

## **Chapter 12: Environmental Justice**

### **Introduction**

A 1994 Presidential Executive Order directed every Federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on the minority populations and low-income populations. The Department of Transportation's environmental justice initiatives accomplish this goal by involving the potentially affected public in developing transportation projects that fit harmoniously within their communities without sacrificing safety and mobility.

The Executive Order of 1994 is a follow-up to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that, "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." The MPO receives federal monies through US DOT and FHWA to execute many of its transportation projects, and as a result is subject to the same federal requirement.

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### **Goals and Objectives**

The MPO have identified the following Environmental Justice (EJ) objectives:

1. Make better transportation decisions that meet the needs of all people.
2. Design transportation facilities that fit more harmoniously into communities.
3. Enhance the public involvement process, strengthen community-based partnership, and provide minority and low income populations with opportunities to learn more about and improve the quality and usefulness of transportation in their lives.
4. Improve data collection, monitoring, and analysis tools that assess the needs of, and analyze the potential impacts on minority and low income populations.
5. Partner with other public and private programs to leverage transportation agency resources to achieve a common vision for communities.
6. Avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low income populations.

### **Policy 1**

Ensure that programs, policies, and other activities do not have disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low income populations

The MPO utilized the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development data for income, and the U.S. Census Bureau data for minority population to map these groups on the census

block level. This mapping is done to determine benefits to and potential negative impacts on minority and low income populations from proposed investments or actions.

**Policy 2**

Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

The MPO identifies minority and low income populations early in planning stage to examine and address their concerns. This includes all public involvements plans and activities, development of Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and the Unified Planning Work Program.

**Policy 3**

Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low income populations.

The MPO will work towards ensuring that there is no bias in project selection and will monitor the progress of TIP projects in minority and low income populations to avoid delays in completing the improvements.

The mapping technology provided knowledge of the general distribution of the non-white and low income populations and the resulting analysis confirmed the past TIP projects did not have undue impacts on the target population.

The proposed transit service is planned with the objectives of serving the minority and low income populations. The proposed routes connect minority and low income areas to health centers, business centers, industrial areas, and education centers.

Non-white population is low in the MPO study area. Instead of undue impacts from transportation projects, there are a favorable number of benefits resulting from the transportation projects and proposed transit system. The MPO will work towards ensuring that no undue impacts would happen with future transportation projects to non-white and low income populations.