

Racial Equity Pocket Questions – Legislative Public Hearing for Proposed Text Amendment for Complete Streets

What are the racial impacts?

Lack of representation on elected and appointed boards (advisory boards also provide comments for public hearings), and a perception of not being heard can make it difficult to feel welcome. Decisions relating to transportation projects have historically had more negative impacts on communities of color.

Who is or will experience burden?

Shift workers and people who have limited time, transportation choices and/or children may have difficulty finding the time to learn about a proposal, attending meetings, understanding how and when to provide input, and to whom. It takes time to learn about and understand transportation projects, including how to read construction plans, and obtaining a comfort level to participate in public meetings. Language may also provide a barrier for some residents.

Who is or will experience benefit?

The public hearing process is intended to provide a mechanism to provide information in a public forum. In the case of a proposed change to a land use regulation, a public hearing provides a public forum for an applicant (land owner or local government) to present information to members of the public and the decision-making entity (elected officials/board of adjustment). Hearings provide opportunities for public comment and allow for decisions to occur in a public setting for transparency. Public hearings for text amendments involve a legislative decision, one which allows for applicants and members of the community to engage with elected officials and voice support or concern for the matter under consideration. This particular text amendment has been prepared by the Town rather than a private applicant is intended to advance the public benefits of planning, designing and operating streets that serve all modes of travel for people of all ages and abilities.

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 and governmental processes, based on personal experiences and/or examples of structural racism in government decisions, particularly those relating to land use.

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

Changes to land use regulations can affect land values and quality of life experiences for surrounding property owners and occupants in ways that can be beneficial and, albeit for some, less desirable. For this particular text amendment, possible unintended consequences could involve the need to widen a street in order to provide more bike and pedestrian facilities, design improvements that would benefit the public, but could harm property owners along the corridor.