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Transportation and Infrastructure, Meeting #4

September 22, 2021, 6:00 PM | 2 hours, 20 minutes

Documented by: Izzy Stroobandt

MEETING MATERIALS

[Agenda <Link to Agenda>](#)

[Presentation <Link to presentation>](#)

ATTENDEES

- Lilliane Webb
- Cindy Fish
- Tim Gustafson
- Jared Policicchio
- Ben Cosgrove
- Lou Turner
- Jose Estrada
- Ashley Gratz
- Monica Newsome
- Jordan Evangelista
- Vig Krishnamurthy
- Katherine Field McCarter
- Elizabeth Scott
- William Garcia
- John Paige
- Jamie Simone
- Shadan Tofighi
- LaTanya Lane
- William Davis
- Pericles Georgopoulos
- Jamie Osborne
- Joshua Woods
- Leah Mooney
- Devon Braunstein
- Melvin Thompson
- Sophie Manley
- Alex Dumitriu

MEETING GOAL

The primary goal of this meeting was to hear from an artist-organizer, come to a consensus on the pillar definition and guiding questions, review overarching and pillar-specific trends and reintroduce the Health and Racial Equity Impact Assessment.

WHERE WE ARE



Step 1

We Are

Setting the Stage



Step 2

We Have and Need

Develop A Policy Toolkit



Step 3

We Will

Set Policy Framework

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

This pillar is having difficulty coming to an agreement on a definition and on questions that they feel fully grasp all the modes of transportation. For this reason, this meeting ran over the expected time and not all members were present for the pillar-specific trends review.

2

Members of the pillar feel there is a disconnect between the themes, such as historical reckoning, the HREIA, and the direction that the We Will plan is heading. They expected a greater focus on ensuring an equitable distribution of resources, and some are worried that that may be getting lost in the complicated verbiage of the definition and questions.

3

There is some frustration among the members who feel that the resources, such as meeting notes or slides, are not being given out in an accessible way (they're embedded as links into summaries instead of clearly laid out), or they feel that they're missing information and coming into these meetings without the full picture.

CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS

“When investment happens without rehabbing the community—it results in displacement.”

Jose Estrada | Arquitectos, Inc, Member

“Transportation planning has created ‘transportation deserts’ in South and West Side Black communities. Racial segregation by design was created by transportation planning in Chicago. The 1966 Comp[rehensive] Plan was a major nodal point in that history, which the We Will transportation pillar has yet to reckon with.”

Lou Turner | African American Policy and Leadership Institute, Member and Principal Grant Writer

“For decades, there has been commercial freight running adjacent to our church building spewing toxic chemicals in the backyards, parks and residential parking lots in our communities—something that does not occur in other neighborhoods, and it contributes greatly to poor air quality and health disparities.”

Melvin Thompson | The Endeleo Institute, Inc, Executive Director

“I frequently ride my bike to a part-time job on the far West Side. As I trend South and West, the ride gets rougher and more hostile. There is noticeably less infrastructure for those outside of cars, and the car infrastructure is in notably worse shape.”

Joshua Woods | Connetics Transportation Group, Planner I

NOTES

Kickoff and Introductions

- The meeting starts with consent and a reflective prompt: *How have historical inequities impacted transportation and infrastructure in your neighborhood?*
- “Location of highways is a good example. Also prioritization of cars over transit, bikes and ped[estrian]s,” answered^[SEP] Leah Mooney.
- “Rogers Park's transportation network was changed in the 1970s and again in the 1990s as part of an urban renewal project, which ended up isolating pockets of the Far North Side, severing East Rogers Park from West Ridge,” said Tim Gustafson.
- “We have all these Red Line, Green Line stops that come down to Cermak and then from there the next stop is 35th street. That’s a large swath of Chicago that is underserved by the CTA”
- “The CTA Green Line station was removed at 63rd and Racine, which made it more difficult for residents of the Englewood community to quickly access the Green Line,” Ben Cosgrove explained.
- “The removal of the elevated CTA station at 63rd and Stony Island in the mid 1990s. I believe that this represented CTA’s willingness to reduce transit service in Black and brown neighborhoods,” said Jamie Osborne.
- “606 planning never considered possible negative gentrification impacts,” said John Paige.
- “Streetcar lines used to crisscross Humboldt Park (and many other neighborhoods). Now train lines kind of miss us,” said Jordan Evangelista of HoneyPot Collective.

Overview

Lilliane Webb, the facilitator, reviewed the timeline for the entire project.

- Fall 2020: Pre-planning: *What should the plan address?* Twenty-eight conversations and workshops, 600+ people participating. The results are topics for each pillar.
- Fall 2021: Research: *What are the guiding questions that will lead to recommendations?* Two hundred eighty-five individuals and organizations selected, open application process, actively engaged in developing guiding questions. Anticipated results: Activities by artists, community partners and others will seek broader reactions to those questions.
- Winter 2022: Policy and action plan: *Do these recommendations address the past and present and will they move us forward?* How should engagement be designed?

Phase II Public Engagement Channels:

- Sept-Oct: Artist/organizer engagements
- Oct-Dec: Community partner engagement events, Virtual Forums: Website + Surveys

- Piloting Oct- Dec: Meeting in a box

Guiding questions and pillar definition discussion

- The group is still at 10 guiding questions that need to be narrowed down.
- Pillar definition drafted from previous meeting: “We Will’s Transportation and Infrastructure pillar involves the conveyance of people, goods and information through the utilization of private or public vehicles, networks and systems.” New version: “We Will’s Transportation and Infrastructure Pillar involves the transport of people, goods and information through physical infrastructure, networks, and systems creating connectivity and accessibility by vehicles, transit, walking, biking, airports, rail, water, and utilities.”
- Comments received: acknowledge complex nature of pillar, comprehensive to address all modes and infrastructure, conveyance versus accessibility, should be multimodal and include active transportation.
- “We should change the order of the modes at the end and not lead with cars ... ‘by walking, biking, transit, vehicles, etc.’,” said Jamie Simone.
- “Less auto-dependent neighborhoods,”^[SEP] said Melvin Thompson.
- “Each question could have subsections related to the principles/themes of reckoning/HREIA. For example, how does question 1 address A, B, C, etc,” Jamie Osborne said.
- “I’m not sure that sustainable modes are elevated enough in these guiding questions,” said Leah Mooney.

Breakout room

- “The list mixes some different kinds of things: water, a medium like air, versus airports,” Vig Krishnamurthy said. “Likewise, transit is an operating model, but still requires ‘vehicles.’”
- “Some of the things that aren’t acknowledged are things that are static, like parks, or the combined disposal facility. It’s part of the waste disposal of the city and it’s potentially problematic but it’s static as well.” said Katherine Field McCarter.
- “The role of trans[portation] and infrastructure is providing access to parks but it hasn’t really been decided where parks will go, as far as pillars,” Cindy Fish said.
- “Would it make more sense if this definition involved movement instead of transport?” William Davis asked.
- “What about framing it as a connectivity issue^[SEP]?” Jordan Evangelista said. “To me it seems like there’s a difference between defining this pillar and defining transportation and infrastructure itself, defining the pillar to me seems like it would need to acknowledge the agencies tasked with carrying out or addressing these issues.”
- “Including the quality of life, parks, accessibility to grocery stores, medical centers, hospitals—those are all quality of life issues. When you are able to get to those major, necessary institutions, that will improve the quality of life in Chicago,” said Shadan Tofighi.

- “This is supposed to be forward-looking and the city is already making investments in innovation and life sciences. We see that and the importance of recreation and walkability is all part of the relationship between our environment, where we live, where we work, where we play,” William Davis said. “Our transportation plan should be anticipating the way these things are moving.”
- Shadan Tofighi said that with rent insecurity and displacement, people are moving around often while trying to keep their kids in the same schools for some level of stability. With no school bus system, continuing to get to school is difficult.
- “I propose updating the end to: ‘through physical infrastructure, utility networks, and systems creating connectivity and accessibility (by walking, transit, biking/micro-mobility, shared vehicles, private vehicles, on land, water, air),’” said Jamie Osborne, Department of Planning and Development (DPD).
- Ben Cosgrove suggests “... Systems which create connectivity and accessibility through walking, biking, public transit, vehicles, water, utilities, and airports.”
- “‘... involves the movement of people, goods, and information through a connected system that prioritizes the accessibility and safety of people walking, taking transit, and biking.’ (and then a second sentence to clarify the rest?)” said Jamie Simone.
- “I remember thinking [in the advisory committee meeting] that we didn’t have anything in our questions that really addressed the issue of community outreach,” said Jamie Simone.
- “I’m not sure I understand the fourth bullet,” Jordan Evangelista said.
- “The first two bullets are so close. Those should be one,” Jamie Osborne said.
- “The other change I want to propose is for the third bullet, the freight and other economic movement. Freight is often just one piece of movement; freight is literally a dirty word, so we need it, but how not to just focus on it?” said Jamie Osborne.
- “We’re referring to Chicago’s unique position as an inter-state center of commerce, so there’s that national responsibility, but there’s also the most basic mobility of pedestrians and bicyclists,” William Davis said. “They’re two vastly different systems but they have to learn to coexist.”
- “But what about the freight, especially trains, that move through Chicago with no immediate discernible use to the city?” Shadan Tofighi asked.
- “I see bullet one and bullet three as complementary. How can we ensure equitable access while equitably distributing the burden (externalities) of transportation?” said Jordan Evangelista.
- “Maybe we need to add something about equitable access to safe, clean and reliable utilities (water, gas, electricity, broadband, etc.),” said Jamie Simone.
- “How can communities be more involved in the transportation and infrastructure design and implementation processes?” said Jamie Osborne.
- “I’m always concerned about moving with urgency. I think maybe it’s in this future systems thing, to solve problems today,” said Jordan Evangelista.

Back to the main group

Other breakout room:

- “The proposed definition spent a lot of time on transportation and the modes weren’t in the order we wanted them. So, we shifted to ‘what is infrastructure?’,” said Lilliane Webb. “Talked about having broader questions so we could have specific infrastructure objectives, be it water or internet systems.”
- “On the reckoning principle: We Will comp plan addresses the racialized design of past Chicago transportation plans and infrastructure development,” said Lou Turner.
- “The idea of parks and open space as part of infrastructure, should that be included? Access to broadband internet,” Pericles Georgopoulos said.
- “This was a draft definition our group started (with the recent addition from Lou on the historical reckoning): ‘The WWC Transportation Pillar is multifaceted. It focuses on what we need to properly care for ourselves and one another. It also addresses the racialized design of past Chicago transportation plans and infrastructure development. This pillar includes transportation (insert transportation items) and infrastructure (insert infrastructure items),’ LaTanya Lane said.
- Ashley Gratz suggests adding “the planet” to tie in sustainability.
- “The We Will comp plan also serves as a learning environment for Chicagoans to learn about the city as a whole, as well as how their own communities fit in the larger Chicago metro area,” said Lou Turner.

“If you are willing to spend a little more time on this between meetings, we have these Word docs and you are able to meet with each other and connect,” said Lilliane Webb.

Pillar trends overview

- “We want all conversations to be rooted in historical reckoning,” said Cindy Fish.
- Redlining: Between 1935 and 1940, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) assigned grades to residential neighborhoods that reflected “mortgage security.” Residents of Zones C and D (see map below with HOLC Appraisal grade), mostly Black and brown residents, were subjected to racist lending practices that blocked opportunities to obtain mortgages and build wealth. Black families in Chicago lost between \$3 billion and \$4 billion in wealth because of predatory housing contracts during the 1950s and 1960s.
- Segregation: A segregated city is a direct outcome of historic redlining and racism. Chicago is among the top five most segregated cities in the US. (See map with Race, Dot Density).
- Life expectancy: Racism and multi-generational barriers to economic and social capital have produced an 8.8 year Black/white life expectancy gap in Chicago. In the city of Chicago there’s almost a 20-year gap between the neighborhoods with the highest and lowest life expectancy.
- “I appreciate how maps can illustrate data, even if they bring attention to ugly truths,” said Tim Gustafson.

- Lou Turner said, “Contract buying must be included in reckoning on Chicago's housing segregation history and theft of Black assets, which calls for reparations.”

HREIA framework introduction

- “To improve equity and resiliency, [we] must work with communities,” Cindy Fish said, presenting. “We have to acknowledge systemic racism as a root cause.”
- “So, why doesn't all of the issues and history articulated in this presentation guide our questions? The questions for the pillar don't reflect what is currently being presented,” Lou Turner said.
- “EXACTLY!” responded Melvin Thompson.
- “The guiding questions address themes of access to internet, safe streets, making infrastructure available to all people, including disabled,” said Cindy Fish.
- “There is a major disconnect between HREIA and the guiding questions. Three card Monty,” said Lou Turner.
- “I was just looking through the info online about whether/how the Housing & Neighborhoods group might be approaching housing segregation. I don't see it specifically (at least not at first glance) but perhaps it will be reflected in their guiding questions? You can read all the previous meeting summaries at [the link](#),” said Jamie Simone.
- “Start all over on the guiding questions,” Lou Turner said.
- “I wonder if we can integrate some of these historical and structural issues that the We Will process is raising in the pillar questions by structuring the pillar questions to explicitly address the contradictions. I think the freight question was trying to get at that: economic development ... but not at the expense of further marginalizing certain groups,” suggested Vig Krishnamurthy.
- “Lou's comment speaks across all of the pillars. If the guiding questions aren't aligned with the history presented here tonight then the comprehensive plan will mirror the last one,” said Melvin Thompson. “We're not doing a good enough job.”
- “I'm feeling like I'm missing stuff and I want to contribute to these things but I'm getting worried that there's things I'm missing in all of this stuff,” Leah Mooney said. “Let's be careful not to embed important information in links where they might not be seen. I think we all want to contribute to this and keep it moving but also not sort of show up at a meeting and feel like we're working from behind.”
- “Is the HREIA process supposed to help us with that process, make sure the historical reckoning is taken into consideration in our guiding questions?” asked LaTanya Lane.

Trends overview

Lilliane Webb asked the group to stay on if able, explaining that the meeting is getting close to its ending time but they haven't gone through all the content.

- “I think tonight's discussion has been helpful for me to understand our progress as we work toward consensus, but agree that perhaps a small-group check in will help us find our

bearings in the process? I would be interested in seeing if some participants would want to lead some of these discussions,” said Tim Gustafson.

- “We all have more ideas that we want to put into these questions to further improve them. Can we go through the same process again being able to comment on the six questions that we have?” said Ben Cosgrove.
- “I initially thought the HREIA process would be in lockstep with ours,” said Melvin Thompson.
- “Returning to ‘working styles’ that we discussed in the second meeting, I saw that some people need time to process, revise, etc., and don’t necessarily work best in live discussion. I’d be interested in seeing an online discussion group in a sort-of chat format to discuss these various issues in the intervening time. I’d also like to see HREIA issues integrated into the questions more. So often groups beg to conduct REIAs after the fact with the city but by that time it’s too late,” said Katherine Field McCarter.
- “I was thinking that perhaps a space for reckoning can remain forever open and editable throughout this process, so no one feels as though we are closing that chapter and moving on, but can always revisit and add/refine as needed,” said Tim Gustafson.
- “Can the historic trends citywide and our pillar-specific trends be used to help inform our guiding questions—to give us something that we are ‘solving for?’” asked Vig Krishnamurthy.
- “Yes. The idea is that we build consensus around themes and questions with the WWC principles/themes/HREIA in mind. Then we will run everything through the HREIA and further refine,” said Jamie Osborne.

RESOURCES

HomeTown Voices

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksDKCSfNTG8>

Mobility Care event tickets - Oct 2

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mobility-care-tickets-171375116587>

Link to earlier slides embedded in summaries

<https://wewillchicago.com/where-we-are-now>

EquitiCity

<https://www.equiticity.org/>

Upcoming rides (as William mentioned)

<https://www.equiticity.org/rides>

NEXT STEPS

- Go back into the shared document, or another form of connecting with We Will, and they will be in touch via email in the coming days about slides, video and what comes next.