

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: The purpose of this memo is to provide the Council with an update on two grant proposals which were submitted as part of regional collaborative efforts. The first proposal involves a submission to the [Charging and Fueling Infrastructure \(CFI\) Discretionary Grant Program](#) administered by the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) to expand the electric vehicle (EV) charging station network in the triangle area.

The second submission requested funding to complete technical assessments and facilitate a community planning process for a network of energy resilience hubs through the [Energy Futures Grant](#), administered by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of State and Community Energy Programs.

Department: Planning Department

What are the racial and equity impacts?

Historically marginalized communities suffer and will suffer disproportionately larger impacts due to climate disruption. For example, rising temperatures may lead to increased electric bills as residents increase air conditioner use. These bills will be greater for those who live in rental housing, as they do not have control over the efficiency of their units and for those who have low incomes or experience housing cost burden, as they will be less able to pay for the installation of energy efficiency upgrades. In Carrboro, 59% of housing is rental property. There is a racial disparity in owner-occupied and rental-occupied units:

- Owner-occupied units Black: 6.1% White: 80%; Hispanic: 5.6%
- Renter-occupied units: Black 22.1%; White 66.1%; Hispanic: 5.5%

This is also a racial disparity in households who experience severe cost burden in Carrboro: 15% of white, non-Hispanic households in Carrboro experience severe cost burden, while 19% of Hispanic households and 21% of Black households experience severe cost burden.

Who is or will experience community burden?

There may be some reduction of parking spaces during construction of EV charging stations. Those who cannot afford an electric vehicle will not be able to utilize these resources.

In addition, the EV charging stations will result in less stations available for non-electric vehicles.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Due to cost burden, it is especially difficult for many households to afford expensive energy generation and storage systems that would help increase their resilience. Some communities have facilities with backup power generation that residents can depend on during emergencies, but

these backup power systems are often driven by fossil fuels due to the expense of solar and batteries.

A network of resilience hubs has the potential to dramatically change how communities and local governments obtain resources and information before, during, and after a disaster. This is especially true for disadvantaged communities that have historically been disproportionately impacted by disasters. These hubs will operate during normal times as well, providing training, information, and tools to residents.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Historic and deliberate institutional policies at all levels of government and unintended consequences of “race-neutral” policies have created inequities for Black and other marginalized communities in education, incarceration rates, employment, housing, generational wealth, and health outcomes. These inequities will only be exacerbated by ongoing climate disruption.

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

While EV prices are decreasing each year, purchasing an EV still represents a significant cost for many households. Consequently, public EV charging stations may currently be utilized disproportionately by residents with higher incomes.

Based on the results of the Town’s [2022 Parking Study](#), installing 24 EV charging ports (12 stations) is not predicted to significantly impact available parking for non-electric vehicles. The stations will occupy only 24 of the approximately 697 publicly-available off-street parking spaces for non-EVs in downtown Carrboro. In addition, in 2022 the North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association reported that Carrboro had the most registered EVs per 1,000 people (760 EVs) when compared to municipalities in of similar size throughout the state.

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

The vendor will be charging a fee in order to offset costs associated with the charging stations. Local government staff plan to work with the selected vendor to offer reduced charger usage fees for qualifying low-income EV drivers to further incentivize EV adoption by marginalized communities who are bearing a disproportionate burden from climate change.

When planning the resilience hub network, community engagement will be a focal point. Anticipated strategies for direct community engagement include:

- Directly fund community-based organizations (CBO) to assemble an engagement plan for communities that are directly served by resilience hubs and conduct outreach. This will include sharing information with community members about the project and collecting feedback through workshops.
- Host collaborative workshops that bring together community members, town/city/county staff, and technical experts to design resilience hubs.
- Present community members with a final design that will incorporate feedback from the collaborative planning process and technical assessments.