

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative:

Authorization for the Town Manager to Award a Contract for Planning Services to Update the Safe Routes to School Strategic Action Plan. The Town has received a Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure grant from NCDOT and is in the process of finalizing an RFP for consultant services to assist with updating the adopted Safe Routes to School Strategic Action Plan. The purpose of this item is to authorize the Town Manager to select and award a contract to a transportation planning firm to complete this work.

Department: Planning

What are the racial and equity impacts?

Racial disparity in education limit opportunities for students of color. Lack of representation on elected and appointed boards, particularly the local school board, and a perception of not being heard can make it difficult to feel welcome. Safe Routes to School is a national program that promotes the benefits of physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices by walking, biking or rolling to school along safe routes. Schools are encouraged to participate in activities such as walk, bike and roll to school days.

Who is or will experience community burden?

It is anticipated that the Town would work with the selected consultant firm to develop an engagement component to updating the Safe Routes to School Strategic Action Plan, and work with the local schools to publicize meetings and/or other activities. It takes time to learn about Town initiatives to be able to fully participate. Shift workers and people who have limited time, transportation choices and/or young children may have difficulty learning about the Safe Routes to School Program, scheduled public meetings, and other opportunities to get involved. Language may also provide a barrier for some residents.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Students attending or planning to attend one of the four schools identified for inclusion in the updated Safe Routes to School Strategic Action Plan should experience benefit. Families who are already engaged in their local school, the PTA and/or the Town in general are most likely to be aware of the existing SRTS Plan and Implementation Committee and may feel more comfortable getting involved in process. Biking/walking audits for safer routes to school may lessen some of the transportation barriers experienced by some community members. Families who live within walking/bike distance of one of the four local schools will likely benefit the most from the updated plan.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Working individuals and families may find it difficult to attend public meetings, may be reticent to speak in a public setting and may have an overall distrust in government, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School District and their child's local schools, based on personal experiences and/or examples of structural racism in education. While the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School District is ranked as one of best school districts in the state, racial gaps in student achievement remain.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

The updated plan may be limited in scope in that it focuses on the needs of only some of the school district, or residents in certain neighborhoods, particularly those most able to walk/bike to school based on proximity of their homes to their assigned school. With a number of local initiatives underway, residents may begin to experience fatigue from Town engagement efforts.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

Combining engagement on the Safe Routes to School plan with other school programs or other Town initiatives may make it easier for families with limited time to learn about multiple programs at fewer events. Targeted engagement strategies may also be needed to ensure broad community participation.