

DEI in my Ideal Job

While diversity, equity, and inclusion are integrated into all my work as a Transportation Planner, it is most obvious in my work with environmental justice. Demographic information from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey can be used to identify populations with potential transportation disadvantage. Funded projects should be mapped in relation to these populations to verify that federal transportation investment is reaching these areas. However, just because money is being spent in an area, does not mean the residents are benefitting from the transportation project. Ideally, benefits and burdens should be quantified in some way. However, from researching other MPOs in the country and recently attending National Transit Institute's Advanced- Level Environmental Justice workshop, I was unable to find any metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) that have achieved this.

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE? In 1994, Presidential Executive Order 12898 mandated that federal agencies incorporate environmental justice analyses in their missions by analyzing and addressing the effects of all programs, policies and activities. The USDOT established three guiding principles for federally funded transportation projects:

- Avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects — including social and economic effects — on minority populations and low-income populations.
- Ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in transportation decision-making processes.
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.