HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

The effects and impacts of regional planning grants on planning and equity in the Bay Area, the Puget Sound region, and the Twin Cities

Authors:

Juan Sebastian Arias
Samantha Beckerman
Joni Hirsch
Sara Draper Zivetz
Genise Choy
Dov Kadin
Colleen Kredell
Amy Martin
Joseph Poirier
Kristine Williams
James Yelen

Project Advisor:

Karen Chapple

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) was a grant program formed out of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, an interagency collaboration between HUD, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Transportation (DOT). The program was approved by Congress in 2010 and renewed in 2011 for a total of $250 million in appropriated funding. SCI awarded 74 grants to regions across the country to support planning efforts, with a focus on economic competitiveness, community revitalization, climate change, environmental damage, and public health. The grant program supported regions in creating an inclusive process that emphasized social equity and access to opportunity while coordinating strategies across historically 'siloed' sectors, such as housing, transportation, water and energy infrastructure, and land use planning. This report explores the planning process dynamics and outcomes of the grant in three metropolitan regions: the San Francisco Bay Area, the Puget Sound region, and the Minneapolis-Saint-Paul region.

The research team set out to determine what the catalytic effects and lasting impacts of HUD's Regional Planning Grants were in terms of breaking down silos across sectors, issue areas, planning verticals and jurisdictions, and strengthening regional relationships. Research was also collected on what effects and impacts the grants had in terms of promoting a greater regional attention to equity and in supporting and institutionalizing more equitable planning processes. Research was conducted between the months of January and May 2016 when 53 interviews with regional planners, municipal officials, non-profit workers, and members of community-based organizations were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed using Dedoose, a web-based qualitative data analysis platform.

The research shows that all three regions experienced various degrees of progress in furthering collaboration and incorporating equity into their planning practices. Varying degrees of engagement resulted in the incorporation of both urban and suburban perspectives in the Bay Area and Puget Sound regions. Along with Minneapolis-St. Paul, the Puget Sound was also successful in altering histor-

ical power dynamics to empower local community stakeholders. All regions reported some degree of difficulty in engaging the business sector (less so in Minneapolis-St. Paul) but it is clear that business entities require a different outreach strategy to ensure meaningful engagement.

All three regions also experienced progress in terms of incorporating true equity into the grant administration process. Minneapolis-St. Paul went the furthest and succeeded in institutionalizing equity in multiple spheres (new staff, departments, plans, and an advisory group explicitly tasked to focus on equity) but both the Bay Area and Puget Sound regions also made strides. While important work was accomplished and new relationships were indeed formed, all regions struggled to a degree with balancing the priorities of their region's urban, suburban, and rural communities. Overall progress was made toward advancing regional equity goals, but clear challenges remain, particularly in ensuring equitable planning outcomes continue despite the tensions that lie between local and regional priorities and the fact that robust funding for regional planning no longer exists.

This research brought two main lessons to light. First, for equity to be a central component of planning practice, equity advocates must be provided real means for meaningfully influencing decision-making processes. Second, to take advantage of the momentum created by comprehensive and collaborative planning efforts like these, it is important to have a post-grant plan in place. Processes or funding opportunities that provide avenues to help participants continue the work can help institutionalize shifts in planning conversations and perspectives. Further research is needed on the long-term impacts of this grant program on regional planning and equity.

Photo courtesy of Corridors of Opportunity Project

I. Introducing the Sustainable Communities Initiative

This report explores the planning process dynamics and outcomes of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) in three metropolitan regions: the San Francisco Bay Area, the Puget Sound region, and the Minneapolis-Saint-Paul region. Approved by Congress in 2010 and renewed in 2011 for a total of $250 million in appropriated funding, SCI was a grant program formed out of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, an interagency collaboration between HUD, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Transportation (DOT).

Unique in scope, SCI supported planning efforts in 143 regions across the country with the intention of fostering cross-sector, cross-jurisdictional planning processes that address social, environmental, and economic challenges. More specifically, 74 regional grants were awarded to tackle interconnected issues of economic competitiveness, community revitalization, climate change, environmental damage, and public health - all through an inclusive process emphasizing social equity and access to opportunity. Regions were organized as consortia of public, non-profit, and private sector entities and were required to consider and coordinate strategies across historically 'siloed' sectors, such as housing, transportation, water and energy infrastructure, and land use planning.

Other requirements for grantees included funding-matches, community engagement commitments, performance tracking, and demonstrated alignment with other HUD, DOT, and EPA programs and policies.

In this report, we assess the impact of SCI and the ways in which the grant influenced planning processes within participating regions. Specifically, we set out to determine the extent to which SCI fostered greater collaboration and alignment of future growth goals within regions. Through in-depth interviews with over 50 SCI participants across three metropolitan regions, our research team explored short and long-term impacts of the grant in (1) breaking down barriers to coordination and collaboration across jurisdictions and planning sectors, (2) promoting a greater attention to and understanding of social equity, and (3) institutionalizing equitable planning practices.

Interviewees included regional planners, municipal officials, non-profit workers, and members of community-based organizations of various sizes and issue-area focuses. Interviews covered topics ranging from specific organizations' roles within their SCI regional consortium to broader reflections on grant impacts within regional planning culture. All interviews were conducted in pairs and averaged around one hour in length. Researchers used a flexible interview guide that posed specific questions while leaving room to follow-up on new information and interesting anecdotes.

Table 1: Distribution of Interviews Across Sites & Sectors

	Regional Public Sector	Local Public Sector	Community Based Organizations	Large Nonprofits & Philanthropy	Business Sector	Other	Total
Bay Area	3	4	5	6	2	3	**23**
Twin Cities	4	3	4	4	1	2	**18**
Puget Sound Region	3	4	3	1	1	1	**13**
Total	**10**	**11**	**12**	**11**	**4**	**6**	**54**

To better understand the impetus for SCI, this report briefly contextualizes our work within the academic literature on collaborative planning processes, silo-busting, and cross-agency collaboration. The following section presents a brief examination of this context.

II. Understanding Regionalism & Regional Equity

Underlying the SCI program were a number of assumptions: namely, the need to address social equity and inclusion at the regional, rather than local, scale; to integrate land use, housing and transportation planning; and to work collaboratively. This literature review examines decades of academic debate related to both the purpose and execution of the SCI grant program.

A general premise of the SCI program was that regional planning in the United States suffers from 'siloing', or the separation of certain key jurisdictions, planning issues, or institutions to a point of dysfunction. This has become conventional wisdom among politicians, academics, planning practitioners, and public thought leaders alike.

Chief amongst relevant 'siloing' analysts is scholar and former Minnesota legislator Myron Orfield, who has produced a number of widely read works on the frustrated dynamics of jurisdictionally-siloed regions, which he terms 'metropolitics'. Orfield (1999, p.43) points out the tension between different levels of government: "central control versus local autonomy in federated systems is the central political dilemma in American history."

A second primary concern of SCI programming was to enhance consideration of social equity issues within regional planning processes. The logic underlying SCI - enabling a more inclusive, equitable regional planning table - was to both improve planning outcomes and ensure decisions are responsibly influenced by those bearing the eventual impacts.

Kania and Kramer (2011) explore this 'table setting,' arguing that goal and definitional alignment are instrumental to the success of addressing complex social ills within a diverse group of actors. This occurs through an intentional process of continuous communication, shared metrics, and mutually reinforcing activities known as *collective impact* (ibid). Mathur (2008) further stresses the importance of a clear purpose for stakeholder engagement. He describes this approach as an 'ethical requirement' which views engagement as an ongoing dialog that includes frequent reflection.The ethical requirement supports mutual learning among all stakeholders, particularly to empower constituencies that are often left out of decision making discussions (e.g. the public). By increasing the diversity of stakeholder voices, Mathur argues decisions will bear a greater share of social responsibility and will be more accountable to the needs of the public.

In a parallel thread of research that touches on SCI's inclusivity goals, Archon Fung (2006) echoes the importance of adding seats at the table, given the planning field's traditional domination by an expert class beholden to little outside deliberation. Planning often occurs in expert isolation, yet a stronger connection by planners to the people and places they serve results in more successful outcomes (Manzo & Perkins 2006). Taken together, these theorists support the SCI goal of making regional planning processes more inclusive.

Mathur's 'ethical requirement' for broader stakeholder inclusion is not without its critics, however. This type of stakeholder participation may serve only to deflect attention from what is an otherwise top-down decision-making process (Kaza 2006). It is naïve to assume a seat at the table automatically results in a socially preferable outcome (ibid.; Lester & Reckhow 2012).

Theorists have also developed metrics for the success of SCI silo-busting efforts. Dichotomizing outcomes into 'tangible' and 'intangible' benefits may help define and discern what initially seems immeasurable. Intangible benefits, in particular (which

can be understood as increased trust and stronger relationships), can produce indirect effects on planning efforts. Tangible outcomes of silo-busting could include the adoption of new policies or plans, legislation, or implementation strategies (Innes & Booher 1999). Examining both tangible and intangible benefits of SCI will contribute to an existing body of knowledge and could produce broadly applicable best practices.

A slightly more pragmatic corner of academic thought exists in leadership and incentive-based explanations for successful cross-sector collaboration. Of key importance is strong leadership that is able to define structures and governance mechanisms early in a collaborative process (Crosby & Bryson 2010). For the SCI specifically, collaboration may be most successful when consortium members "have a reason to stay at the table and negotiate" (Frick et al. 2015). In a sense, these lines of thinking validate underlying SCI assumptions of silo-busting outcomes, provided grantee consortiums have strong, integrative leadership and distinct, identifiable incentives.

In many respects, the academic literature reviewed here foreshadows collaboration and tensions expressed by interview subjects in this report. Concepts of epistemic communities, strong leadership figures, naïve process expectations, and the 'ethical requirement' all appear and are discussed in case study interviews. The episodes uncovered in this examination of SCI serve to both ground-truth existing ivory tower discourse and validate the importance of the regional planning conversation.

III. Background: The San Francisco Bay Area, the Puget Sound Region & the Twin Cities

This report analyzes SCI process and outcomes in three cases: the San Francisco Bay Area, Puget Sound region, and Twin Cities region. Empirical research explores where, when, and how the SCI grant program was successful in yielding positive outcomes with regard to equity and collaboration.

Research Methods Overview

In-depth research began in the Bay Area, where our UC Berkeley-based research team had ready access to grant participants, primary source documentation, and academic support. Our initial topics of interest consisted of the nature of collaborative relationships active during the grant execution, the role SCI funding played in those collaborations, their durability regional approaches to equity, lasting changes to planning culture, perceived successes, and program recommendations to HUD.

We contacted prospective interviewees first via e-mail to describe our research project, explain our interest in interviewing them specifically, and arrange a time and location to conduct the interview. In-person interviews were scheduled when feasible; phone interviews were conducted when in-person meetings were not possible. Two student researchers - one lead interviewer and one note taker - participated in each interview. We received permission to audio-record each interview and used these recordings to create partial or full transcriptions. After open coding preliminary interview transcriptions as a team, we developed a code book for coding and analyzing remaining interviews in Dedoose, a web-based qualitative data analysis platform. We then integrated additional SCI grantee regions into the analysis.

Early conversations with HUD administrators revealed that federal officials saw both the Puget Sound and Twin Cities regions as 'model' grantees, at least with respect to equity outcomes. Analysis of their regional demographic and institutional profiles revealed comparable levels of inequality, market strength, and non-profit capacity across these two regions and the Bay Area (see Figure 1 on page 9 for comparative metrics). By holding these constant, research could delve deeper into the variation in grant execution processes in the three regions, asking, in effect: If market dynamics and community capacity were essentially the same, why did their outcomes differ? A key intention of this analytical deep dive was to uncover experiences that may have shaped

outcomes and perceptions of success differently in the three regions. Across the three regions, we interviewed a total of 53 key individuals, which can be found listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Interviewee Organizations by Region

San Francisco Interviewee Organizations		
Association of Bay Area Governments	City & County of San Francisco	Peninsula Interfaith Action
Bay Area Council†	City of San Jose	San Francisco Foundation†
California Housing Partnership Corporation	City of Vallejo	San Mateo County Union Community Alliance
California State Controller's Office*	East Bay Housing Organizations	SPUR
Causa Justa :: Just Cause	Greenbelt Alliance	University of California, Berkeley
Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy	Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County	Urban Habitat
City of Oakland	Metropolitan Transportation Commission*†	
Puget Sound Organizations		
Capitol Hill Housing	HomeSight	Puget Sound Sage
El Centro de la Raza	Housing Consortium of Everett & Snohomish County	SCIpda
City of Seattle†	Impact Capital	University of Washington Transportation Services
City of Tacoma	Puget Sound Regional Council†	
Minneapolis-St. Paul Organizations		
Alliance for Metropolitan Stability†	McKnight Foundation	Ramsey County
Central Corridor Business Resources Collaborative	Metropolitan Council†	Twin Cities LISC
City of Minneapolis	Metro Transit	University of Minnesota†
City of St. Paul	Minnesota Philanthropy Partners†	Wilder Research
Greater MSP	Nexus Community Partners	

* Phone interview (one of two interviews in the case of MTC).

†Two or more individuals interviewed from entity.

Four student researchers travelled to the Puget Sound region to conduct interviews in person, with one pair travelling in mid-March and another pair travelling in early April. Five student researchers went to the Minneapolis-St. Paul region in teams of two and three, travelling for similar dates as the Puget Sound teams. This two-phased interview process allowed those travelling in April to learn from and follow-up on findings in the March interviews. We modified and refined interview topics and our

code book after testing methods on the Bay Area case. Modifications were based on what we believed would be most interesting and applicable across all three regions, resulting in thematic emphases on equity, collaboration, and planning culture.

Although this report's analysis is framed primarily by theme (as opposed to by region), we provide below brief context for regional planning in each case study area in order to understand the arenas in which these three SCI grants were executed.

Figure 1: Demographic Metrics Across Regions
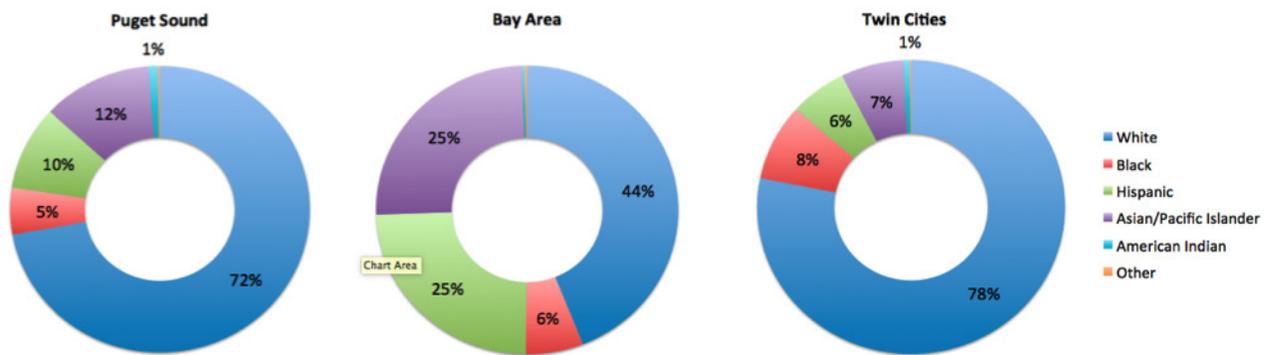
San Francisco Bay Area

The San Francisco Bay Area's 2012-2014 SCI program, the Regional Prosperity Plan (RPP), was led by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). MTC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, home to about 7.65 million residents. MTC partnered with the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Bay Area's Council of Governments, to execute the grant.

The RPP organizational structure was originally intended to function with one high-level steering committee and two subcommittees: the Economic Prosperity Working Group and the Housing Working Group. Both subcommittees were meant to focus their work on addressing income inequality and other disparities in the region's poorest communities. By the time funding was in place, a third working group, the Equity Collaborative, had been incorporated. The

original RPP grant application identified four main areas of focus: limited opportunities for lower-income workers, unaffordability of housing for the regional workforce, spatial mismatch between housing and jobs, and gentrification and displacement pressure. To address these needs, the RPP focused on developing an Economic Prosperity Strategy to understand and expand opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals. The RPP also focused on supporting and financing community-based organization (CBO)-led pilot projects aimed at addressing economic and housing disparities.

Puget Sound Region

The Puget Sound region's 2011-2013 SCI grant program, called Growing Transit Communities (GTC), was based on integrating regional transportation and land use planning. The region's MPO, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), was the lead consortium member, host organization, and staffer for GTC. The grant was initially catalyzed by conversations between the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and PSRC, and later supported by all 18 members of the Central Puget Sound Sustainable Communities Consortium. GTC was meant to serve the Central Puget Sound region of approximately 3.7 million residents and over 6,300 square miles.

The central goal of GTC was to "overcome key implementation challenges of VISION 2040" - the region's long-range plan for transit-oriented development and equitable access to opportunity. VISION 2040[1] is based primarily on a $15 billion transit expansion plan intended to help the region grow in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner.

Photo courtesy of San Francisco Regional Propserity Plan Fact Sheet

Minneapolis-Saint Paul

The Metropolitan Council (Met Council) is the seven-county regional government serving the nearly three million residents of the Twin Cities region. Met Council was the consortium lead for the region's 2011-2013 Corridors of Opportunity (CoO) SCI grant. The CoO work "focused on accelerating the build-out of the region's transit system while promoting adjacent development that advances economic vitality and benefits people of all incomes and backgrounds."[2] The grant execution was well-coordinated with transit officials, given the region's transit authority, Metro Transit, is an operating division of Met Council.

CoO was conceived of and implemented within a local political climate committed to collaboration and supportive of equity goals, but with a history of exclusion of minority voices in public infrastructure decisions and development.[3] In addition to the five million-dollar HUD SCI investment, the Twin Cities region also received $19.1 million in grants and loans from Living Cities' 2010 Integration Initiative.[4] This SCI-concurrent national philanthropic investment provided technical assistance and more funding for implementation in the region.

2   http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org/about/corridors-opportunity-partnership-regional-opportunity
3   In 2005, Chris Coleman defeated the incumbent Saint Paul mayor and, together with Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, helped promote a new period of collaboration between the historically competitive cities. The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, made up of local and national funders, then formed in 2007 to invest in and support the Central Corridor light rail line and its corridor-wide benefits, further establishing a collaborative regional culture. In 2010, Minnesota elected Democrat Governor Mark Dayton, who, in turn, appointed a more left-leaning Met Council in 2011. For more, see http://www.funderscollaborative.org/about-us.
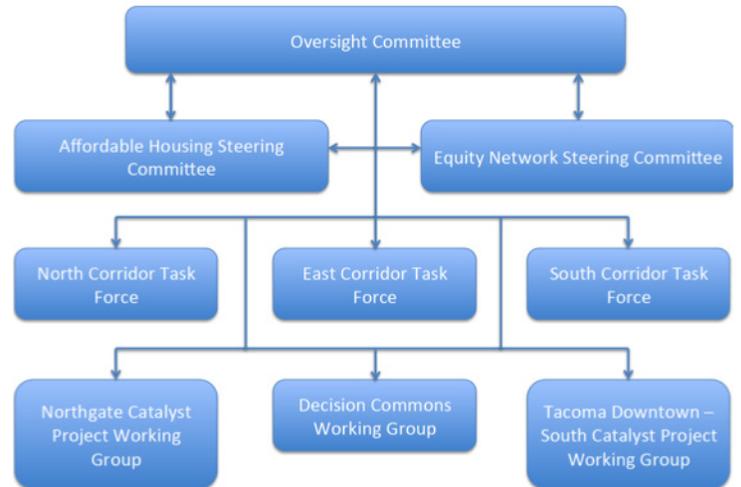4   https://www.livingcities.org/work/the-integration-initiative/about

1   PSRC WARIP0042-10 Final Report, September 16, 2014. Page 1.

Figure 2: Regional Prosperity Plan (Bay Area) Organizational Structure
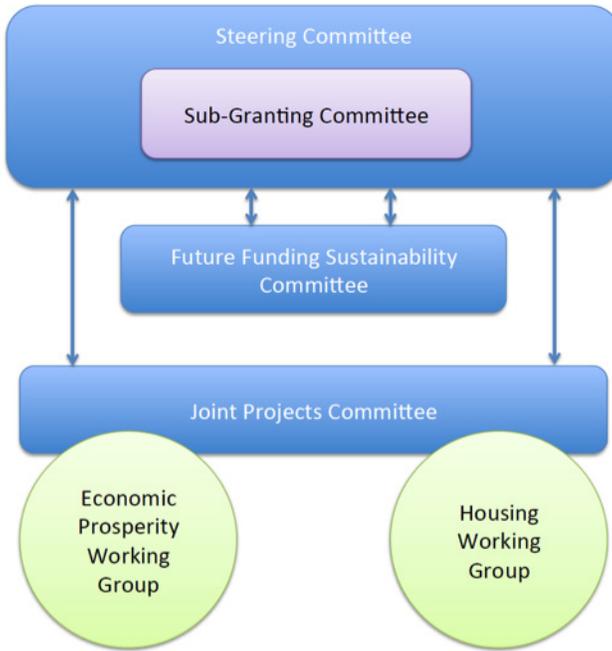
Figure 3: Growing Transit Communities (Puget Sound Region) Organizational Structure

Figure 4: Corridors of Opportunity (Twin Cities) Organizational Structure

IV. Analytic Themes: Equity, Collaboration & Planning Culture

The following analysis reflects four broad themes in the SCI process that were salient across case study sites:

1. The nature and significance of equity outcomes;

2. The nature and significance of stakeholder engagement;

3. The jurisdictional dynamics at play; and

4. The lasting impacts and institutionalization of the process on regional planning culture.

1. Regional Approaches to Equity

Equity played a critical role in the overall SCI grant process across all of our case study sites. This is likely due to a national backdrop of recession and generally widening socioeconomic gaps, and also because of equity's centrality in HUD's SCI notification of funding availability (NOFA). Key context factors differed across regions, however. Each case study site was home to different pre-existing equity agendas, different stakeholders (this report addresses MPOs, specifically), and different forms and definitions of the equity concept. The following sections highlight the approach MPOs and SCI consortia took to addressing equity (i.e. whether, how, and by whom it was included in the governance structures formed by the grant); the way regions defined and discussed equity; and equity policy, program, and practice outcomes.

Equity & MPOs

Although the role of the MPO in the grant process differed across the three case study regions, there was a consistency in how the regional planning agencies approached equity. All three MPOs grappled with the issue of equity in both the grant process and outcomes, but each approached and embraced equity differently and to varying extents. For example, one MPO maintained tight control over the the grant process and equity conversations while another MPO shared significant power with local community groups.

In the Bay Area, some CBOs argued that equity had not historically been a key component of MTC's work, and if the goal of the grant was to truly advance regional equity, MTC should never have been in the position of leading the charge. Similarly, some CBOs lamented that MTC did not embrace equity-focused organizations more fully in the proposal and implementation of the grant, resulting in an inadequate incorporation of equity issues. One CBO worker described this feeling: "My sense of it was that…it was never an intention of the regional agency at the highest level to take seriously that this was a process that was going to produce a shift in terms of how the regional agency thought, acted, reacted, and invested in equity." Others, particularly from the regional agencies, indicated that some progress was made. At the very least, the grant certainly engaged MTC and other agencies in a common conversation around equity.

> "I think equity, for whatever reason, is a hard topic to talk about. I think what one of the really huge parts of the grant is that it created a formal space and legitimacy through which this conversation could occur…It allowed the conversation to occur and it allowed for equity to become an increasing core component of what agencies are either talking about or are going to be implementing. MTC is beginning to have that as a key component…"
>
> (Bay Area Regional Agency Employee)

There were similarly mixed impressions of PSRC's embrace of equity in the Puget Sound region. A number of GTC participants believed that PSRC staff gained a broader understanding of equity by leading and participating in the GTC grant program. PSRC staff themselves, in an interview, echoed this sentiment: "We had an equity training...here at the agency today. I think it's...an outcome. So, certainly, a reorientation internally that grew out of that, that interaction outside of our usual silos."

Other participants, however, disagreed that concerns of equity genuinely penetrated PSRC's organizational ethos, claiming that the agency's tight control over the GTC process produced expected status quo outcomes:

> *"For these kinds of big planning initiatives, how you set it up will almost always dictate what you end up with. So, if you set up a process whereby the information and the analysis is coming from highly-technical specialists, they have the power - they will have the power in how you define the problem and how you define the solution at the end of the day...to really put equity at the center of this, required a very different approach than PSRC took."*

> (Puget Sound Region CBO Worker)

In the Twin Cities, on the other hand, it was generally agreed that equity was given its due attention. The equity dialogue was primarily focused on and realized through community engagement. The CET continues to meet after CoO came to a close; they plan to wrap-up their work in 2016, following the build-up of capacity at local CBOs. One CET member noted the completion of the Team's goals as the reason for the group's wind-down: "We have agreements and partnerships that have agreed to sunset - and it was time. The goal for us was not how we thrive, but our partners and grantees thrive. Some have turned into full-fledged organizations that have been able to do their own thing now."

Equity in the Consortium

Consortia across all case study regions actively incorporated equity into their governance structures and missions. The inclusion of equity as a central consideration in each regional collaboration was likely influenced by HUD's SCI NOFA guidelines, but it was also further shaped by local dynamics.

Incorporation of Community Groups as Partners

In the Twin Cities, for example, addressing racial disparities in the region was a foundational component of their SCI grant application. One Twin Cities government representative described this concern: "Equity was a big element of everything from the beginning. The policy board, the big group went out of their way to incorporate equity and their definition of equity."

Similarly, an equity focus materialized relatively early on in the Puget Sound region, largely due to the broad inclusion of CBOs early on in the process. The experience in the Bay Area differed slightly: Although the grant application was centered on the equity issues of housing and economic opportunity, several community advocates did not feel they were adequately involved in the early-stage shaping of the grant. It was not until later in the consortium process that an equity-specific working group emerged.

These varying experiences reflect the timing with which equity advocates or community organizations were incorporated into consortia. Puget Sound did this the earliest. There, many participants felt that the PSRC wasn't merely "checking boxes" in assembling the HUD SCI consortium. As one non-profit executive explained, "It was really beginning to - I think - bring the community voice into decision-making. And doing it, not at the program level, where everything is very designed - it was getting the community to the table in the formative part. Pre-programming. This is, this is revolutionary stuff."

13

The Twin Cities also involved community advocacy organizations in planning the grant, though they were brought into the fold on the tail end of the application process.

Equity Work Groups & Committees

Each region took a slightly different approach to incorporating equity into their consortium's regional planning activities. Whereas the Bay Area and Puget Sound regions formed separate working groups explicitly focused on equity, the Twin Cities region instead formed the CET, which spearheaded a thorough engagement and regranting process to a number of CBOs. The CET, in turn, convened a Community Engagement Steering Committee, comprised of local CBOs whose "whole purpose was to create a powerful voice for low-income communities and communities of color to secure community benefits for [the] regional transitway system" (CBO Worker, Twin Cities). Through this structure, the CET coordinated four rounds of grants to support local groups' involvement in planning processes.

The Twin Cities' laser-like focus on community engagement stands in contrast to the other case study regions. Even after the consortium added the separate equity-focused working group, its exact charge was not always clear, even to some of its participants:

"That was really confusing, I have to say. I chaired that group and I was like, I don't know what we're supposed to do here. I don't think I understood fully that it was an add-on, because people recognized equity wasn't really being addressed well enough through the other lenses…I didn't realize until way later that it was a group that had been added on because of this critique."

(Bay Area CBO Director)

Much like the Bay Area, the Puget Sound region established a separate body charged with an equity directive. There, many of the grassroots and community-based organizations involved in the grant application process eventually formed the Regional Equity Network (REN), a major sub-committee of the GTC effort. REN's primary role was coordinating and funding the community engagement process through a sub-grant program and acting as a "convener and connector of a lot of these regional community and sub-regional efforts" (Puget Sound Region Government Official). This effort was widely viewed as a success, in that it resourced community participation and helped frame how other components of the GTC understood and addressed equity issues.

While the REN in Puget Sound and the CET in the Twin Cities were widely seen as successful, the Equity Collaborative in the Bay Area was not generally viewed in as positive a light. A common criticism of the group was that "it was really [funding] cool and interesting stuff, but it was really hard to tell what it all added up to" (Bay Area CBO Worker and Equity Collaborative Member). Aside from lacking coherent purpose, the Collaborative's separation from other working groups drew further criticism. A CBO executive from the Bay Area described: "Equity did kind of get pigeon-holed a little bit into the equity work group…equity advocates got kind of siloed in there."

On the other hand, some saw value in the Bay Area's approach. One participant felt it created a safe space

for more meaningful equity conversations to occur, instead of being relegated to the margins of other working groups. An executive of a large non-profit shared: "I think the strategy of building up equity-centered space is helpful, because people feel they can come into that space and talk about what their communities truly need, what they're hearing more openly." This perspective valued a separate equity space as necessary to make equity an issue equal in importance to other 'traditional' issue areas.

Diverse Representation in Process

The diversity of each case study region's SCI grant board membership also emerged in the Puget Sound and Twin Cities regions as important to promoting greater equity in the consortia. In both cases, the inclusion of people of color at the senior governance level was widely seen as a positive, equitable step forward. In the Puget Sound region, the Oversight Committee had a person of color on the board from the start of the grant. In the Twin Cities, a close examination of the demographics of the Policy Board after the first year revealed a lack of diversity, which led to the inclusion of additional individuals, such as the African-American Deputy Mayor of St. Paul. Similar conversations did not seem to surface in the Bay Area.[5]

Photo courtesy of Corridors of Opportunity Project

_____

5   It's worth noting that several interviewees raised concerns about diversity on leadership committees not being equated with regional equity success. Stakeholders in both Twin Cities and Puget Sound regions warned about efforts to promote equity stopping at tokenism and as substandard proxies for full community involvement.

Equity Narratives & Definitions

The nature of equity-based discourse, as well as new definitions that emerged from the grant process, varied considerably across case studies. In each region, interviewees described the discussion and language used with regard to equity as evolving over the course of the grant. The lens through which equity was framed, however, differed between regions; it ranged from racial, access to opportunity, to displacement perspectives - and a shared definition was not always achieved.

In the Twin Cities, the initiative supported a robust and nuanced conversation around inequities, despite the lack of a dedicated equity-oriented subcommittee. Numerous participants cited increasing comfort with discussing equity issues among consortium members and felt that such considerations had been ingrained in regional planning dialogue by the end of the Corridors of Opportunity process. Producing a broadly shared definition, however, continues to be a challenge. As one Twin Cities municipal official put it: "I don't know that the region is comfortable with a definition [of equity]. Certainly we worked really hard on it, staff and the Policy Board worked on it, and struggled and struggled and struggled. I don't know that we still have something the region would agree to or be able to tell you what it is."

Many interviewees from the Puget Sound region cited similar success regarding the degree to which dialogue about equity was elevated through the SCI process. However, in contrast to the Twin Cities, the Puget Sound's consortium made developing a working definition of equity an explicit goal. Through the creation of its Principles of Equitable Development document, the Regional Equity Network laid the foundation for a common understanding of equity for GTC participants and other actors in the region, especially those lacking prior familiarity. As one PSRC member explained: "When the Oversight Committee first began meeting, we brought that definition to them and said 'this is what we're talking about in terms of equitable development,' and everyone bought off on that definition."

Another member of the Regional Equity Network phrased it as such:

> "We had like a two-day retreat so that we as a subcommittee – and that was a big group – there were like 40 of us – and so we developed a definition of equity from a community perspective. And that was huge because that definition has become the fall-back definition for jurisdictions on equity, and I can't tell you how many meetings I've been in when people pop that definition up, and they're people not involved in GTC process and when they go to their equity slide, then I chuckle, and they'll be like: 'Well, why are you chuckling?' And I'll tell them, because I was in the room when this was created. And so it's amazing because it gave our region a common definition and understanding and a working definition for equity. Yeah, it was amazing. It was amazing to participate in."
>
> *(Member, Regional Equity Network)*

This contrasts starkly with the Bay Area consortium, where a commonly shared understanding of equity did not emerge. While some Bay Area participants appreciated the space created to discuss equity issues, most interviewees were not optimistic about motivating a meaningful shift in the dialogue. According to several participants from community-based organizations, much of the emphasis on equity was placed on residential displacement and improving conditions for low-wage workers, with specific references to race and ethnicity left out of the conversation. One foundation employee observed: "If you sit down and listen to the discussions people are having about housing, jobs, or economic development, there's very little discussion around race." This speaks to a potential narrowness in the scope of Bay Area equity conversations and to a reticence among some to confront racial issues head-on.

In the Twin Cities, equity was discussed in broader terms, primarily around racial disparities in educational achievement, employment, and other outcomes. As one regional agency employee pointed out: "[The newly appointed Met Council's] principles included that we needed to do things to address what is a pretty deep disparity in this region - we are an economically thriving region as a whole but not everyone has been beneficiaries of that. And that's gotten worse over the last 20 years."

To address these disparities, the idea of promoting 'shared prosperity' was repeatedly referenced among interviewees in the Twin Cities. As a participant from a regional transit agency put it, the consortium "look[ed] at the challenges we faced in shared prosperity, meaning equity in terms of employment, equity in terms of pay, equity in terms of opportunities for business development and business growth." Whereas Bay Area stakeholders appeared to talk about equity only in terms of displacement and low-wage work, the conversation in the Twin Cities centered on racial disparities and a vision of regional shared prosperity.

Similarly, in the Puget Sound region, a member of the REN framed equity in terms of capturing community benefits for current residents and raising awareness about cultural, residential and commercial displacement: "We can develop all these wonderful places but if we really don't see benefits accruing to the people that live there, that's not what we want to see." While preventing cultural and commercial displacement and retaining community benefits for long-time residents were mentioned in the Bay Area, these issues do not appear to have been addressed as deeply as they were in the Puget Sound region.

2. Stakeholder Engagement

The challenge of directing a diverse group of stakeholders – businesses, CBOs, government, academia, and regional leaders – was common across all regions studied in this report, with varying levels of successful engagement achieved in each location. This challenge was not unforeseen; a major tenet of HUD's SCI program was to invest in the creation of non-traditional partnerships and focus on integration and coordination of work across sectors that historically have not successfully collaborated. The different approaches that each MPO took in implementing the SCI grant and the extent to which equity was considered in their regional processes also influenced how the various stakeholders in each region were engaged.

Table 3: Stakeholder Engagement Summary Matrix

Stakeholder Group	San Francisco Bay Area	Puget Sound Region	Minneapolis-St. Paul
Community	Growing representation and influence; lack of institutionalization	Strong and institutionalized	Strong and institutionalized
Business	Weak engagement; lack of institutionalization	Weak engagement with big business; nominal engagement with small business	Growing representation and engagement; statewide resistance; mixed on small business

Business Engagement

Prior participation in regional planning processes heavily influenced the extent to which stakeholders were brought on board and meaningfully engaged. Those businesses or business groups (e.g., coalitions, chambers) that had a history of involvement in their respective region's transportation and land use policy discussions were more likely to have been partners in the SCI grant process.

With respect to the business community, existing regional actors helped set the stage for involvement. In Minneapolis-Saint Paul, the Itasca Project - an employer-led alliance that seeks to address regional economic issues in the region - was active and established before Corridors of Opportunity and already played an influential role in regional planning. Prior to the CoO process, Itasca members worked to generate political will among regional representatives in the state legislature to override a non-transit friendly governor's veto of a transportation spending bill.[6]

In the Puget Sound region, small business interests had a history of influencing regional planning. Local ethnic business coalitions had worked on transit development initiatives before re-engaging in Growing Transit Communities to ensure their concerns of displacement were heard. Businesses in the two regions may have played different roles and demonstrated different concerns, but because each stakeholder was previously active in regional planning processes, they were able to maintain a more successful engagement throughout their region's SCI grant.

Major employers and large business interests engaged minimally - and in some cases not at all - with the SCI process. According to interviewees across re-

---

6   Another example of Itasca's regional involvement is in the role it played in bringing attention to racial disparities in the region. In 2005, the Itasca Project partnered with the Brookings Institute to release Mind the Gap, a report detailing the racial and economic disparities in the Twin Cities region. The report served as a warning that these disparities must be reduced to protect Minneapolis-Saint Paul's regional economic competitiveness (http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2005/10/cities%20sohmer/20051027_mindthegap.pdf).

gions, these large business interests may have been willing to provide initial input to help inform the SCI process but were less willing to stay engaged unless there was a specific issue or item to respond to. As one regional planner from Seattle summarized: "They're [major businesses] only willing to engage at a certain level, over a certain period of time...they're willing to come to a meeting and react to something, and then go away and then come back again when the new thing is done."

While individual major employers and businesses may not have prioritized ongoing engagement, business coalitions and chambers of commerce were, in some cases, able to serve as a liaison to the SCI process on behalf of these interests. In the Twin Cities, the Itasca Project and local chambers of commerce both played this role successfully, while similar stakeholder groups in the Puget Sound region and Bay Area were less successfully engaged. Representatives from the Seattle Chamber of Commerce indicated that though the organization had the capacity to provide representation to the process, engagement was not prioritized for them. In the Bay Area, either San Francisco Planning + Urban Research or the Bay Area Council (BAC) could have played the sustained role of large business liaison but the latter only participated initially. Their participation was marked by political disagreement: According to the BAC, the organization had concerns with economic security policies being added to the engagement process and decided to cease engagement in the SCI initiative as a result. In both the Bay Area and Puget Sound regions where major business voices either chose not to participate or discontinue participation, other consortium members (particularly CBOs) expressed frustration with the business community's lack of willingness to collaborate.

Where big business engagement was absent, small businesses saw an opportunity to voice concerns stemming from prior transit development and regional planning processes. In the Bay Area, this small business voice was absent, but in the Puget Sound and Twin Cities regions, these stakeholders were slightly more engaged. In part, this variation in small business engagement reflects the nature of the SCI grant execution in each region. In the Bay Area, much of the small subgranting work was geographically dispersed throughout the region, whereas in the Twin Cities and Puget Sound regions, a majority of this work was focused around specific transit development.

The Twin Cities saw conflicting perspectives on the degree of success with which small businesses were brought into the process. While a few grant participants felt that there was a strong voice for small businesses at the regional table, several others noted that small businesses along the LRT corridors were hard to engage and unlikely to even be aware of the regional planning effort.

The Puget Sound region experienced similar small business engagement challenges. According to one small business coalition leader, local business owners could not directly engage with planning processes due to lack of capacity, language barriers, and lack of knowledge about the process. These small business voices were also skeptical of their potential to influence the planning process due to prior challenges with transit initiatives. One community representative described significant commercial displacement having occurred along a light rail construction corridor and felt a lack of higher-level concern for the shuttered establishments. Despite the best efforts of PSRC and the REN to sponsor small business engagement through small participatory grant awards, the local business community still felt outreach had not been substantial or effective enough.

Although the concerns of small and large businesses in these planning processes varied greatly, businesses of all sizes did not prioritize long-term regional planning processes. Although representative organizations such as business coalitions and chambers of commerce were able to play some role in informing discussions through a business lens, SCI grant participants across all three regions expressed an interest in seeing more direct engagement from the business community. For small businesses, the greatest effort may have been made in the Puget Sound region's

REN small grants program, which attempted to resource the engagement of small businesses in the greater planning process. For large business voices, the Twin Cities may have been most successful in substantively engaging such stakeholders, due in large part to an existing role that the business community has played in regional processes. Success in the Twin Cities was exemplified by Greater MSP - a regional economic development coalition that formed during the SCI grant. As the Twin Cities SCI consortium reached the end of its three-year tenure, Greater MSP was asked to co-chair a working group in the one-year extension of the region's collaborative table, Partnership for Regional Opportunity

Community Engagement

All three of the case study regions faced community skepticism and a historic lack of trust in regional planning institutions. These local conditions shaped how each SCI consortium was able to promote and institutionalize the deeper engagement of historically marginalized communities in their grant.

The Twin Cities faced its own unique brand of mistrust. One member of a local advocacy organization described the skepticism and local dynamics at the time the consortium was formed: "We had to overcome that - we had to persuade folks [that] this is a new Met Council, new leadership, a lot of possibilities and potential – but we had to get over this deep-seated suspicion."[7] Several interviewees in the

Bay Area similarly described the local environment as one mired in a distrust that existed between small and large CBOs as much as between local and regional entities.

Although all three regions attempted to assuage this skepticism and bring historically marginalized communities into the planning process, the Twin Cities and Puget Sound regions appeared to have done so more successfully than the Bay Area. In both of these regions, the SCI collaborative built specific mechanisms to ensure community voices were included in the governance structure.

In the Puget Sound region, this concentrated effort for community engagement took place within the Regional Equity Network, which was highly focused on engaging communities of color and immigrant communities. A broad array of stakeholders felt the REN played a crucial, successful role in organizing community engagement. Part of this success may have resulted from the decision to use an expert facilitator to equalize power dynamics in the consortium. As a member of the Equity Network described the process under the GTC facilitator: "...there was fair representation and even though there may have been more people at the table from Seattle/King County there was equal attention that was paid to all voices at the table."

The Twin Cities built a similarly robust infrastructure designed to give decision-making power to community members. There, the CET - comprised of three grassroots organizations that had previously not worked together - was explicitly tasked with forming a new robust community engagement model. The CET negotiated decision-making power over a grant-making budget and handed over that power to a Community Engagement Steering Committee of hyper-local community based organizations. This intentionality around sharing decision-making was repeatedly described as an attempt to disrupt existing power dynamics. One city government official

---

7   This suspicion in the Twin Cities is unsurprising given past regional experience with inequitable public investment. When light rail transit expansion was originally proposed, the predominantly African-American community of Rondo, previously bisected by the construction of highway I-94 in the 1950s-'60s, saw that construction of the new rail corridor would once again traverse their neighborhood without providing them access - there were no stations planned for Rondo. Beginning in 2007, the Stops for Us coalition fought for the neighborhood to receive access through the inclusion of three light rail stations. In 2010, their community organizing paid off: the FTA changed federal fund matching rules, de-emphasizing cost effectiveness in favor of livability, thereby

enabling construction of the three demanded stations. For more, see: www.metrostability.org/campaigns/article.php?sid=Stops_for_Us.

from the Twin Cities elaborated: "I wasn't on the community engagement team but I certainly know those parties and I was in the group that said we need to actually share power here, we need to give people money and we need to let them make the decisions."

Still, these efforts to build institutional mechanisms for community engagement in planning processes faced obstacles. One was the inaccessibility of technical planning jargon and its mystified processes. To varying extents, all case study regions attempted to overcome this challenge through specialized trainings. A Puget Sound region planner described this prong of the GTC strategy: "We did some capacity-building workshops and activities and peer to peer networking. [We] had some formal trainings and workshops - a 'Planning 101' series…goal wasn't to make everyone a planner but to help them understand where to influence the process." The other two case study regions conducted similar exercises.

Another challenge common to all case study regions was that of stakeholder capacity to participate, given limited resources. Each region addressed this issue through a different approach. The Bay Area directly resourced participation in the consortium through stipends to working group leadership, while the Puget Sound region and the Twin Cities established grant programs to resource participation. The slightly-more-targeted approach in the Twin Cities and Puget Sound region stand in contrast to the Bay Area experience. Although the RPP did have small grants programs associated with each of its workgroups, and while several interviewees did attest to the success of resourcing smaller community groups otherwise excluded from regional planning dialogues, these efforts do not seem to have added up to a comprehensive community engagement strategy. Grant-making decisions in the Bay Area were still seen with some skepticism. Interviews revealed a perception that the SCI grant dollars were a funding stream for those already at the table, suggesting that the tensions between smaller and larger advocacy and community groups remained.

Despite challenges, interviewees in all three regions felt that some progress had been made on the issue of improved community engagement. One success in the Bay Area, for example, was the enhanced connections made among local CBOs. Many interviewees mentioned that their organizations were able to establish relationships with new individuals and entities, with some instances of CBO-led projects or coalition efforts that have continued beyond the SCI engagement.

The impacts in the Twin Cities have been stronger and longer lasting. There, many interviewees felt that regional planning culture's approach to community engagement has been fundamentally shifted. As one city official told us: "There's a different expectation around what it's going to look like when good engagement is happening, that it's not going to be a bunch of white people and a microphone." In addition to changes to cultural norms and expectations, the Twin Cities also saw some institutionalized structural change:

> "The first task they set out was to establish regional standards on community engagement. It took them a long time and they got huge pushback from Met Council like: 'That's the gold standard and we don't do that here.' And, but, a couple years later… you know how each MPO is required to do a public engagement plan - [the process] ended up with them rewriting [it] in partnership with the community engagement steering committee...Now they apply it not just to transportation spending but also to all activities of the Met Council. That was a huge win."
>
> *(Twin Cities CBO Employee)*

3. Jurisdictional Dynamics

In addition to cross-sector collaboration, the SCI program brought together stakeholders from across jurisdictions to work on planning, equity, and development issues. Interviewees from all three case study regions spoke of the importance of and associated challenges with using different planning, political, and business solutions in different parts of the region to best address the specific planning needs of localities. All three case study regions also experienced the competing interests that plague local elected officials that are accountable to both local and regional constituencies.

Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration

> *"The thing I'm going to miss from a policy level is that there was a policy board made up of leadership from St. Paul, Minneapolis, Hennepin, Ramsey, and the Met Council. That, for the first time, our region was coordinating more on a regional level, versus competing on a regional level."*
>
> *(Executive Director of Twin Cities Advocacy Organization)*

All three regions seemed to find value in their ability to create unlikely grant partners in jurisdictions across the region. The three case study areas also valued the opportunity to engage with these jurisdictions despite having previously fought for different policies and outcomes based on local interests.

One Bay Area elected official commented that, rather than competing or fighting with one another, "the heated conversations within the steering committee in the various convenings I was in were healthy and respectful." Similarly, a GTC participant from Snohomish County in the Puget Sound region admitted that although "there were some really uncomfortable conversations with people", at the end of the day, they felt that PSRC took their concerns "to

heart". The same interviewee elaborated: "I think the same was true for Pierce County. So, I think that was the best outcome."

In the Twin Cities region, the two major municipalities of St. Paul and Minneapolis have a contentious history that can sometimes be characterized as combative, competitive, and distrustful. A local foundation worker admits: "St. Paul is the smaller of the two cities, it is the poorer of the two cities, it has the least corporations of the two cities, and the least amount of philanthropy that's invested in the two cities. So, it has an underdog syndrome, which is challenging, I think, for St. Paul." Several interviewees believed the SCI process substantially improved relationships between Minneapolis and St. Paul, as well amongst Hennepin County and Ramsey County (where the respective cities are located). A government employee from one of the municipalities said: "It was clear, at that point, that the region was hungry for the cities to quit fighting…I don't think that any of us guessed how powerful this would be."

The urban/regional distinction was also important in Minnesota. In the Twin Cities, the collaborative process began with only a single suburban mayor involved in the grant. A research foundation worker explains how the SCI program improved suburban representation:

> *"Clearly, the one suburban mayor was in no position to compete on an equal footing for oxygen in the room with the two big city mayors. So they had added a second one right around that time, shortly before or shortly after the end of second year, in order to give better voice and a fairer chance of participation."*
>
> *(Research Foundation Worker)*

Despite the effort to better incorporate suburban jurisdictions into the Corridors of Opportunity process, several interviewees explained that the representatives from these areas of the region never seemed

completely comfortable participating. One elected official reported:

> "The one disappointing thing in the Corridors of Opportunity was trying to get those suburban communities engaged. We had a number of different suburban mayors throughout the process, no one mayor committed. We had a number of suburban county commissioners that came and went. They never got fully engaged. It wasn't something they were comfortable with. And I think that even at some times it was stuff that they were adversarial to, they felt threatened."

On the other hand, the Bay Area and Puget Sound regions seemed more successful in engaging both core cities and suburban jurisdictions. "I think allowing some of our suburban communities with very little organizational capacity to be connected to some of the more urban neighborhoods where we have a higher concentration of community organizations was really helpful," a Bay Area regional planner told us, suggesting sharing and learning across geographies may have occurred. Similarly, a city employee in Seattle spoke of the grant's ability to not only spur peer-to-peer connections across the region but also to create a place for grantees to connect and learn from one another.

Different Policy Solutions for Different Jurisdictions

"Economic regions, whether it's Seattle or Minneapolis-St. Paul or San Francisco, are monolithic in terms of economy. They each have urban cores, suburban rings, and exurban and rural perimeters. And so the types of projects and then therefore the types of economic development tools and programs that are needed to stimulate the economy in these different areas can't be the same."

(Regional Agency Employee, Twin Cities)

One major challenge that arose from cross-jurisdictional collaboration was identifying and pursuing issues and strategies that would apply to the priorities of both core cities and suburban jurisdictions. In the realms of transportation, economic development, and affordable housing, the conversations taking place within the core cities did not always reflect the concerns of the suburbs. In some case study regions, representatives of outlying jurisdictions expressed the desire to be more involved in the grant process and in others they felt compelled to focus solely on local issues. Such divisions made it difficult to find common ground in pursuit of unified goals and sometimes, given the geographic distance and divergent issue areas, it simply didn't make sense to. Even when common goals were determined, the strategies and tools that were found to be most effective in urban areas were often not the same as what was needed in the outer rings.

Transportation-related divisions were particularly salient in the Bay Area and the Puget Sound region. A CBO worker described the tension in the Bay Area: "In the inner core, we're talking about more bus lines, more service on existing bus routes, connecting last mile connections between transit hubs and job centers" whereas in Contra Costa county, the conversation is "about Uber, and shuttle apps and rideshare mobile apps that would help with rideshares, those kinds of strategies which are much more diffuse. We tried to hear those ideas and incorporate them but

they're different." Transportation needs across the Puget Sound region are similarly diverse, yet the GTC process decided to focus on light rail expansion, despite the fact that not all parts of the region benefit immediately or at all. One GTC Oversight Committee member recalled:

"We have this constant argument about what are the cities that benefit from light rail, which are the cities that don't get it anytime soon, and all the cities that weren't getting it were like, 'no this isn't just about light rail, this is about bus, this is about ferry, this is about this big map."

(GTC Oversight Committe Member)

Not surprisingly, in the Puget Sound region, participants from Seattle felt that the focused effort on light rail galvanized the entire grant process, while those from outlying jurisdictions felt frustrated that the goals of the GTC weren't as relevant.

The GTC Regional Equity Network, for example, was set up to bring regional voices to the table. In effect, however, many of those voices did not have shared priorities. One local official described: "I think sometimes people had a hard time finding the common ground. Where it's like: 'Well, I'm a business owner in Othello and you operate a social service agency in Federal Way, which is 50 miles or 30 miles away.'"

The Twin Cities recognized this jurisdictional dissonance and created a 'submarket strategy' to better address the divergent needs of their core cities, suburban job centers, and rural areas. As a result, greater Minneapolis-St. Paul is now dedicated to using different models to address varied regional needs - particularly those related to creating jobs and attracting businesses and investment. Implementation of these submarket strategies is the goal for the next two years.

In the Bay Area, a CBO member noted that even where economic development tensions existed

between the core cities and the outer-ring suburbs such as Antioch, Vallejo, and Benicia, the conversations about how to address broad needs are taking place: "It's not like [suburbs] were left out of the process. They were engaged. They weren't always happy with all of the recommendations and we feel that tension in an ongoing way."

Some officials explained how outlying jurisdictions may have benefited from increased collaboration with core cities. Benefits were incurred through the building of new technical tools for suburban jurisdictions with less planning capacity and through pre-emptive experiences with issues (gentrification and displacement were noted as Bay Area examples) that may become more applicable to suburbs as regions grow.

The Incentives for Local Officials to Address Regional Needs

> "Ultimately, we can talk regionally but it all boils down to local politics, local considerations and that can never be forgotten. We can have all these regional aspirations but parochialism is ripe in this region."
>
> (CBO leader, Bay Area)

All three case study regions struggled with a lack of local incentive to act in the regional interest. Although regional governing bodies exist, much of the most influential land use decision-making occurs at a local level. Grantees described a generally tenuous relationship between local control and regional planning objectives. One Bay Area city planner put their opinion bluntly: "More and more of these issues are regional in nature and it's hard to address them purely at a local level." Another Bay Area planner elaborated: "That's the big problem. How do you get a local community to act against what they perceive to be their best interests?" In the Twin Cities, an elected official articulated the expectation on the part of constituencies to adhere to local rather than regional interests:

> "I was one of the main leads on the central corridor but it wasn't even touching my district. I would go back to my community and people would say 'Why are you working so hard on this when this is our district?' Because I truly believe this investment is going to impact you and what we need is for this investment to succeed so we can get the gold line to succeed for the east side because they're all connected, they all build on each other. Just having this line will impact you, it will impact my east side residents. That was always hard."

The comment below, along with others, highlights discrepancies between regional and local financial interests. In the Bay Area, one CBO interviewee described the following parallel tensions:

> "The nature of this economy right now is that every town is competing with every other town to get the big tech firm, biotech firm, whatever they think is going to generate a bigger tax base for them. They don't want housing. They don't want affordable housing. They don't want poor people here. There's a huge racial tone around that. It's not in their interest to do equitable development. It's not in their financial interest. Cities depend on their tax base and fiscalization of land to run their budgets…"
>
> (CBO Representative)

A further complication of regional planning objectives is the fact that the work of MPOs and similar agencies often falls on the shoulders of locally elected and, ultimately, locally accountable representatives. In Seattle, one planner interviewee discussed the complications of locally-minded regional decision making:

> *"[The PSRC board] is a very governmentally-driven organization. They're fundamentally accountable to their member organizations…They did the work technically extremely well but they're extremely beholden to their membership cities and very sensitive to the politics of their member cities. And so the work of the grant was mostly focused on trying to get everybody through that without having any major schism."*
>
> *(Seattle Planner)*

Some interviewees expressed feelings that, given the limitations noted above and existing regulatory frameworks, it may be unreasonable to expect local governing bodies to place regional priorities over local ones. One Bay Area nonprofit worker elaborated:

> *"Local decision-makers don't want their local decisions conditioned based on regional priorities. There's no political incentives for people to act at a regional level. They're elected by local populations. They get campaign donations by people who are interested in local issues. They come to a meeting where some advocates and increasingly more community groups come, and some Tea Party folks come and film the meetings and put it on the web. And they will put on this magical regional hat and we expect them, without sufficient political pressure, or without legal pressure or whatever, to act in a regional self-interest."*
>
> *(Bay Area nonprofit worker)*

4. Lasting Impacts & Institutionalization

Equity's role in regional governance and planning discourse, business and community engagement, and inter-jurisdictional regional dynamics all impacted regional planning agencies involved in the SCI grants. This final section discusses Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), their role in SCI grants, and lasting impacts on their culture and practices

While the MPOs for all three regions served as lead agencies of their respective SCI grants, each took a different approach to facilitating the process. The varying degrees and nature of MPO involvement across case study regions may have led to different outcomes in the institutionalization of SCI processes.

At one end of the spectrum, PSRC devoted substantial hours and maintained a tight grip on the execution of GTC. One Oversight Committee member described PSRC as "directly managing the entire process and they kept a really firm hand on it. They managed all those committees and they kept a pretty tight rein on the kind of communication...the oversight committees were organized by them and they were very scripted agendas." This control - which was seen in a positive light by some participants - was criticized by others as having negative effects on the process. One CBO participant was particularly frustrated with the tight PSRC grip:

> *"I went to a bunch of these meetings and it was so incredibly frustrating and frankly it was a waste of time to even go…In fact, I remember there was a group of us – the Equity Network folks, we met and went over some of the draft documents that came out like the typologies and stuff like that, and we had very concrete suggestions, like jobs need to be included here and jobs need to be included there, and they need to be good jobs. None of that made it into the final stuff. PSRC scrubbed all of it."*
>
> *(CBO Participant)*

A PSRC staff member remarked on the pros and cons of their agency's close control of GTC agendas: "Because we were doing all of that staff heavy lifting, it was a little bit of a challenge to maintain that large ship and engage with others...but we also see, I think, [it] really made sense for PSRC to provide that convening and just force that function role. But it was a bit of a trade-off."

On the other end of the spectrum, the Met Council developed an equity-focused, power-sharing structure, relinquishing much of its own decision-making power. The $720,000 provided to the community groups as a part of the SCI grant was distributed via a peer-review grant process. The CET, Policy Board, and the Met Council all shared power with the community member-staffed granting committee. One CET member described the novelty of this approach: "The Policy Board was really nervous about all of this. Are we going to have a final say in your granting process or not? ...the powers that be were very nervous about this. But to their credit they allowed us to move forward." Almost all interviewees in the Twin Cities highlighted this community engagement work as the major success of the SCI grant.

In the Bay Area, MTC seemed to play a primarily administrative role as the ultimate recipient and chief administrator of funds, as well as the body through which sub-grants were dispersed. Although MTC convened partners and controlled funding, it allowed each working group to function somewhat independently and did not push subgrantees to adhere to specific perspectives. Some interviewees described MTC staff as helpful to those involved in the grant, particularly with respect to completing reporting requirements.

Lasting Impacts on MPOs

"There are some really hopeful signs. MTC is now considering a new 10 million dollar investment in affordable homes near transit…A housing preservation fund coming out of MTC - that could be a great step forward. There's the second round of OBAG, and in a couple months there will be more talk about - staff proposal on how to incorporate housing affordability and displacement in criteria in OBAG - three hundred and fifty mil over five years to reward regions that are growing in sustainable and equitable ways."

(Bay Area Regional Planning Agency Employee)

Some interviewees felt that MTC commissioners are still not convinced there are issues of equity the agency needs to address. A non-profit member of the consortium noted: "We still had meetings six months ago where the commissioners were like, 'I'm not sure if displacement is really a problem outside of SF or Oakland. It's not really a regional problem…' I think that's a failure, to be honest." After participating in this grant, however, CBOs now have a more direct relationship with MTC and better understanding of how they can affect change within the agency to push for a greater future focus on equity. One CBO employee elaborated on this success:

"So, now we're in a moment where many more of the local equity groups are aware of the regional agencies…we are aware of what they do. We are aware of who they are. We are aware of where they're located. We understand their programs, their policies, etc. and so that is shifting and so as we understand that then we're able to do a better job sharing that kind of information with the folks who are impacted by the policies and decisions of the regional agencies. So we are now in a new period where there's beginning to be a much more of a direct engagement…"

26

A similar lack of institutional change was described in the Puget Sound region. Some GTC participants felt PSRC remained relatively unchanged in the aftermath of the GTC process. One interviewee called affordable housing work accomplished in GTC "spectacular work" but lamented that "a lot of this stuff has now gone onto the shelf and is just sitting there and that's unfortunate."

The same respondent lamented the lack of capacity that was directed towards GTC issues after the grant's formal conclusion: "What's really needed is for PSRC to have a staff person with capacity to come back to this, all this, and say these are priorities and we're devoting staff people to it."

Table 4: MPO Effects Summary Matrix

	San Francisco Bay Area	**Puget Sound**	**Minneapolis-St. Paul**
Role	Strong administrative role, weak leadership	Strong leadership, not collaborative	Strong leadership, but collaborative
Equity	Mixed, depends who you ask	Mixed, depends who you ask	Strong, power shared with equity-based community groups
Lasting Changes	Lack of institutionalized change, but procedural changes (e.g. increased planning awareness among CBOs)	Minimal institutionalized change	Many institutionalized changes

In contrast to the Bay Area and Puget Sound region cases, many Twin Cities interviewees cited organizational changes at Met Council and Metro Transit produced by the CoO work. According to a local philanthropic leader: "Of all the partners, I feel the Met Council was one of the most radically changed… they have probably gone some of the furthest on equity as any group at that table… talk about a turn-around organization… it's kind of amazing." Changes that occurred at the Met Council include:

- *A new Equity Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Council*, with 17 of the 21 seats designated for community members. The CoO Community Engagement Team advocated strongly for the creation of this committee.

- *A new Everyday Equity cross-agency team at Metro Transit* focused on identifying and breaking down institutional barriers to equity both within the agency and in Metro Transit's operations.

- *An expanded Engagement and Outreach Team at Metro Transit* housed within the Marketing & Customer Services Division. Previously a lone dedicated community engagement officer, the team has grown to five employees drawn from diverse backgrounds including community organizing.

- *A new Transit Oriented Development (TOD) office in Metro Transit* that could provide expertise on TOD to the region.

- *The adoption of CoO's best community engagement practices into Met Council's public participation plan*, a document required of all Metropolitan Planning Organizations under SAFETEA-LU and other federal rules.

Institutionalization of Equity

Interviews across all regions elicited fascinating insights into the degree and ways in which the equity approaches and narrative around equity discussed above were more permanently incorporated into the way that institutional actors worked, provided services and leveraged influence. Specifically, the cementing of equity concerns into the regional planning agencies' work, policies, and structure occurred to a certain extent in all three regions. The Twin Cities seemed to lead in this arena, with the creation of a community engagement office and equity committee, and an entirely new public engagement plan. As a result of this grant process, the Met Council "ended up...rewriting [the public engagement plan] in partnership with community engagement steering committee - co-authored. Now they apply it not just to transportation spending but also to all activities of the Met Council. That was a huge win." (Director of Advocacy Organization, Twin Cities)

Meanwhile in the Puget Sound region and the Bay Area, the degree of equity institutionalization within the regional planning agency was less evident. Establishing a working definition of equity and incorporating it into the Puget Sound's Growing Transit Communities' Principles of Equitable Development might represent a step towards broader consideration and implementation. As one participant put it, "you're not starting from ground zero. We can adapt [the principles] into living documents…here's a starting point." (PSRC representative, Puget Sound). Further, the proposed Regional Equitable Development Initiative, a "revolving loan fund for property acquisition in transit station areas for affordable housing development" represents some form of institutionalization within the Puget Sound Regional Council. However, little indication of further institutionalization in the agency emerged.

In the Bay Area, respondents indicated that MTC also demonstrated little evidence of institutionalization of equity concerns. Several respondents pointed to

continued relationships and/or a recent affordable housing forum at MTC as a result of the SCI process and the conversations sparked at that time. As a foundation representative put it, though equity was and continues to be a subject of discussion, there is little to ensure it is lasting:

> *"My general sense is that equity is driving most things here in the Bay Area as opposed to other regions in the country, and that, I don't know if the grant necessarily, it may have pushed MTC to be much more explicit about it, and explicit about it in the sense that they were engaging CBOs and partners that were very explicit about it, not that MTC was all of the sudden adopting the language. And in fact, it seems like they've retracted from that a little bit."*
>
> *(Foundation Worker, Bay Area)*

It should be noted that while the SCI grant may have provoked limited institutional change in the regional planning agencies outside of the Twin Cities, there seem to be more efforts to institutionalize equity within city governments, especially in the Twin Cities and Puget Sound region. As one Puget Sound CBO leader described: "cities have comprehensive plans. So one of the things we're trying to do to institutionalize the efforts of SCI is to get those things to regional strategies, elements of the regional strategies, particularly the equity elements, to become incorporated into the comprehensive plans and the countywide plans." For the Twin Cities region, a strong equity agenda was being driven by progressive mayors, but it was clear that the SCI process, which convened people around these issues, played a role: "almost every governmental entity that was at that table now has some equity-focused policy, programming, staffing, analysis going on. Really at every level—the counties, the state, cities" (Foundation Representative, Twin Cities). Beyond city and regional governance, the Twin Cities Greater MSP initiative (which launched concurrently with the SCI grant)

developed the regional indicator dashboard which measures, among other things, equity outcomes for the region. This represents perhaps the best example of cross-sector institutionalization of equity concerns across all three sites.

V. Conclusion

Through the SCI grant, all three regions made strides - though to varying degrees - toward breaking down barriers for increased collaboration and promoting equity via planning practices.

With respect to collaboration and engagement, key successes include:

- The Bay Area and Puget Sound regions were able to engage stakeholders from both urban and suburban jurisdictions.

- The Puget Sound and MSP regions succeeded in disrupting power dynamics to empower community stakeholders.

- The MSP region excelled at meaningfully incorporating business stakeholders as partners in the process.

In terms of progress on equity issues and lasting impacts on regional planning dialogue, notable outcomes included:

- In the MSP region, the Met Council institutionalized equity in multiple ways through new staff, departments, and plans and continues to receive input from a newly instituted community advisory group, all focused on equity.

- The Puget Sound region managed to produce a shared definition of equity that continues to be used, while the core membership of the Regional Equity Network remains active in advancing equity initiatives.

- In the Bay Area and Puget Sound regions, some MPO funding programs now include an equity component, and CBOs working on equity issues have formed new alliances to continue to collaborate.

Interviewees from all three regions cited value in having a table around which stakeholders could gather because of the grant, allowing the conversation around equity to have been elevated in all three cases. However, we cannot directly attribute all progress made on equity to the SCI process alone, as dialogue and action on this issue was not new to any of the case regions studied.

A couple of lessons can be gleaned from interviewee insights across the three regions. First, for equity to be a central component of planning practice, equity advocates must be provided real means for meaningfully influencing decision-making processes. This is something the Bay Area lacked, causing some participants to critically question the effectiveness of the grant process and the sincerity of its intent to move the dial on equity. Second, to take advantage of the momentum created by comprehensive and collaborative planning efforts like these, it is important to have a post-grant plan in place. Processes or funding opportunities that provide avenues to help participants continue the work can help institutionalize some of these shifts in planning conversations and perspectives.

It will be interesting to see what effects the relationships and discussions supported by the SCI grant program will have on equity and planning outcomes going forward. Challenges remain to achieving sustainably effective collaboration and equitable outcomes, given the inherent tensions between the needs of urban, suburban, and rural communities within a given region, as well as stakeholders' varying capacities to stay engaged. It is also apparent that the social-political context and availability of financial support particular to each region affects how durable steps made during the SCI grant toward collaboration and equity can be. It is too soon to tell what long-term impacts this experiment in regional planning might have, but what we have seen so far is promising.

VI. Works Cited

Basolo, Victoria. 2003. "U.S. Regionalism and Rationality." Urban Studies 40 (3): 447–62.doi:10.1080/0042098032000053860.

Benner, Chris, and Manuel Pastor. Just Growth: Inclusion and Prosperity in America's Metropolitan Regions. Regions and Cities 50. London ; New York: Routledge, 2012.

Crosby, Barbara C., and John M. Bryson. "Integrative Leadership and the Creation and Maintenance of Cross-Sector Collaborations." The Leadership Quarterly, Public Integrative Leadership, 21, no. 2 (April 2010): 211–30. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.01.003.

Frick, Karen Trapenberg, Karen Chapple, Elizabeth Mattiuzzi, and Miriam Zuk. "Collaboration and Equity in Regional Sustainability Planning in California: Challenges in Implementation." California Journal of Politics and Policy 7, no. 4 (2015). http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9502t3w9.pdf.

Fung, Archon. 2006. "Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance." Public Administration Review 66 (December): 66–76.

Innes, Judith E., and David E. Booher. 1999. "Consensus Building and Complex Adaptive Systems." Journal of the American Planning Association 65 (4): 412–23. doi:10.1080/01944369908976071.

Kania, John, Mark Kramer, and others. Collective Impact. Stanford social innovation review, 2011. http://www.lano.org/resource/dynamic/blogs/20131007_093137_25993.pdf.

Kaza, Nikhil. 2006. "Tyranny of the Median and Costly Consent: A Reflection on the Justification for Participatory Urban Planning Processes." Planning Theory, 255–70.

Orfield, Myron. "Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability." In Forum for Social Economics, 28:33–49. Springer, 1999. http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF02833982.

Manzo, Lynne, and Douglas Perkins. 2006. "Finding Common Ground: The Importance of Place Attachment to Community Participation and Planning." Journal of Planning Literature 20 (4): 336–50.

Mathur, Vivek Narain, Andrew Price, and Simon Austin. 2008. "Conceptualizing Stakeholder Engagement in the Context of Sustainability and Its Assessment." Construction Management and Economics 26 (6).

Purcell, Mark. 2009. "Resisting Neoliberalization: Communicative Planning or Counter-Hegemonic Movements?" Planning Theory 8 (2): 140–65. doi:10.1177/1473095209102232.