

# Equity and inclusion

Equity and inclusion refer to historically disadvantaged groups, environmental justice, and people with special transportation needs. Examples of these groups include:

- People of color
- Seniors
- Children
- People with low incomes
- People with limited English proficiency
- People with disabilities

Washington state law defines special needs populations as persons, including their personal attendants, who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase appropriate transportation.

WSDOT must protect the rights of all people affected by our projects by identifying, engaging, and addressing the needs of historically disadvantaged groups. These groups constitute a significant portion of our state’s residents (see table below). Additionally, about 20 percent of Washington’s children live in poverty (about \$20,000 per year for a single parent with two children).

Group	Percentage of Washington population
Disability status	12.4%
Population older than 65	12.1%
No access to vehicle	4.3%
Low income	13.9%
Unemployed	5.8%
Veteran	9.1%
Native American	2.9%
Linguistically isolated	3.6%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (January 2016) and American Community Survey (2015).

## WSDOT policy and guidance

- [Environmental Manual](#) (chapter 458)
- [Executive Order E 1069.01 Equal Access for Persons With Disabilities](#)
- [Americans With Disabilities Act Transition Plan](#)
- [Tribal Liaison](#)
- [Community Engagement Plan](#)
- [State Public Transportation Plan](#)
- [Statewide Human Services Transportation Plan](#)
- [Application for Local Planning and Community Accessibility](#)

If the project proposes something not discussed in the WSDOT Design Manual, consult the regional assistant state design engineer to discuss appropriate documentation.

## Additional resources

- [PEDSAFE: Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System](#), Federal Highway Administration
- [Pedestrian Safety Strategic Plan](#), Federal Highway Administration
- [Handbook for Designing Roadways for the Aging Population](#), Federal Highway Administration
- [Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies](#), Federal Highway Administration

## User tips

Identify historically disadvantaged populations and populations with special transportation needs early in the design process. In planning and design decisions, consider the origins and destinations they frequent and the services they use. Active transportation, transit, and paratransit may be the primary form of mobility for these populations.

Ensure that people from historically underrepresented populations and people with special transportation needs participate in the planning and design process and influence decisions. Document what you heard and how it influenced the outcome. Note that there are specific requirements related to tribal engagement.

Coordinate with WSDOT's Active Transportation, Communications, Environmental Services, Office of Equal Opportunity, Public Transportation, and Tribal Relations staff to develop strategies tailored to addressing the needs of historically disadvantaged and special needs populations.

## Consider pedestrian safety

From 2015 to 2017, 20 percent of all traffic fatalities in Washington involved people walking or biking. At 109 fatalities, pedestrian deaths reached their highest number in more than 30 years.

Individuals over the age of 70, Hispanic, and African American pedestrians tend to be overrepresented in fatal pedestrian crashes.

Vehicle speed is a major determinant in the severity of pedestrian crashes. A pedestrian hit at 40 miles per hour has an 85 percent chance of fatality, while a pedestrian hit at 20 miles per hour only has a 5 percent chance of fatality.

Age is also a consideration. Injuries resulting from a collision likely have more severe consequences for seniors and people with disabilities.

While residents and elected officials sometimes resist countermeasures like traffic calming, speed reduction, refuge islands, curb bulbs, and crossings, studies show they have a relatively minor effect on travel times.

## Focus on air quality

People with low incomes and people of color are at increased risk of premature death from fine-particle air pollution. This type of pollution comes from burning gas and diesel, and from the reaction of these particles with other pollutants in the atmosphere. The small particles penetrate deep into the lungs and blood stream and are linked to heart and lung problems, asthma, and lung cancer. Expanding roadways and the number of vehicles on these roadways increases this form of pollution.

## Design for transit

Transit speed, reliability, and frequency are of particular importance to transit-dependent people. These often are people from historically disadvantaged communities and people with special transportation needs. Improving the performance of fixed route transit helps address these needs.

Additionally, everyone travels at least a short distance by foot, wheelchair, bicycle, or other assistive device to get to transit. Features like adequate sidewalks, crossings, lighting, pathways, and traffic control are particularly important for people with special transportation needs.

## Give special attention to rural roadways

Approximately 25 percent of pedestrian and bicycle, fatal and injury crashes nationwide occur on rural roadways.

Walking and bicycling on rural roadways may be a necessity for people with low incomes and other historically disadvantaged groups. Consider countermeasures like narrowed crossing locations, lighting, designated and marked pedestrian crossings, aligned (not offset) intersections, added or improved shoulders, and speed reduction.

## Where to get help

The Office of Equal Opportunity; Tribal Relations; Public Transportation Division's community liaisons; and WSDOT's regional environmental, planning, and communications staffs can all serve as resources for equity/inclusion planning and designing.

*Your input helps to make these planning and design tips a relevant resource!  
For more information, contact Kate Severson, [seversk@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:seversk@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 709-8003.*

### **Title VI Notice to Public**

It is the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin or sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated, may file a complaint with WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). For additional information regarding Title VI complaint procedures and/or information regarding our non-discrimination obligations, please contact OEO's Title VI Coordinator at (360) 705-7082.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information**

This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the Office of Equal Opportunity at [wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov) or by calling toll free, 855-362-4ADA(4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711.