



## NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

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### **Position/Policy Statement Equity in Transportation: Best Practices Framework**

As a leader in safety, the National Safety Council (NSC) is compelled to address systemic disparities and inequities that exist within road safety with the goal of creating a safer, more equitable U.S. transportation system. This framework is a reflection of our current knowledge and intention. Due to the complexity of this issue and our own continued education, this framework may be revised as needed.

For the purposes of this document and the position discussed, equity is defined as the fairness with which benefits and burdens are distributed and how disparities, including those based on race, income, and gender, are identified and addressed within specific populations. This fairness should take into account addressing disparities, lack of agency in decision-making, and other legacies of under-investment or discrimination that may have resulted in unequal outcomes for specific groups or individuals.

#### **POSITION/POLICY:**

NSC appreciates that the interventions and programs that address transportation safety and access to mobility options often have a grassroots or local component not tied directly to NSC. We also recognize that the Council's leadership, voice, and programming can be leveraged to address disparities in roadway safety, including traffic fatalities<sup>1</sup>, access<sup>2</sup>, and equity, as well as to expand the diversity of stakeholders and partners.

To achieve the NSC mission to save lives, from the workplace to anyplace, the Council must work in a multi-faceted effort to address safety disparities, including achieving transportation equity: the idea that, regardless of one's age, race, gender, ability, income, background, or other personal characteristics, a person will be able to enjoy mobility options that are safe and accessible.<sup>3</sup>

When achieved, transportation equity can have a profound impact on communities, enabling safe access to school, work, healthy food, parks, and more, as well as empowering community

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<sup>1</sup> <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>; <https://www.governing.com/gov-data/pedestrian-deaths-poor-neighborhoods-report.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car\\_access#/](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car_access#/)

<sup>3</sup> Safe and accessible mobility includes consideration of investments in transportation options and support for those transportation systems, and NSC will support transportation investments to provide safe and accessible transportation for all.

members to become stakeholders in roadway safety. Mobility independence for all road users becomes a reality.

In recent years, transportation stakeholders, including NSC, have established a goal of reaching zero deaths on our roads as both an objective for the organization and as a framework for programming. As such, NSC commits to understanding the historic and current barriers to transportation safety as it relates to its roadway practice and incorporating equity into its work, which is critical to creating safe environments where people can move freely and safely such that achieving zero deaths within our transportation system is possible. [A Safe Systems approach](#), as emphasized in the Road to Zero strategy and [adopted in a NSC policy position](#)<sup>4</sup>, is also necessary to approach roadway safety in a data-driven, holistic, and equitable manner. Additionally, NSC will use its platform to promote safety for all, regardless of demographics, a priority on both a national level and within its own organizational culture.<sup>5</sup>

### **JUSTIFICATION:**

There has been a deep history of inequities in the U.S. that continues to impact transportation systems. From decades of policies and programs prioritizing infrastructure for vehicle transportation over active transportation, such as walking and biking, and public transit, to inequities in transportation funding in historically disadvantaged communities, not all communities and individuals are able to enjoy or access the full benefits of our transportation system.

Despite the advances that have been made in transportation safety, research consistently shows that any gains made are not shared equally.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps even more troubling, improvements and changes made in the name of transportation safety sometimes have unintended consequences that do additional harm to those they mean to serve.<sup>7</sup>

For example, research and reporting show that:

- Drivers are less likely to yield to Black people walking and biking than white people. Black pedestrians were passed by twice as many cars and experienced 32% longer wait times for cars to yield to them than white pedestrians.<sup>8</sup>
- The pedestrian fatality rate for Native Americans is nearly five times higher than that of whites; for Blacks, it is nearly twice as high as that of whites.<sup>9</sup>
- Lower-income neighborhoods experience more than twice as many pedestrian fatalities as those with the highest incomes.<sup>10</sup>
- Older adults experience higher rates of pedestrian fatalities. For those 50 and above, the rate of pedestrian fatalities is more than a third higher than the general population. This jumps to almost twice as high for people 75 and older.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nsc.org/getattachment/cbffc278-6c2b-4c16-ad11-959201b2755e/t-safe-systems-149>

<sup>5</sup> At the time of writing this policy position, the Biden administration has instituted Executive Orders calling on the whole federal government to evaluate ways they can incorporate DE&I into the work they are doing.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org/\\_asset/02fpi3/btg\\_street\\_walkability\\_FINAL\\_03-09-12.pdf](http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org/_asset/02fpi3/btg_street_walkability_FINAL_03-09-12.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/sanchez-moving-to-equity-transportation-policies.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=psy\\_fac](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=psy_fac)

<sup>9</sup> <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

- Fatality rates within car crashes vary by age. Older adults and drivers under the age of 25 have a higher fatality rate than other age groups.<sup>12</sup>
- Policies such as jaywalking disproportionately burden communities of color. Over one five-year period studied, Black people received 55% of pedestrian tickets in Jacksonville, Fla., despite representing 29% of the population.<sup>13</sup>
- Biking policies are inconsistently applied, resulting in the disproportionate enforcement of Black cyclists. In one study, Black cyclists accounted for almost half of incident or arrest reports for bicycle citations despite making up just 18% of the population in Minneapolis.<sup>14</sup>
- Black and Hispanic people received 86.4% of biking-on-sidewalk tickets in New York City in 2018-19.<sup>15</sup>
- Public transportation inequities disproportionately impact Black people. Bus drivers are twice as willing to let white people ride for free than Black people.<sup>16</sup> Ninety-one percent of WMATA/Metro Police citations/summons were issued to Black people in Washington, D.C., while only 8% were issued to white people.<sup>17</sup>
- The majority of crash-test dummies are designed to represent the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile male; there is no good representative for female drivers or passengers, despite the fact that women comprise about half of all drivers.<sup>18</sup>

Incorporating equity in transportation policies, programs, and discussions can work to address these and other existing disparities.

Race and transportation is a vital topic and part of the national dialogue. NSC believes this policy position will guide input on this topic from the Council and other stakeholders.

Through this policy position, NSC resolves to promote safe, fair, and equitable practices to ensure all community members – regardless of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or other personal demographics – have safe and accessible mobility options. NSC also resolves to encourage partners and others to promote practices that ensure the same.

As such, NSC recommends the following:

- Education: This includes programs, communications, and campaigns to educate road users, community members, planners, and engineers to raise awareness and provide information with the goal of changing an attitude or behavior that will improve safety. An equitable approach to education must consider and should include, but is not limited to:

<sup>12</sup> <https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/14700>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.propublica.org/series/walking-while-black>

<sup>14</sup> [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/mplsbike/pages/3970/attachments/original/1476137957/MBC\\_Police\\_Citations\\_Report\\_Final2\\_small.pdf?1476137957](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/mplsbike/pages/3970/attachments/original/1476137957/MBC_Police_Citations_Report_Final2_small.pdf?1476137957)

<sup>15</sup> <https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2020/06/22/nypd-targets-black-and-brown-cyclists-for-biking-on-the-sidewalk/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CIf%20people%20are%20riding%20bikes,to%20ride%20in%20the%20street.&text=The%20stats%20follow%20a%202014,were%20mostly%20Black%20or%20Latino.>

<sup>16</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/ej/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ej/ueaa090/5898389>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.washlaw.org/pdf/2018\\_09\\_13\\_unfair\\_disparity\\_fair\\_evasion\\_enforcement\\_report.PDF](https://www.washlaw.org/pdf/2018_09_13_unfair_disparity_fair_evasion_enforcement_report.PDF)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.consumerreports.org/car-safety/crash-test-bias-how-male-focused-testing-puts-female-drivers-at-risk/#:~:text=An%20average%20adult%20female%20crash,from%20male%20bodies%20in%20crashes>

- Developing, executing, and implementing programming with community voices included in the process, particularly those representing disadvantaged and/or highly impacted communities.
  - Using images, language, and media that is reflective of the community and audience.
  - Working with the community to identify issues to be addressed, assessing what is needed, and defining what implementation and, ultimately, success would look like.
  - Working with trusted ambassadors, spokespeople, and community leaders to help in the execution of any campaigns or programs.
- Enforcement: NSC supports enforcement as a mechanism to support safe transportation and believes there are ways to ensure it is fairly applied. This includes efforts to educate and promote compliance with laws and regulations related to traffic safety. An equitable approach to enforcement must consider and should include, but is not limited to:
    - Working with partners and stakeholders to create a plan to ensure engagement with representatives of the community and government in the development and drafting of any law or regulation. This includes discussing effective means of enforcement within the community.
    - Understanding whether and how enforcement of traffic safety laws or regulations can exacerbate existing racial, socioeconomic, or accessibility issues, and subsequently working with stakeholders to identify solutions.
    - Assessing whether new or alternative forms of enforcement can be deployed to effectively address the issue at hand, including but not limited to: automated enforcement, community policing, and other strategies.
    - Advocating for data collection and assessment tools that measure whether traffic safety enforcement unjustly burdens specific communities or populations and providing appropriate solutions.
    - Educating and training those working on enforcement on current best practices and techniques.
- Engineering: This includes changes to the built environment, roadway operations, or vehicle design to address safety and access. An equitable approach to engineering must consider and should include, but is not limited to:
    - Addressing existing or historic bias, disenfranchisement, or overburdening of a specific group or population in any planning or proposal considerations.
    - Creating contextually sensitive plans and solutions and avoiding one-size-fits-all solutions. Changes or improvements must be context-sensitive and meet the needs and desires of the individual communities they purport to serve.
    - Identifying and assessing unintended consequences that might result from well-intentioned efforts.
    - Engaging from the outset community members, stakeholders, and users to ensure the solution is having the intended effect.
    - Involving a diversity of people in testing and design to increase safety.
    - Supporting the design of vehicle technology to improve safety outcomes for all roadway users.
    - Supporting efforts to improve transportation and, ultimately, enhance access and mobility independence.

## NSC Commitment to the Fourth “E” Equity

In addition to incorporating equity into the existing three E’s of transportation safety – education, enforcement, and engineering – NSC has added equity as the fourth E in our work. This new element will incorporate equity into all of our efforts, communications, and partnerships and the way that we approach the topic of roadway safety.

### NSC DE&I Statement:

At NSC, we demonstrate our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through our culture and our values. **Our culture embraces all people** regardless of ancestry, color, national origin, race, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, physical or mental disability, or veteran status. We **boldly** empower our team to model respect and dignity. We find **impactful** opportunities for growth and development. We create a **safe** environment that includes mental, physical, psychological, and emotional protections. To **be NSC** is to deliver our mission by working together – our employees, members, and stakeholders – in such a way that everyone feels a sense of belonging

**We believe that you can’t be safe if you don’t feel safe.** Feeling safe requires a commitment to equitable policy implementation and promoting diversity in the safety profession. We must cultivate our own diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment to deliver on our mission to save lives, from the workplace to anyplace.

### Internal

- NSC acknowledges that there is a legacy of systemic bias in transportation planning and roadway safety and aims to address this through existing and future work.
- NSC commits to using images and examples that represent diversity in its work and communications.
- NSC commits to using best care to be sensitive and responsible in the language and terms it uses, taking its cue from the populations to and about which it is communicating.
- NSC commits to ensuring its planning, programming, and offerings are inclusive of a wide variety of factors with a goal of equitable access for all.
- NSC commits to not discriminate based race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or veteran status.
- NSC commits to continuing the conversation and sharing resources around the topic of transportation equity to learn, listen, and appreciate how the issue intersects with our existing body of work.
- NSC commits to seeking external review and engagement with those working in transportation equity to continue to learn and improve.
- NSC commits to recognizing and respecting the knowledge and expertise that comes with lived experience within the communities it is serving.

### External

- NSC commits to highlighting examples of disparities when working with colleagues and partners and to incorporating equity in joint projects with external stakeholders.

- NSC commits to sharing resources and information related to addressing disparities and inequities in transportation safety with colleagues, partners, the general public and networks.
- NSC commits to seeking new organizations and networks working in transportation equity and other related areas to engage in this work.
- NSC commits to identifying and sharing examples of success in achieving equity in transportation.

NSC hopes that this work will lead to safer and more equitable roadways and transportation systems and looks forward to working with partners toward this end. Equity and transportation is a topic that continues to evolve. These recommendations must not be a “one-off” attempt at addressing legacies of inequities and future work but rather must evolve along with the needs of the sector. This will requires ongoing assessment, planning, and implementation.

*This position statement reflects the opinions of the National Safety Council but not necessarily those of each member organization.*

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