



EQUITY STUDY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY DID THE WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CONDUCT AN EQUITY ANALYSIS?

Given Governor Inslee's and Secretary of Transportation Millar's emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, WSDOT leadership determined a need to evaluate our agency's actions and decision making for equitability. WSDOT contracted with Western Washington University's Center for Economic and Business Research to broadly explore four areas of the agency's operations. The areas for consideration in the equity study are: land acquisitions, investments in highway construction, employee recruitment, and general industry trends in benefits distribution. This study will serve as a starting point for future research and exploration of equity within WSDOT.

WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?

Throughout the report, key literature on transportation equity and best practices are highlighted. The analysis also recommended areas for further research and consideration or areas for improvement. Initial findings showed:

- **Equitable land acquisitions:** Available data suggests that while WSDOT paid less on average than nearby private buyers, the land purchased by the agency also tended to be of lower assessed value. Due to data limitations, the study team was unable to conduct a comprehensive property valuation. As a result, no conclusions can be drawn regarding the equity of WSDOT's land acquisitions.
- **Equitable highway construction investments:** Findings indicate that transportation improvements are being made mainly near areas with higher concentrations of low-income individuals. However, this was likely a product of lower property values near significant infrastructure. Findings suggest that these improvements

do not disproportionately positively or negatively impact communities of color.

- **Equitable employee recruitment and hires:** Data shows that WSDOT attracts fewer women than men; however, the gender distribution of hires is similar to applicants. This suggests that qualified female applicants have the same likelihood of being hired as qualified male applicants. Findings also show that WSDOT recruits a more diverse qualified applicant pool than available within the local population, though WSDOT's hires are generally less diverse than the pool of qualified applicants.
- **Equitable distribution of transportation benefits:** Findings indicate the majority of transportation investments are car-based, and active transportation investments are often not made in areas that would best serve its users.

DID THE STUDY HAVE ANY LIMITATIONS?

The focus of this study was to broadly explore the overall equity of the agency's operations. In some cases, data and scope limited the findings. For example, access to additional data would have allowed for a more accurate real estate valuation. In other cases, the broad nature of the study limited a deep analysis into the why individuals choose to reside near infrastructure.

WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

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