

**Equity-Driven Outreach for Bicycle Planning and Beyond:
Let's Bike Oakland as a Case Study**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Urban Planning

by

Helen Pierson

May 2020

Abstract:

As more cities begin to address the lack of bicycle infrastructure through citywide planning efforts, inequalities inherent to the community outreach process threaten to perpetuate inequality of access to biking in cities. This research will explore the ways planners are using equity-focused public engagement to take on the unique challenges of creating an equitable and inclusive bicycle culture, and planning for infrastructure that accommodates the needs of all residents. The research is focused primarily on the public engagement strategies used in the City of Oakland's 2019 Let's Bike Oakland planning process. The primary case study is supported by research on the San Jose Bike Plan currently in development, and the Portland Pedestrian Plan released in 2019. This study uses a mainly qualitative research methodology through interviews with planners and consultants involved in the planning process, and analysis of relevant documentation. Through this research I identify powerful engagement and outreach strategies to create an equitable planning process, and suggest how those strategies can be applied to further

Keywords:

Public engagement, planning process, equity, bicycling, Oakland

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Weiping Wu, for her invaluable dedication, insight, and feedback throughout the research process. I would also like to thank my readers, Professor Sara Zewde, and Jon Orcutt, for their insightful comments and support in the thesis review process.

Thank you also to my colleagues for their thoughtful advice and moral support throughout the process.

Additionally, I would like to thank my interviewees in the research process, who were generous enough to take time out of their busy schedules to share their knowledge and experience. This thesis would never have been possible without their generosity, and speaking with these passionate professionals has been an inspirational and rewarding experience.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1
<i>Background</i>	
<i>Research Methodology</i>	
<i>Planner / Consultant Interviews</i>	
Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework	12
<i>Public Engagement in Planning</i>	
<i>Equity Planning</i>	
<i>Equity and Bicycle Planning</i>	
Chapter Three: The Let’s Bike Oakland Plan	19
<i>Oakland Cultural and Historical Context</i>	
<i>Who was Involved</i>	
<i>The Let’s Bike Oakland Planning Process</i>	
<i>Reflections from the Planning Process</i>	
Chapter Four: Other Examples of Equity-Driven Bicycle Planning	32
<i>San Jose Better Bike Plan 2025</i>	
<i>Portland Pedestrian Plan</i>	
Chapter Five: Conclusions and Discussion	43

Chapter One: Introduction

Bike lanes exist in the public realm. This means that while not everyone bikes, everyone travels in the same streets as bikes, whether it is by car, foot, scooter, bus, or wheelchair (etc.). The planning and implementation of bike lanes in cities affects everyone while not being used by everyone, creating a unique challenge for planners. Until recently, bicycle planning in the US has been largely driven by a small but vocal group of bicycle advocates. Bicycle advocates, traditionally able-bodied white men, have demanded improved bicycle infrastructure, believing that if you create more space and build more protections for bikers, more people will bike. This approach has led to imbalances in where and how bicycle infrastructure is built in cities, as well as in who is seen as a legitimate bicyclist in the eyes of planners, law enforcement, and other bikers (Hoffmann 2016).

In recent years bicycling has become an increasingly culturally visible mode of transportation, driven in part by young, upwardly mobile professionals moving back into cities and eschewing cars in favor of a less expensive, healthier and more sustainable mode of transportation (Hoffman 2016). In response to an increased demand for bicycling infrastructure, and growing evidence of the economic benefits that accompany an influx of bicyclers, some cities have developed new bicycle infrastructure plans that aim to address these inequities by planning for and building more bicycle infrastructure in areas that are lacking or unsafe. However, many cities are facing pushback from communities of color who do not feel that the bicycle plans represent their needs, and are instead aimed towards attracting the type of development that leads to gentrification. Hispanic, African-American and Asian-American riders represent the fastest growing demographics in bicycle commuting, and the majority of those who bike to work have an income of less than \$50,000 annually. Despite this, minority neighborhoods tend to have fewer bike facilities, and a

higher risk of accidents and crashes. (Lusk 2019). When planners are not able to successfully engage vulnerable communities in the planning process, plans and improvements to the built environment will continue to perpetuate inequality of access to amenities such as bicycle infrastructure. Bicycle planning processes that focus on equity of access and making up for decades of disinvestment represent an opportunity to build a more equitable public realm and bring the benefits of bicycling to more city residents.

This research will explore equity-focused bicycle planning processes to answer the question: what public engagement strategies can planners use in comprehensive bicycle planning to create a more equitable planning process? To explore this question, I will focus my research on the planning process undertaken by the Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) for the Let's Bike Oakland Plan released in July 2019 as a case study. This primary case study will be supported by research on the San Jose Bike Plan that is currently in development and the Portland Pedestrian Plan that was released in 2019.

As one of the three largest cities in the Bay Area, Oakland is experiencing growth pressures and an influx of residents. Many area residents are facing displacement due to increasing cost of living. To address the infrastructure needs of the city while keeping the needs and voices of current Oakland residents at the forefront of the conversation, OakDOT framed its comprehensive bicycle plan around equity and put an emphasis on amplifying the voices of disadvantaged groups throughout the planning process. By taking a close look at the engagement strategies leveraged by the Oakland's planning team, and by interviewing the planners and consultants involved in the process, I assess whether the plan was able to effectively address disparities in equity, and how the use of public engagement strategies contributed to the final plan. By learning about what worked and

what didn't in Oakland, I hope to provide a framework for how cities can effectively and equitably engage residents in the bicycle planning process.

Background

Before the popularization of the mass-market automobile, bicycles presented a faster and more efficient option for transportation than walking, leading to a rise in popularity in the late 19th century. By the mid-1890s, around 300 American companies were producing over a million bikes a year (Angier, 2015). With the rise of affordable automobiles and car-based mobility in the 1900's, road networks and land use patterns were redesigned to support easy travel by car. For roads, that meant expanding and streamlining streets so that more cars could travel faster. Highways increasingly cut through cities, and as more Americans moved to the suburbs, the bicycle lost its mass market appeal and became stigmatized as a vehicle only for those who could not drive due to poverty, or lack of a driver's license (Lugo 2018).

In the 1970's, bicycle activism was dominated by bicyclists who fought for the right of the cyclist to occupy street space as an equal among the cars. Many viewed the creation of separated bike lanes as an effort to push bikes off the street to make more room for cars (Mapes 2009). By the 1990s, many people who could afford to choose where to live were moving back into cities. With this shift, a culture of bicycle activism that viewed the bicycle as a "powerful tool for community resilience and grassroots action" (Lugo 2018, p. 15) began to gain momentum. The main goal of the new generation of bicycle activists was to convince local governments to build more bicycle infrastructure in cities. These activists took the view that if cities built infrastructure, citizens would choose to bike.

As bicycling and bicycling advocacy has become more mainstream in the US, more researchers have explored the health and economic benefits of bicycling, to both individuals and cities. Commuting by bike has been linked to a reduced risk of a range of negative health outcomes including cardiovascular disease (Celis-Morales 2017). An increase in bicycle infrastructure in cities has been linked to a range of economic benefits including increased retail sales, increased property values, and decreased healthcare costs (BBC 2018). In addition, a greater number of Americans choosing to cycle instead of drive could lead to a dramatic decrease in the amount of gasoline consumed in the country, and a reduction in the amount of related greenhouse gas emissions (Mapes 2009).

In the US, the national share of bike commuters rose over 50% between 2000 and 2016. While this is a significant increase, numbers remain low overall. Among the nation's largest cities, Portland OR has the highest share of bike commuters at 6.3%. Some cities have experienced huge growth in the past several decades. Often, as with the 300% increase in bike commuters in NYC from 1990 to 2016, changes in commuting modes come as a result of cities planning and improving bike infrastructure (League of American Bicyclists 2016). In many cases, the increase in bicycle safety infrastructure and increasing number of Americans on bikes has brought multiple benefits to communities. However, like many community benefits in the US, bicycle planning and resulting infrastructure has not served everyone equally. As Melody Hoffmann, a bicycle advocacy scholar, puts it, “The white upwardly mobile people who often make up bicycle advocacy groups can (and do) utilize their cultural privilege and power to control how their advocacy will materialize in cities. This includes controlling what areas of the city get bicycle amenities and what these amenities look like.” (Hoffmann 2016, p. 5). As a result, communities of color and low income communities in

cities throughout the US have not enjoyed equal access to the built infrastructure that increases bike safety.

While physical barriers such as a lack of access to safe infrastructure affect a community's access to biking, cultural factors can also influence who feels comfortable on a bike. Black bikers are stopped by the police for tickets and citations at consistently higher rates than any other demographic. In a study of this effect, widely referred to as 'biking while Black', on Tampa residents, researchers concluded that police often used infractions such as not wearing a helmet or biking on the sidewalk as excuses to screen Black citizens for other criminal activity (Zayas & Stanley 2015). This higher risk of getting stopped and in some cases harrassed by the police could serve as a cultural deterrent to biking for Black residents. In low income communities, often the only ones on bikes are those who cannot afford any other means of transportation, positioning bikes as markers of poverty and disincentivizing biking despite its health, environmental and economic benefits. In high crime areas, a fear of being attacked or having a bike stolen may disincentivize biking (Lusk et al 2019). In communities that rely on cars and buses heavily, bikes are seen as a slower and less convenient mode of transportation that takes up valuable street space and getting in the way of motor vehicles. Across the demographic spectrum, bikes are seen as potentially dangerous to pedestrians and other street users, positioning bike riding in opposition to a safe and vibrant street life.

Despite these many barriers, the number of Americans on bikes continues to grow. As cities and their decision makers increasingly recognize the potential benefits of bicycling to both reduce infrastructure costs and to improve the physical and economic health of their residents, city-wide bicycle planning efforts are becoming more common (Hoffman 2016). Public engagement within

bicycle planning faces unique challenges in determining who to engage in the process and how to ensure that engagement is productive and meaningful for those involved. Traditionally, stakeholders in a bicycle planning process are those who are already committed to biking as a leisure time activity and a mode of transport. This often includes those who are already vocal and active in bicycle advocacy, and excludes communities of color, low income riders, and those who rely on bicycling out of economic necessity. Bikers who don't fit the cultural norm of bike advocates or upwardly mobile white commuters are often excluded from planning processes for a variety of reasons. While the majority of bike commuters in the US have an income less than \$25K, low income residents who rely on bikes for cheap transportation may not have leisure time to devote to participation in planning workshops. Language barriers and undocumented status can also prevent meaningful engagement of immigrant communities in bicycle planning processes. For many marginalized communities, distrust of governments that have been neglectful or even malicious over previous decades can combine with 'planning fatigue', a distrust that anything concrete or beneficial will come of engaging with planners, to discourage meaningful participation in planning processes.

One of the three major cities in the San Francisco Bay Area, Oakland is facing an dramatic increase in living costs and an influx of new residents, many of whom are white and upwardly mobile. These factors combine to place long-term and low income residents of Oakland, many of whom are Black and Latinx, at risk of displacement. The increase in Oakland's population has increased pressure on the city's transportation including both roads and highways and BART, the area's main public transportation system. Oakland's recent bike plan seeks to focus on equity and inclusion and to update and improve the city's bicycle network as a part of a larger transportation strategy. The plan's presents a vision of "Oakland [as] a bicycle-friendly city where bicycling provides

affordable, safe and healthy mobility for all Oaklanders. New projects and programs will work to enhance existing communities and their mobility needs.” (Let’s Bike Oakland 2019). The plan’s emphasis on equitable engagement in the face of mounting displacement pressures presents a perfect case study to learn about the ways that planners are applying equity focused public engagement strategies to bicycle planning.

By choosing to focus on equity as a foundational aspect in the planning and implementation of bike improvements, planners throughout the US have a chance to redefine who has access to safe and convenient transportation options throughout their cities. In many cases, this focus on equity will necessitate taking steps to amplify the needs and perspectives of marginalized communities and those who have been left out of bicycle planning in the past. Without this effort, new city-wide bike plans will serve to exacerbate existing inequities and bring disproportionate benefits to the highly visible white professional class, in the same way that planning has historically done. Planning efforts that put a focus on equity through serving existing low income communities of color as well as traditional bike advocates, such as the Oakland Department of Transportation’s ‘Let’s Bike Oakland’ Plan, have the potential to redefine who is served by the field of planning and how.

Research Methodology

My research on this topic is modeled around a case study framework of a single, focus case study supported by insights from several supporting case studies. This approach, described by Vinit Mukhija in a 2010 paper, presents an alternative to the single or multiple case study methodologies and provides an opportunity to both explore a topic in depth, and to enrich the research with relevant supporting information (Mukhija 2010). The primary case study in my research is the

planning process behind the Oakland Department of Transportation's comprehensive bicycle plan, the 'Let's Bike Oakland' plan released July 2019 and recognized with an APA Silver Award in Planning Excellence in April of 2020. My research on this case study included analysis of the historical and cultural context of Oakland and the Bay Area, analysis of the plan itself and supporting public documents, and interviews with planners and consultants who worked on the plan directly. I support the main case study by looking at the Portland Pedestrian Plan as another example of a successful city-led equity-driven planning effort, and the San Jose Bicycle Plan as an example of a city that is trying to adapt some of the methods used by the Oakland Department of Transportation to increase engagement in their planning process. These secondary case studies serve to present examples of planning efforts that contrast Oakland's with different approaches to equity, different constituencies and different urban scales. Including these secondary case studies can help to inform which aspects of Oakland's process are unique to the context, and how approaches to equity planning might be scaled and expanded to cities and planning projects throughout the US. Information on the secondary case studies is sourced from publicly available materials surrounding the plans and the planning process, as well as media reports on the plans and processes.

In this research I will first present a brief overview of relevant literature around participatory planning, equity planning, and critical writings on race and equity in bicycling. I will then provide a thorough summary and analysis of the Let's Bike Oakland planning process, followed by descriptions and analyses of the Bike San Jose and PedPDX processes. The discussion of the case studies will culminate in reflections and conclusions regarding equity-driven planning processes in the US.

One of the major questions that came up in this research process concerns the best way to evaluate an equity focused public engagement in a planning process. Although frameworks exist to assess planning processes, none focus directly on the equity of engagement in the process. In order to assess the planning processes, then, I focused on the following aspects of the process to evaluate the planning efforts. First, what groups and community members were engaged in the process and what perspectives are most visible through the planning documents. Second, what are the relationships between the communities engaged and the planning team. Third, how does the resulting plan respond to the feedback that was gathered throughout the process and fourth, how has the planning document and any implementation been received by the public. By looking at these four aspects of the planning process and the resulting plan I hope to learn about the successes and failures of cities engaging in equity-driven planning processes.

Planner / Consultant Interviews

I conducted interviews with the OakDOT Project Manager of the Let's Bike Oakland Plan, and the Engagement Coordinator for the plan. These two OakDOT representatives connected me with two members of the consultant teams that I spoke to as well: a member of the TransForm team, and a member of the Alta Planning and Design team. Interviews were semi-structured with a focus on the logistics of the planning process and reflections from the planning process. Questions included but were not limited to the following.

1. What was the motivation behind framing the plan around equity?
2. How did the outreach process for the Let's Bike Oakland plan differ from previous iterations?

3. How did you identify community groups to include in the engagement process?
4. Did any engagement strategies stand out as providing more or less input on the final plan?
5. What challenges did you encounter during the outreach process? What do you feel was successful about the outreach process and why?
6. How did the outreach that you conducted influence the final content of the plan?

Although the interviews I conducted with planners involved in the Let's Bike Oakland process were critical to my understanding of the project and illuminated many of the ways that the project can provide a valuable new model for equity based outreach, I was not able to speak with any representatives from the community organizations that the planning team worked with, or any community members that the plan aims to serve. This is due to a variety of factors, including a lack of time to build meaningful connections with community members and organizations, as well as a desire to be respectful of both the planning team who did not offer to connect me with community partners, and of the time and resources of vulnerable communities that were engaged in the planning process. While this gap in my research process was well intentioned, I recognize that leaving out the perspective of the communities that are served by the plan represents a crucial gap in the assessment of both the planning process and the outcomes of the plan. To learn more about the community's reaction to the plan I analyzed local news reports on the plan, and referenced sections of the plan in which the community groups represent themselves.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework

Public Engagement in Planning

When planning began as a practice, any form of engagement of the public in the process was rare. Top-down planning in the US led to massive infrastructure projects such as the Interstate Highway system. This and other large projects were imposed on citizens without their involvement in the planning process whatsoever. Planning projects routinely led to evictions and drastic changes to neighborhoods in the name of ideas like modernity and urban renewal. Paul Davidoff's 1965 article, *Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning*, presents an argument for a shift away from the unilateral and top-down planning practiced by planners until that point, towards an advocacy-based planning practice. Davidoff argues that "If the planning process is to encourage democratic urban government then it must operate so as to include rather than exclude citizens from participating in the process." (Davidoff 1969, p. 332). Davidoff goes on to emphasize the importance of going beyond merely informing the public, to educating and empowering citizens so that they may propose alternatives to government sponsored plans.

One of most prominent and still-cited texts that addresses a lack of engagement in the planning practice is Sherry Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation in Planning" (1969). Inspired by her experience working at HUD's Urban Renewal program, Arnstein catalogued the ways that planners engaged citizens in the process. Building on the concepts introduced by Davidoff, Arnstein gives a hierarchy to the types of engagement, ranging from the non-participatory practices of manipulation and therapy to the top of the ladder, what Arnstein called citizen control. The ladder conceptually frames the increase in citizen empowerment available with more meaningful engagement practices. Since its publication, Arnstein's ladder has consistently provided a framework

for how successful engagement practices can empower citizens to become a meaningful force in the planning process.

While Arnstein's work is still regarded as a critical foundation for thinking about participatory practices, some scholars argue that it is just that – a foundation. Bratt and Reardon (2013) argue that the ladder framework lacks empirical evidence describing what practices actually work, and that the ladder incorrectly positions the top rung – citizen control – as the best outcome of any planning process. Citizen control has the power to amplify culturally embedded hierarchies such as “white privilege/ racism, income segregation, sexism, ageism, and homophobia” (Bratt & Reardon 2013), and discounts the value and expertise that is offered by planners in the process. In addition, the ladder provides no insight for planners who are operating on the lower rungs of the ladder as to how they can better engage and empower their constituents.

Planners have still not fully resolved the difficulties inherent to participatory practices, and as more strategies begin to incorporate data collection and online polling, the challenges continue to evolve. Public meetings, a traditional format employed by planners to solicit feedback on a presented plan, give a voice to those that have the free time and schedules to accommodate attendance, and those who have the confidence to publicly voice their opinions. The latter issue is often addressed through small group activities that focus on hearing from everyone. Even when planners are able to solicit feedback from a range of sources, it is not always easy to synthesize that feedback into concrete additions to the plan. Online surveys and webinars attempt to reach those who are unable or unwilling to travel to meetings for a variety of reasons, but they also bring up the issue of accessibility to the necessary hardware and software. Even cities such as San Francisco that have

instituted robust avenues for public participation often struggle with NIMBYism, and the ability of individuals to block widely beneficial projects due to their individual concerns.

Equity Planning

Equity planning represents an expansion of the role of planners beyond merely creating a functional built environment towards creating a more equitable future for the cities that they work in. Developing out of reform movements of the early 1900's and the civil rights movement of the 1960's and 70's, equity planners "try to move resources, political power, and participation toward the disadvantaged, lower-income people of their cities and regions." (Krumholz 2019). Equity planning shares some concepts with Davidoff's advocacy-based planning; a key aspect of equity planning is learning from and empowering traditionally disadvantaged communities in cities. Much of equity planning is centered around participatory strategies such as meetings and workshops as a way to create empowerment and collaboration, but the practice also depends on the intent and focused efforts of the planners involved (Krumholz 2019). Based around an equity framework, the Let's Bike Oakland plan is an example of equity planning originating from a city government.

According to Norman Krumholz, one of the pioneers of equity planning, at its outset equity planning was largely based in a few progressive city planning departments (Krumholz 2019). Over time, especially as financial support from the federal government has waned in recent years, equity planning has transitioned to be a more prevalent practice in community benefit groups, nonprofits and citizen advocacy groups than in city governments. More recent literature on equity planning embraces the diversification of scales and organizations in the effort to achieve the goals of equity planning (Krumholz 2019, Doussard 2015). In his examination of Chicago-based equity planning

projects Doussard argues that scaling equity planning demands beyond the scope of the city to take on corporations, state houses and federal authorities can overcome restrictions on equity planning (Doussard 2015, p. 303-4). Doussard argues that scaling up equity planning to take on larger opponents can both make it easier for equity planners to find support by reaching outside of the city scope, and can also increase the impact of gains made by equity planners. Krumholz also views expansion as the future of equity planning, but in Krumholz's view equity planners must expand not only outwards from city governments, but also to a more local and community-based scale. Krumholz argues for the integration of equity planning with environmental sustainability efforts that champion social equity, and for the expansion of the roles of equity planners outside of city hall and into non-profits, hospitals, schools, and local activism (Krumholz 2019).

Although there are many advocates of integrating equity planners into city government and official policymaking, one of the critiques of equity planning is that institutionalizing advocacy for underrepresented groups can deflate the grassroots energy that is generated from oppositional social movements (Doussard 2015). This is a fear that was also brought up in Davidoff's discussion of advocacy planning, and is reflected in Arnstein's tokenism rungs on the ladder of participation.

A further troubling challenge in equity planning is the difficulty planners face in successfully implementing the plans and priorities that are developed through the equity planning process. As Krumholz and Hexter state, planners "have little influence over whether or not plans are implemented; the adoption and implementation is often in the hands of politicians" (Krumholz & Hexter 2019). This tension between traditional planning and successful implementation may contribute to why so much of the emphasis on the future of equity planning focuses on expanding beyond the traditional role of city planner. Working at different scales and in different roles gives

equity planners an opportunity to achieve more tangible results from their work without the political difficulty of implementing plans created for local governments. For equity planners that do work in traditional city planning roles, Krumholz's work as a city planner in Cleveland in the 1980's can provide a blueprint for leveraging the press and political will to achieve real tangible results.

Equity and Bicycle Planning

Critical literature on bicycling has focused on the role of the bicycle as a signifier across time periods and cultures. Hoffman (2016) writes about the bicycle as a signifier, highlighting the cultural perspectives associated with different views of the bicycle. For example, many bicycle advocates see the bicycle as a means of transportation that can both improve personal health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These views provide a basis for advocating that street improvements be made to increase safety and encourage cycling as a means of travel in cities. For recreational cyclists, bicycles can be an expensive status symbol. For those who are reliant on their cars for physical or cultural reasons, bicycles and bicycle infrastructure often represent a nuisance or even a danger to driving. Bicycles can also represent the inability to afford any other means of transportation, motivating some communities to resist bicycle infrastructure, or to resist bicycles as a marker of poverty. For some communities, bicycles and bicycle infrastructure are seen as harbingers or contributors to gentrification and displacement. The history of the bicycle also contains many symbolic iterations (Furness 2010). When bicycles became available to wealthy white women in the 1890's they were seen as a dangerous and corrupting influence for the freedom and independent mobility it allowed its users (Hoffman 2016). Furness (2010) writes about the bicycle as a countercultural political symbol in the 1970's.

Although existing literature on the bicycle focuses on its historical significance and its position as a political symbol, scholarship has largely avoided the role of the bicycle in racial and economic divides. Two recent exceptions to this are Melody Hoffman with “Bike Lanes are White Lanes” (2016) and Adonia Lugo with “Bicycle / Race” (2018). As Hoffman states, “It is a challenge ... to discuss why particular people are excluded from a social space when their existence is largely not acknowledged in research” (Hoffman 2016, p. 10). Cycling media, most notably in a 2006 article written by Dan Koppel in *Bicycling* magazine, often describes ‘invisible cyclist’ as “low-income cyclists, immigrant populations, or other groups that bike advocates have found hard to reach.” (Hoffman 2016 referencing Zewde 2011 p. 36). These ‘invisible’ cyclists are often those who ride their bikes because they do not own a car or cannot afford public transportation. In ‘Bicycle/Race’ (2018) Lugo emphasizes the linguistic and conceptual differences between the empowered and ideologically driven ‘car free’ cyclists that dominate the bicycle activism realm, and the ‘transit-dependent’ cyclists, who often make up the statistical majority of riders but receive none of the support and attention that is given to the former group. Lugo argues that when bicycle advocates focus solely on creating physical infrastructure as a method to support all cyclists, cities overlook the myriad cultural influences that affect a bicyclist on the street. This can range from police targeting to reckless or angry drivers to language barriers or different street etiquette education.

Bicycle infrastructure that is built in cities does not always serve everyone equally. In recent research on perceived safety of bicycle infrastructure, Anne Lusk and colleagues explored the perceptions of safety along bike routes among residents familiar with higher crime and lower income neighborhoods in Boston. The researchers’ definition of safety included both safety from collision

and safety from crime, a risk that is not often discussed in conjunction with bicycle infrastructure. Researchers surveyed church groups, YMCA members, and members of halfway houses, shelters and gangs. Shared use paths, separated paths shared by bikers, pedestrians and other non-motorized travelers, which are seen as one of the safest forms of bicycle infrastructure by advocates and many cyclists, were perceived as having a high risk for crime by the study's participants. Bike lanes were perceived as having a medium-high risk for crime and as barely safer than shared streets from collisions (Lusk et al 2019). While the feedback collected by Lusk and the research team may not be applicable to every community's needs, Lusk highlights the need for planning to engage with all residents in order to promote policies and infrastructural improvements that will benefit them.

Chapter Three: The Let's Bike Oakland Plan

Oakland Cultural and Historical Context

Oakland has an estimated population of 429,082 as of the 2018 ACS estimates, with 28% identifying as White, 27% identifying as Hispanic or Latino, 24% as Black or African American, 16% as Asian and 5% as other. Oakland is located across the bay from San Francisco, and is the third largest city by population in the Bay Area behind San Jose and San Francisco. As the Bay Area as a whole continues to develop into a tech-hub that is known for high costs of living, more young urban professionals move to Oakland seeking affordable rents and an easy commute to San Francisco. This influx of new residents is generating conflict and controversy and exacerbating neighborhood divisions.

Oakland has long been a hub of African-American cultural and political empowerment. From 1940 to 1970, Oakland was a destination for Black families relocating from the South in the second great migration. In 1966, the Black Panther Party formed in Oakland and was an active participant in the city's culture for sixteen years, providing services such as free meals and health clinics to many Oakland residents. In the 1980's, Oakland's Black population made up nearly half of all residents. Today, Oakland's Black population has been outpaced by growing numbers of White and Hispanic or Latino residents. Rising costs of housing and stagnating wages have pushed out many longtime Oakland residents. In 2018, Oakland had a poverty rate of 17%, nearly double that of San Jose and San Francisco. In addition, while median rent hovered only a few hundred dollars below both larger cities, median household incomes were nearly half, at \$68,000 compared to just over \$100,000 (ACS 2017). All of these factors combined with a history of disinvestment and displacement have prompted the city of Oakland to take on a number of city wide planning

initiatives, including an equity-driven paving plan, a cultural plan, mobility planning, and most recently the Let's Bike Oakland plan (OakDOT, interview 2019).

Oakland's first bicycle plan was released in 1999 and revised in 2007 and 2012. The 2019 Let's Bike Oakland plan was the first comprehensive update to the plan since its initial release (City of Oakland). Prior to the Let's Bike Oakland process, Oakland had 164 miles of bikeways. The plan proposes the addition of 219 new or upgraded bikeways with an emphasis placed on "low-stress bikeways", which include shared use paths, buffered and protected bicycle lanes, and neighborhood bikeways which are often smaller streets with little automotive traffic that connect neighborhood destinations. The resulting network would comprise 344 miles of bikeways with a reduction in bike lanes in favor of more protected and less stressful classes of bikeways. While the 2019 update preserves some of the existing goals and priorities of the 1999 and 2007 plan such as safety and , it adds an overarching equity framework, and increases the focus on connecting East and West Oakland with transit hubs, grocery stores and local community destinations such as commercial areas, schools and rec centers. The plan also includes an emphasis on supporting local grassroots bicycle programming, and boosting the local bicycle economy. (Oakland DOT)

Let's Bike Oakland Project Team

The Let's Bike Oakland Plan was led by the OakDOT planning team. The city's Department of Transportation was a young department when it undertook the comprehensive bicycle planning process, having been established, only nine months prior to beginning of the process in 2016. Although the department had been involved in several planning projects, the Let's Bike Oakland Plan was the first major planning effort spearheaded by the DOT. The OakDOT

planning team includes 4-6 staff members who led the planning process. The Let's Bike Oakland team was supported by the rest of the DOT planning staff as well as the city's Department of Race and Equity and a consultant team led by Alta Planning and supported by Transform, a local planning non-profit.

The Department of Race and Equity (DRE) was created not long before the DOT as a mostly internal facing department. According to the city's website, the department "work[s] with City departments to create a city where our diversity is maintained, racial disparities have been eliminated and racial equity has been achieved." (Department of Race and Equity n.d.) In the Let's Bike Oakland Process, the DRE acted in an advisory capacity to the DOT, helping to provide the rationale and backing for the plan's use of equity as a framework from the beginning. The DRE conducted trainings in race and equity issues with both the DOT planners and the consultant teams, and also consulted with the DOT on the development of the outreach survey that the team used to gather feedback in the initial stages of the planning process. The Department of Race and Equity represents a unique effort by the City of Oakland to place equity and racial justice at the forefront of its work and its interactions with its citizens. By ensuring an across-the-board approach and support for incorporating equity and racial justice components to City operations, DRE played a crucial role in the implementation of OakDOT's equity based planning process.

The consultant team, brought on early in the process by OakDOT, was led by Alta Planning and Design. Alta is a well established national-scale transportation planning consulting firm that often works with city governments on comprehensive plan scale projects. Alta worked with Toole Design Group, another large-scale transportation planning firm, and Transform, an Oakland-based non-profit transit advocacy group that was enlisted by the City to help with the plan's focus on a

framework of equity. While Transform does not have a history of working on government-led projects, it has a strong connection to Oakland community groups and focuses much of its work on multi-modal mobility justice work. Although OakDOT approached the Let's Bike Oakland Plan with a focus on equity and justice from the beginning, that approach was a departure from the city's approach historically. As an equity-focused group that had experience working closely with the community, Transform worked to help the city address the community distrust and resentment that was present as the beginning of the planning process as a result of long term disinvestment by the city in East and West Oakland's communities of color.

In a typical bicycle planning process, a consultant such as Alta or Toole would work with the city to conduct the community outreach, leading public information sessions and answering the public's questions at forum style meetings. As a part of OakDOT's focus on equity in the planning process, the consultant team subcontracted the public engagement to local Oakland community groups. The city identified Outdoor Afro, a national organization that aims to bring people of color into the outdoors, and Bikes 4 Life, a local Oakland group that works to encourage Oakland residents to use biking as an alternative method of transportation and to increase health, political education and empowerment of the community. TransForm connected the city with three other Oakland based groups – The Scraper Bike Team, an East Oakland group that works to empower local youth to work towards social justice change through self-expression, creativity and bicycle art, The East Oakland Collective, a member-based East Oakland advocacy group that seeks to amplify underserved communities through economic development, civic engagement and leadership, and homeless services and solutions, and Cycles of Change, an Oakland based organization that works to

improve health and sustainability through access and education around bicycles, with youth programs in local schools and beyond. (Let's Bike Oakland, 2019)

Let's Bike Oakland Planning Process

From the beginning of the Let's Bike Oakland process, OakDOT, backed by the DRE, established that the plan would focus on and emphasize equity as an overarching framework. Although there are many understandings and definitions of equity, the Let's Bike Oakland plan describes their approach as follows:

Equity means that your identity as an Oaklander has no detrimental effect on the distribution of resources, opportunities, and outcomes for you as a resident.

We identified vulnerable user groups as well as four goals that we believe will advance equity: **access, health and safety, affordability, and collaboration.** The project team has defined future actions and ways to measure progress on these four goals.

The Equity Framework asks:

- Who are the City's most vulnerable groups?
- What is the desired condition of well-being that the City and residents want for Oakland's most vulnerable communities?
- How can implementation of the Plan work towards these conditions?

Let's Bike Oakland, 2019, p. 3

The equity framework established by the DOT provided the outline and rationale for all aspects of the planning process including the resident survey, the existing condition analysis, the community outreach strategy and the implementation strategy.

Before beginning the community outreach process, the DOT conducted a statistically representative survey of residents' current views of biking in Oakland. 1,688 residents took the

survey with a minimum of 100 respondents in each of the 8 geographic zones that the plan identifies. The survey was developed by OakDOT in partnership with the DRE, and defines the landscape of residents' views of bicycling at the outset of the planning process, as well as what barriers residents face to biking. In order to more fully understand existing conditions, the DOT also analyzed the existing bicycle infrastructure and who has access throughout the city. This analysis highlighted the outsize number of Black Oaklanders being stopped by police, especially in North and East Oakland. The analysis also emphasizes the small number of Oaklanders who have access by bike to daily necessities such as grocery stores, commercial areas, transit and facilities such as schools and recreation centers. The data also provides a window into safety concerns for bikers in the city, outlining common types of accidents, and dangerous areas for bikers. The equity framework shaped the existing conditions analysis in the plan as the document acknowledged that “relying solely on quantitative data over the knowledge and experiences of marginalized communities can lead to incomplete decision-making.” To combat this effect, the planners worked with community partners to “clarify, dispute, and enhance the data from this survey in order to prioritize the knowledge and contribution of community residents.” (Let’s Bike Oakland 2019)

In order to prioritize the perspectives of underrepresented Oaklanders, the city and their consultant team partnered with the aforementioned five community groups to plan engagement events, host community workshops and guide the plan recommendations. The OakDOT team subcontracted much of the engagement to these community groups, with the City and consultants acting as advisors to the community, available to offer support when needed. The community groups took on the lead role of planning and organizing community events and promoting the events through their community networks. Although the city conducted more traditional outreach activities

such as surveys and pop-up tabling at events, the majority of the community engagement was planned and coordinated by the community partners. Events included listening sessions, community bike rides, bike repair workshops, and more.

According to the OakDOT planners, a large part of working closely with the community in the outreach process was working to build trust with the community going forward. Although this was not an easy process, it was integral, and ultimately helped to build connections and empower the community groups to feel a sense of ownership over the resulting plan. To build this trust, the city's first step was to own up to past disinvestment in many areas of Oakland dominated by communities of color. The city also emphasized clear and open communication with community partners throughout the planning process. After every community listening session, planners from the DOT closely recorded what they heard and how they interpreted it, and shared those documents with the community partners in order to their accuracy. When the city began to develop recommendations, they shared the recommendations with the community partners as well as the community feedback and thought process that went into those recommendations.

Integrating implementation into the outreach process was also important to the city's relationship with the community. The DOT team began working towards implementing elements of the plan concurrent with the planning process, focusing their efforts on projects that were specifically highlighted as important by their community partners. In East Oakland, the DOT worked closely with the Scraper Bike Team to design and implement a center lane bike safety project on 90th Ave. In October of 2019, soon after the release of the plan, the DOT completed the repaving of 90th Avenue and used that as an opportunity to reclassify and repaint the center lane as a

bike lane to increase the safety and visibility of the Scraper Bike Team in an area where they often ride (Tyska 2019).

Reflections from the Planning Process

Challenges

In part because of the plan's non-traditional outreach framework, the planning team encountered a range of challenges through the planning process. One of the main themes that emerged from my conversations with planners and consultants was conflicts around the city's capacity to take on a planning process with a strong emphasis on equity. Like many cities in the US, Oakland has a history of redlining and disinvestment in minority populations (Levin 2018). In recent years, the city has been making an effort to both own and rectify that history, but that process cannot happen without some conflict between the old planning methods and the new. A member of the TransForm team also brought up the question of whether or not the city is properly equipped to take on the challenge of amplifying the voices of vulnerable populations. City planning is a profession historically dominated by privileged white male practitioners. While the Oakland team was younger and more diverse than planners at many cities, a cultural divide still existed between the planners and the population they planned for. The DRE's trainings for the planning and consultant teams helped the city address this challenge. By bringing TransForm on to the consultant team, the City was able to work with a mobility advocacy group with a diverse team and a history of working closely with Oakland's community group to form connections and collaborate respectfully throughout the process.

Successes

According to interviews with the planning team as well as the city's records from the planning process, the planning document was successful in integrating the needs of community partners in a variety of ways. First, the plan expanded its focus beyond the physical improvements that could support biking to include cultural and programmatic elements, a shift that was pushed by the community partners. This included proposals to create tool lending stations at Oakland Public Libraries as well as expanded support for existing bike education programs led by community partners. The plan also includes neighborhood specific infrastructure typologies to better meet the needs of the current residents. This includes a higher emphasis on neighborhood-scale shared streets in East Oakland reflects the community's desire for safe routes to local destinations such as schools, shops and libraries. Many residents must drive or take public transit to work due to the length of their commute, but choose to bike to more local destinations, lessening a need for faster more efficient dedicated bike lanes. While looking directly at the plan reflects some of the ways that the planning process met the needs of the communities it aimed to serve, it does not encompass all of the benefits of the equity-driven process.

One of the positive outcomes of the plan that was not reflected in the final document is the connections that the planning process forged between local government and community groups. The city's team made a strong effort from the beginning of the process to not only own up to past mistakes made by the city of Oakland, but to actively listen to the groups that they were engaged with and draw clear connections between what they heard from community participants, and how that feedback was affecting the planning documents in real time. This accountability and effort on the part of the city was key to building a trusting and productive relationship between the city and

the community and was built on the foundation of the city's existing equity-focused work, including the creation of the Department of Race and Equity, and equity-focused outreach around Shared Mobility programs. This foundation of shared trust and communication provided a basis for the city to continue to partner with community members and CBO's. By providing funding to contract with CBO's, the city also provided an avenue to increase the capacity of those organizations and broaden their scope of work.

In addition to providing connections and building trust between community groups and city government, the project team believes that the Let's Bike Oakland planning process also shifted the way that traditional bicycle planners and bicycle advocates approached the bike planning process. Outreach events such as community bike rides and all day sessions were run and promoted by community outreach partners. Some members of more traditional bike advocacy groups attended, providing time and space for them to form connections and learn different approaches to bicycle outreach and planning. Members of the city's traditional bicycle advocacy group, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) became more open to learning about and addressing issues that people of color face around bicycling, and several members of the CBO's that the City partnered with joined the BPAC as advisors to the City on a range of projects.

On the consultant side, a planner from Alta Planning and Design, the lead consultant on the project, said that working on the Let's Bike Oakland Plan had begun to change the way that Alta worked with cities and their approach to equity-driven planning. Working closely with community members allowed the planning team to deepen their understanding of the analytical assessment of biking in Oakland. Conversations with community members allowed the planners to confirm both the accuracy of the data collected and the validity of the community's experience in some areas, and

in other areas it revealed gaps in the data collection such as underreporting of accidents in areas with negative relationships with law enforcement. Although the consultants' clients, the cities that they work with, have different funding capacities and different approaches (or lack of approaches) to equity-driven work, Alta now has the experience to inform and encourage cities to follow a similar framework to the Oakland Plan, engaging CBO's in a meaningful way from the beginning of the process. The equity framework of the plan also affected the way that Alta is approaching the implementation of the plan, with a larger focus on equity and historically underserved communities.

Finally, possibly the most straightforward success, recounted by a member of the TransForm team, was that the planning process lifted up the needs of vulnerable communities in Oakland, providing people with a voice within the government that did not have one before. Some critics of equity-driven planning practices might argue that by institutionalizing the input of vulnerable communities into government supported 'advisory groups' the government can placate communities by making them feel heard and acknowledged by the government without translating any of their needs or input into actionable policy or physical improvements. The representative from TransForm, however, argued that other forms of activism that the community could engage in don't have the power to "reach and address the heart of why people are hurting" in the way that the Let's Bike Oakland planning process did. The planning process did not dismantle existing power structures that have a history of being oppressive in the way that radical action might have started to, but working collaboratively with allies and advocates within the city's government allowed the community organizations to change the way the city conducts planning processes, and to have their needs and voices heard within the existing structure of government.

Keys to Success

The planners involved in the Let's Bike Oakland plan attributed the success of the planning process primarily to their efforts to build trust with the community partners, as well as to OakDOT's willingness to acknowledge past injustices. This was possible because of a range of factors. First, the planning team that took the project on was young and optimistic, and committed to an equitable process from the beginning. The planners committed to being widely available to the community, putting in hours on the weekends and at every outreach event, going so far as to teach bicycle repair and maintenance to community members from their homes.

Another factor that contributed to the impact of the planning process was the commitment and support of the city team for pursuing an equity-based planning process. The DOT's planners on the team worked to focus the plan around equity, and gained internal institutional support from superiors at the city and most notably from the city's DRE. This internal support allowed the DOT planners to shape a consultant team and a process with equity at the center from the very beginning. The DOT's commitment to an equity-driven planning process was helped by the relatively recent restructuring of the city departments involved; The Let's Bike Oakland plan was the Department of Transportation's first real city-wide planning effort, and as the first plan produced by a young department, the process was able to more easily evolve away from traditional planning processes at the city. This freedom from traditional planning methods allowed the planning team to quickly adapt and change in response to community feedback, and empowered the team to focus the plan around equity.

Open communication and accountability throughout the process were also key to building a strong relationship between the city's team and the community organizations that they worked with.

After every community led outreach event, the planners followed up with the organizers to report back and verify what they heard from community members and their main takeaways from the event. As the process continued and planners began to formulate recommendations, the team drew a direct line between what they heard from the community, and each recommendation, showing the community how their input shaped the proposed recommendations.

Chapter Four: Further Examples of Equity-Driven Bicycle Planning

Looking closely at the Let's Bike Oakland planning process and outcomes provided valuable insight into the strengths and positive outcomes that resulted from Oakland's strategy of engaging closely with existing community organizations. The work that the Let's Bike Oakland team did has the potential to be adapted to a variety of planning scales and scenarios, but it may not be feasible in every context. Expanding the scope of the research to include the San Jose Better Bike Plan 2025 and Portland's PedPDX plan provides an opportunity to imagine the ways that cities that vary in population, demographics, history, and local governmental structure can approach equity-driven planning in the future.

San Jose Better Bike Plan 2025

Background

The San Jose Better Bike Plan is a comprehensive bicycle plan update undertaken by the city of San Jose. The plan is an update of the city's most recent plan, San Jose Bike 2020, released in 2009. Like Oakland, San Jose is a city in the San Francisco Bay area. San Jose has a diverse population of 1.04 million that is 35% Asian, 32% Latinx and 27% White. Many employees of nearby Silicon Valley live in San Jose, driving up housing costs and leading to displacement of the city's low income population. San Jose's homeless population grew by 40% between 2017 and 2019 (San José Anti-Displacement Policy Network Team, 2019). The city has 2,400 miles of roadways and 419 miles of bikeways and protected trails. (J. Brazil, 2019). The updated bike plan is informed by the 2011 General Plan, the previous Bike Plan 2020, the Climate Action Plan and the Vision Zero San Jose initiative. The goals of the plan, as outlined at a Cal Bike Summit 2019 presentation,

are to promote a mode shift in transportation choices away from cars and towards biking, safety, and equity. According to the plan's website, the Better Bike Plan 2020 will create a bicycle network that is safe, comfortable and convenient. While the plan's messaging features equity as a goal, and the planning process reflects that to some extent, safety and convenience seem to outweigh equity as factors that shaped the plan itself.

The planning process began in July 2018 with initial information gathering that included public workshops, public events and neighborhood meetings. The city's website dedicated to the plan reports that the city learned about citizen priorities around biking including where they want to bike and what presents a barrier to biking in the city. (San Jose, 2019). The city also incorporated traffic and safety data to inform which areas are most in need of infrastructural improvements. Phase 2 took place from January to August 2019 and involved the release of draft recommendations for new projects and programs that support bicycling in the city. The website reports that the team presented initial recommendations at a community workshop in June of 2019. The third and final phase, taking place from August 2019 to March 2020, involves drafting the final plan for review and preparing to implement the first projects. As of the writing of this document, neither the initial recommendation nor the draft plan are available publicly online.

Community Engagement

Like the Let's Bike Oakland team, San Jose's planning team worked to reach underserved communities through partnerships with existing community organizations. San Jose partnered with three groups, Latinos Unidos por una Nueva America (LUNA), which aims to unify the Latinx community throughout Silicon Valley for an improved quality of life, Vietnamese Voluntary

Foundation (ViVO), which empowers refugees and immigrants to promote a healthy multi-cultural society that is self-sufficient and violence-free, and Veggielution, which builds connections between people with diverse backgrounds through food and farming in East San Jose. The city worked with ViVO to host a focus group, and partnered with LUNA to plan a community bike ride. While these events are mentioned in presentation materials from the city on their outreach process, it is unclear what the relationship between the city and these organizations was like, and how the input gained through the events led by community groups has informed the forthcoming plan. San Jose emphasizes in their outreach efforts an attempt to “meet people where they are” (J. Brazil, 2019). This includes hosting neighborhood meetings, faith-based meetings, school-based meetings and business association meetings, as well as more traditional pop-up outreach events and tabling at open streets and city festivals. Although some outreach materials used at workshops are available online, the feedback gained from the outreach meetings themselves is not available.

Analysis

While San Jose presents a relevant comparison for Oakland’s equity-based approach to bicycle planning, the rigor and depth of the effort does not match that of Oakland. The San Jose Bike plan lacks a robust definition of equity in the context of the plan failing to identify what communities and equity goals are at the forefront of the planning process, and messaging about the plan’s overall vision and goals appears inconsistent. San Jose’s planning work is not supported by a city department focused on race and equity, and the city’s strategic plan puts less of an emphasis on equity than the Oakland DOT strategic plan. It is also worth noting the differences in scale and demographics between the two cities. San Jose is a much larger city than Oakland, with more than

double the population, and a much higher average household income. San Jose's demographics also differ from Oakland's, although both cities are facing similar crises of affordability and displacement of low income residents and communities of color. Given the shared issues of displacement and inequality that face both San Jose and Oakland, the San Jose Bike 2020 plan provides a valuable example of equity-driven community engagement in a city-wide bicycle planning effort.

The San Jose team seems to approach outreach in a fairly traditional way, focusing the majority of efforts on public meetings, and pop-up events with the public. Like the Oakland team, San Jose engaged existing community groups in an effort to give a voice to the communities that they support and represent. My impression is that San Jose's process positioned the community groups as advisors to the city on a few events, where the City of Oakland team described themselves as advisors to the groups, providing guidance and materials only when necessary and otherwise contracting out the process to community groups that made it their own. My understanding of the San Jose process is shaped in part by the lack of transparent information that is readily available to the public. The plan website is not up to date, many of the links are broken, and while the materials used in several public meetings are available, the resulting feedback is not, providing few clues about what the team heard from the community and whether it is being applied in the plan itself. While this finding is perhaps not as illuminating as insight on the process from those involved, it is indicative of the transparency of the process as it moves forward. The one place that does seem to contain updates about the planning process and resulting improvements is the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting minutes. While most meeting minutes are available online, there are only 11 members of the committee and they are all appointed by the Director of Transportation. While this lack of information could be a sign of a lack of community input and

transparency surrounding the planning process, it is difficult to directly compare the San Jose documents to those of Portland or Oakland, as both the Portland and Oakland plans are released, while San Jose's is still in development. It is hard to know what information the other two cities made public during the planning process and what was released in conjunction with the final plan.

While San Jose's plan is not yet released, some infrastructural improvements are being implemented already. Although this was a tactic used in Oakland to build trust with the community and indicate that equity will remain a priority through plan implementation, San Jose's improvements met some pushback from the community. In an ABC news story on the bollards installed to protect new bike lanes reporters described confusion from both drivers and bikers on the significance of new bollards and lane markings. While some cyclists interviewed in April of 2019 saw the changes as an improvement, others viewed the change as confusing and poorly publicized (Castillo 2019). San Jose has received positive press for its approach to applying relatively fast and cheap temporary infrastructure changes such as plastic bollards and paint; Streetsblog, an online news source that focuses on reducing dependence on cars and enhancing alternative modes of transportation, lauded San Jose's approach to deploying new infrastructure, describing it as a way to improve safety without being cost prohibitive (Rudick 2019).

Portland Pedestrian Plan

Background

Portland's Citywide Pedestrian Plan, or PedPDX, is a comprehensive plan that assesses Portland, Oregon's pedestrian networks and plans for improvements to ensure that "walking is a safe, accessible and attractive experience for everyone in Portland" (PedPDX, 2019). Portland is a

mid-sized city of 653,115 residents. The population is 70% White alone, 6% Black or African American, 8% Asian, and 9% Hispanic or Latino. (US Census Bureau ACS, 2018), and the plan covers the pedestrian network of the entire city. The city first released a pedestrian plan in 1998, becoming one of the first cities to do so. The PedPDX introduction emphasizes Portland's existing reputation for walkability and the city's emphasis on "pedestrian first" transportation strategy, but presents high traffic fatality rates for pedestrians in the city as a key driver for the planning effort. As an update to the 1998 plan, PedPDX adds safety and equity as considerations, and updates the pedestrian strategy to align with city, state and regional transportation plans. The PedPDX plan defines four goals at its outset: to make Portland's pedestrian environment equitable and inclusive, to make walking in Portland safe and secure for everyone, to provide a comfortable and inviting pedestrian network, and to increase walking as a way to increase the overall health of residents and to benefit the environment. PedPDX also defines objectives for its plan, the first of which is to prioritize investment in areas of the city that have faced the greatest historic under-investment, and areas that have predominantly under-served populations in an effort to reduce disparities in pedestrian access. While equity is not the framework around which the plan is built, it does feature prominently in the goals and objectives that drive the plan and the planning process.

Community Engagement

The Portland Bureau of Transportation's (PBOT) outreach process began in 2017 with a city-wide survey to determine residents' needs and priorities for walking in the city. The survey was available in five languages and responses were collected both online and in person. The planning team widely advertised and distributed the survey, incentivizing responses through the chance to win

small prizes. Staff also promoted participation through in-person outreach events and youth engagement activities with high school students. These efforts resulted in 5,405 survey results and 2,088 written comments. When the demographics of survey respondents were compared with city-wide demographics, the PBOT team found that there was an outsized number of responses from Portland's white residents, and only 2% of survey respondents identified as Black compared to the 6% of the population that identifies as such. To gain more insight from Portland's Black community, the city hosted two focus groups to more intentionally elevate the voices of Black Portlanders. The city made an effort to create spaces that were welcoming and empowering for Black Portlanders, and sought both participation in the city wide survey and a deeper and more nuanced understanding of participants' experience as Black pedestrians. Focus groups were led by Black City of Portland Staff, and the city partnered with active community organizations to extend invitations to community members. Events were held at Black-owned/operated community spaces and catered by Black-owned businesses, and participants received gift cards to grocery stores or Black-owned restaurants as a token of appreciation for their time and participation. The city recorded survey responses, feedback and experiences of Black Portland residents and produced a report entitled "Walking While Black" that is publicly available as an appendix to the PedPDX plan.

The city also conducted targeted outreach with Portlanders with a variety of disabilities, and worked closely with a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and a Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The CAC was formed by the city at the outset of the planning process. Community members submitted applications which were reviewed by city staff members with selection criteria to maximize demographic and geographic diversity, and prioritize those who had not been involved in prior engagement efforts. The city also partnered with the University of Oregon School of

Journalism and Communication to elevate the range and diversity of needs that Portland residents represent. Students from the University worked closely with Portland residents to create short videos that profile their needs and describe where they see room for improvement in the pedestrian network.

Analysis

As another recent city-wide planning process with a focus on equity, Portland's PedPDX plan provides a valuable counter-example to deepen our understanding of Oakland's participatory strategies. Portland's plan pairs a focus on equity with a strong focus on pedestrian safety. Portland's main outreach tool at the outset of the planning process was a survey. While a survey is a traditional method that does little to empower disadvantaged communities and increase equity in the planning process, it can provide valuable large scale information about . However the introduction of the Walking While Black focus group sessions represented an effort by the planning team to amplify the voices of the Black community in Portland. The report released by the PBOT summarizing the Walking While Black outreach effort states that describes how the focus group results will influence not just the PedPDX plan itself, but also the city's overall commitment to addressing racial inequities. The report also acknowledges the historic institutional inequities that Black Portlanders have faced, as well as the cities role in them. The Walking While Black focus group demonstrates a way in which the in depth equity-focused outreach employed by the Oakland team could be scaled and integrated into different types of planning processes. While the focus group does not provide all of the same results and benefits as working closely with community groups throughout the process,

it provides an avenue to understand and amplify the perspectives of particular communities in the planning process.

Although the PBOT team made an effort to adapt the outreach process to focus more directly on the experiences of Black Portlanders due to a lack of representative survey responses, the plan does not address that same lack among Latinx identifying Portlanders. While 10% of the Portland population identifies as Latinx, only 5% of survey respondents identify as such. While Portland's Latinx population may not have faced the same historical discrimination as its Black community (Semuels 2016), but Latinx Oregonians have lower incomes and higher poverty rates than white Oregonians and have faced exploitation and political barriers throughout Portland's history (Oregon Community Foundation 2016, Curry-Stevens et al 2012). If the city hopes to create an equitable planning process, the Latinx community should be an important voice in the planning of the city as well. By engaging diverse community groups throughout the planning process, the Oakland DOT was able to not only hear the voices of traditionally disadvantaged groups, but also to build lasting and meaningful connections with community groups and to increase community investment in the planning process and the resulting infrastructural improvements. The PedPDX team worked hard to reach disadvantaged groups in the planning process as well, with a focus on Black Portlanders and Portlanders with disabilities. While that effort was successful in amplifying and incorporating the experiences of those groups in the planning process, the process did not engage residents and community groups at the same scale as Oakland. The PedPDX plan's engagement strategy presents an alternative and less in-depth approach to equity planning that has an effect on the plan and the communities reached, but may not provide the same lasting benefits and meaningful connections as the Oakland DOT's process.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Discussion

Across the three equity-driven planning processes reviewed, several common factors contributed to the plans' successes. Internal support from the city governments leading the outreach processes was important to creating equity-driven processes and planning teams. The continued adaptability of those teams allowed them to continue to pursue equity throughout the process. Trust building with communities through acknowledgment of past injustices and clear communication throughout the process allowed city governments to build connections with community organizations and the communities they represent. Partnerships with community organizations allowed the planning teams to build relationships with and amplify the experiences of disadvantaged communities. Supporting all of this work, robust community surveying and analyses of existing conditions provided a starting point for the planning process, and a crucial baseline to compare communities' experiences against.

The biggest factor in a team's ability to successfully conduct equity focused outreach was the city's internal governmental support and motivation for equity driven planning. In Oakland this internal support manifested in a variety of ways including the willingness of city staff to devote a large amount of time and personal resources to the planning effort. In addition the support of the Director of OakDOT and the city's DRE empowered the planners to focus the planning process on equity from the outset, and to experiment with new methods of conducting outreach. In Portland, a history of integrating equity into the planning process prepared the planning team to take on the PedPDX plan with an equity focus (Bates, Krumholz 2019). Internal support also gave the team the ability and motivation to change the outreach process in real time to include targeted outreach to Portland's Black community. San Jose's support for equity focused planning allowed the City to

incorporate community organization based outreach into their planning process, moving beyond traditional modes of outreach.

Along with the planning team's support for the pursuit of equity in the planning process, the adaptability of the planning team throughout the process was key to successfully executing a robust equity-based planning process. Most cities in the US have deep inequities and little experience with planning-based attempts to improve them. Cities are new to equity planning, and many residents are distrustful of city government after decades of neglect and disinvestment. In order to bridge those gaps, cities and communities need to work together to build new paradigms for planning and engagement. This cannot be done without cities being willing to adapt their planning processes based on community feedback and experience. Without this flexibility, Portland would not have been able to gain insight into ways that the Black community experiences pedestrianism. The Oakland team also cited adaptability as being a key factor in handing over outreach events to community organizations. The Oakland team approached the process without experience working with community groups as outreach consultants, and continued to adapt to the model throughout the process while learning what the community partners needed most from the city.

In order to adapt planning processes to meet community needs, the case studies explored in this research demonstrate that planners must be willing to deviate from existing outreach models as a project evolves. Each planning project presents a unique problem with a unique set of stakeholders. While planners must begin the process with a framework and goals for the outreach and engagement process, being able to effectively listen and adapt to community needs is an important factor in a planning process's ability to understand those needs and represent them in a final planning document or policy. For a planning effort like the Let's Bike Oakland plan that had a strong focus

on working directly with community organizations to connect with community members, this flexibility might manifest as it did in Oakland through changing the way the city's team supports the community organizations or what types of events are hosted during the process. For a planning effort that is more focused on city-wide scale outreach such as surveying or pop-up outreach events, flexibility might lead to a more focused outreach effort with a community that is underrepresented by city-wide efforts, such as Portland's PedPDX 'Walking While Black' focus group. In any scenario, having the flexibility to tailor the outreach process towards groups that are historically underserved or underrepresented should lead to more representative and equitable plans and policies.

Oakland's community outreach based process especially highlighted the need for integrating trust building into the process of working closely with community partners. While all cities don't share the same history, most cities in the US excluded people of color through either formal or informal segregation and as a result many cities have populations that have not received governmental support for decades (Jackson 1985). In Oakland, this disinvestment has affected East Oakland and West Oakland, areas that were historically redlined and today have higher populations of non-white residents and lower incomes than the Oakland hills (Social Explorer / ACS, 2016). In order to successfully collaborate with community groups and residents in these areas, OakDOT began its outreach process by working to build trust with community organizations and residents. In this context, building trust means convincing residents that the city would both understand and include community feedback in the final plan, and that the city would work to implement the plan to the benefit of the community. Only once the city builds this kind of trust with communities will they be able to truly engage residents and gain insights about the community's wants and needs. When communities trust that their input will be heard and valued, it encourages them to share and

invest more in the plan, encouraging a sense of ownership and investment on the side of the community members. This sense of ownership can be important to the planning process, but it can also help to ensure that when the plan is implemented and physical changes are made to the built environment, the community will use, protect and value those changes. In this way, building trust in the planning process can serve to enrich not only the outreach and engagement, but also the final implementation of the plan.

In order to increase trust and create an open dialogue, the City of Oakland used a variety of strategies to connect with the communities of East and West Oakland. Firstly, the City took time at initial meetings to acknowledge past disinvestment in these communities. The city listened and responded to the community's needs, made staff widely available, and worked to begin implementing community backed projects in the plan concurrent with the planning process. These efforts combined with the availability of the planning staff promoted the community's ownership over the plan and investment in its success. However, despite all of the work done by the city, implementation of the plan will be key in keeping that sense of trust and ownership. At a panel event with community leaders and the OakDOT project manager following the release of the plan, Baybe Champ, a member of The Original Scaper Bike Team, described his ongoing distrust of the City's commitments in the plan: "My point of view is okay, let's make the changes, but I'm going to hold [the City] accountable ... I have trust issues and the best way for me to get over them is through execution." (Rudick 2019). Even with the efforts of the OakDOT team, members of the community groups that worked with the city remain hesitant to trust the City's plans. Without the City putting in the effort that it did up front, the planning team would have failed to engage community members and lost the opportunity to ensure that their voices were heard in the planning process.

In the same vein as building trust with communities, The Let's Bike Oakland outreach process provides an example of how cities can work closely with existing community organizations to create a more equitable process and outcome. In Oakland, the planning team brought on community groups as paid consultants to conduct much of the outreach themselves, gaining insight into community needs while at the same time building up the capacity of community organizations and creating connections between community and government. The San Jose team used a similar model to engage community groups in the planning of outreach events, and the Portland team collaborated with community groups to plan targeted events to engage the Black community in Portland. In each of the planning processes, working with community groups to plan events that could best connect the city and its residents, especially its vulnerable residents, was an important part of focusing the processes on equity.

Although not strictly an outreach strategy, conducting a robust analysis of existing conditions was an important part of the Let's Bike Oakland planning process. According to a member of the Alta Planning team, having an understanding of the current bike network allowed the planners to work with the community to find gaps in the data, such as underreporting of bike accidents in areas where relationships with the police are more negative. It also allowed the community to feel heard and validated in their experiences. The Oakland plan highlights the disproportionate number of citations issued to Black bicyclists when compared to the percentage of Black residents in several Oakland neighborhoods, putting a number to the experience that Black residents had been feeling. More on the outreach side, surveying large numbers of residents allowed each of the outreach processes discussed in this research to gain a baseline understanding of how residents used the existing infrastructure, and what changes they wanted to see. In Portland the

outreach team made an effort to bring the survey to a variety of communities, hosting outreach events around the survey. Surveying was an important tool to learn about what Portlanders wanted out of their pedestrian network, but it was also a way to learn about which populations were participating in the planning process, and which populations were not being heard. Collecting and representing data on the current conditions in a city provides an important baseline for a planning process to build on, as well as insight on who is engaged in the planning process and what their needs are.

This research has focused on the planning processes more than the resulting plans and implementation of those plans. Although implementation of the plan is an important outcome of the planning effort, I would argue that in cases like the Let's Bike Oakland plan, the connections that the process creates are a valuable outcome in itself. In Oakland, members of community groups and advocates within vulnerable communities hosted events that were attended by more traditional bike advocates and longtime members of the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). Connecting these two groups led to traditional bike advocates expanding their understanding of who rides bikes and therefore who their constituency is. Forging these connections also resulted in the addition of community advocates that were previously unrepresented to the BPAC as contributing members. The process also built trust and understanding between planners and community members, although the continuation of that trust may rest on when and how the plan is implemented in the community.

Overall, the Let's Bike Oakland Plan presents a powerful example of how a planning process can support and empower vulnerable communities and work towards a more equitable future for a city and its residents. When combined with insights from the San Jose Bike Plan 2025 and

Portland's PedPDX plan, the reflections from the Let's Bike Oakland plan have the potential to inform best practices in public engagement throughout the US, in bicycle planning and beyond. It is a promising sign that the Let's Bike Oakland plan and the efforts of the planners involved were formally recognized by the American Planning Association's 2020 awards, receiving a Silver Award for best practice in national planning. By recognizing and learning from the Oakland DOT's efforts, the planning community can begin to bring equity to the forefront of more planning processes throughout the US.

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