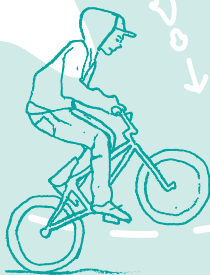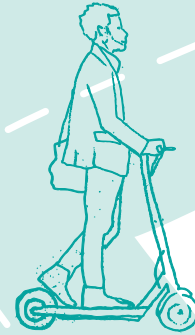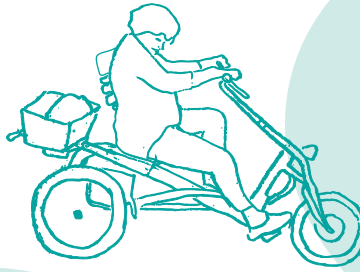Urban Bikeway Design Guide
WORKING PAPER

NACTO

Moving Together

Collaborating with Communities for More Equitable Outcomes | January 2023

Acknowledgments

Updating the *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*

Moving Together: Collaborating with Communities for More Equitable Outcomes is one of seven Working Papers being released by NACTO in 2022 and 2023 as part of the ongoing update to the NACTO *Urban Bikeway Design Guide.* The working papers will cover topics related to equitable planning, engagement, and implementation. The papers will help inform project delivery concerns and policy considerations that should accompany the design updates in the guide. NACTO will develop a complete update to the *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* in 2023 by synthesizing these working papers with state-of-the-practice design guidance.

GO TO PDF ↗ Making Bikes Count: Effective Data Collection, Metrics, & Storytelling

GO TO PDF ↗ Breaking the Cycle: Reevaluating the Laws that Prevent Safe & Inclusive Biking

GO TO PDF ↗ Shared Micromobility Permitting, Process, and Participation

THIS PDF → *Moving Together for Equitable Outcomes*

WINTER 2022/23 Scaling Success: Moving from Pop-up to Permanent

WINTER 2022/23 Planning and Implementing Equitable Bike Networks

WINTER 2022/23 Designing For Small Things With Wheels

About This Paper

To create better projects and project outcomes, planners, engineers, and designers must center partnerships to build meaningful, collaborative relationships with the communities that host and use transportation infrastructure. This paper describes the critical role of collaboration in effective, equitable planning, design, and implementation. It also reviews some considerations and strategies that can help planners approach the inevitable obstacles that complicate collaborative work.

This paper focuses on the essential relationship between city agencies and marginalized communities in developing and implementing transportation projects–other considerations and strategies should be used for communities that are better organized or connected to decision-makers.

This paper does not offer a step-by-step checklist or "how-to" guide for cultivating solid relationships with local communities. In fact, this "check-the-box" approach to relationship building would be counterproductive, since the most successful approaches are customized to fit each context. Instead, this paper offers a grounding in purpose, a flexible framework for approaching community relationships, and some concrete ideas, cautions, and lessons learned from those applying collaborative values in action.

MINNEAPOLIS

My best idea for how to use transportation to improve racial equity in Minneapolis is...

Better Access to Bike Lanes :)

Source: Minneapolis Public Works TPP

Terms And Definitions Used in This Paper

- **Engagement**: an umbrella term referring to the general practice of connecting with community members about a project.

- **Community**: individuals, groups, and organizational stakeholders impacted by a project or process. This paper primarily focuses on marginalized communities.

- **Outreach**: the practice of initiating contact with communities, either about a project or for general relationship building purposes. This can take the form of meetings or events where agencies share project or program information with community members or other forms of communication designed to nurture a relationship.

- **Collaboration, Co-Creation, Co-Design**: these terms refer to the practice of designing with, rather than for, community partners as peers with distinct perspectives and information that can improve both the process and final product.

PART I: WHY IS COLLABORATION KEY TO URBAN BIKEWAY DESIGN?

Urban bike networks are a powerful tool for improving transportation equity. All Ages & Abilities (AA&A) bike networks connect neighborhoods, improve access, and keep people safe—and they can be implemented relatively quickly and at low cost. Collaborative planning is particularly important in all stages of bikeway and bike network development and implementation because it helps ensure that design and policy solutions truly meet community and citywide needs. While this paper focuses on bikeway design, collaborative planning is a practice that can and should be applied to planning as a whole.

Collaboration adds perspective and nuance that can help projects better meet desired outcomes. Local residents immersed in dynamics of life on the ground are best equipped to recognize their own needs, while planners can listen and propose the best executions for those objectives. A successful dynamic includes both sides partnering to find solutions to integrate successfully with day-to-day needs.

> **Well-designed urban bike networks are safe and accessible for riders of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds—and connect to a variety of citywide destinations**

Good collaborative planning can also build foundations for relationships that support future work. When done with sensitivity toward lived experiences and historical context, collaborative planning can also improve relationships with communities and other stakeholders over time. That investment can pay off moving forward in greater buy-in and mutual understanding of transportation planning processes even amid disagreement, which in turn can build long-term trust and support for larger programmatic goals.

Collaboration is often thought of in the context of project engagement but in fact, good collaboration is more than singular outreach. Rather, it's a steady and ongoing connection that reflects the shared priorities of community members and planners. It can be robust and innovative and go beyond traditional one-off meetings. There are city-led ambassadors and engagement teams, some even empowering community members to lead their own demonstration projects. Yet, even these strategies can sometimes fall short in the eyes of community groups, neighborhood merchants, elected officials, renters, homeowners, advocates, and others. Avoiding that frustration happens by ensuring that collaboration is a key part of the engagement whole, setting up a more constructive process.

Successful collaboration calls for perspective, planning, and longevity, straying away from the one-off effort and leaning into the long haul partnership. **To create better outcomes, city agencies should actively seek relationships with the communities they serve**. These efforts are particularly important in disenfranchised communities where a complicated combination of institutional racism and political-historical factors can leave residents with fewer opportunities and tools to advocate and make change on their own behalf.

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is the practice of designing *with*, not for, communities. Collaborative planning—sometimes also referred to as **co-creation** or **co-design**—is under the umbrella of community engagement, but specifically calls for agency staff to engage with community partners as peers or hosts, not just recipients of their work. Collaboration starts with the structure of the process itself and extends all the way to project design, implementation, evaluation and refinement. Not all collaborations are a home run, but in order to create equitable project outcomes, the effort must be made.

Working through disagreements is part of collaboration. In making decisions about how to allocate and share street space, a collaborative process may surface disagreement between the various stakeholders: from local residents and shop owners, to visitors or commuters passing through, to city agency staff and the internal debates they may have amongst themselves. But unlike more traditional outreach or engagement approaches, where city staff are faced with a decision about whether and how to deal with fear, anger, and pushback they've heard at a community meeting about a project, collaborative processes create space for practitioners and community members to work together toward a solution.

"Collaboration is a more involved process and it sees community as an equal part of the design process. From initiation from the moment of planning conversation is when community should be brought in. Should be intentional."

-Daisy (community advisor)

What Defines a Community?

This paper defines community as individuals, groups, and neighborhood stakeholders (i.e., *not* government agencies) impacted by a project or process. But it is critical for public officials to recognize that communities are dynamic and unique, and can mean different things to different people. Here are some important considerations for collaborating with community:

- **Communities and the people within them are not monolithic**. Individual neighborhood organizations or outspoken members of the community may or may not represent a vocal minority rather than the whole. Further, communities are always in flux with economic, cultural, or generational shifts, and these groups may have different values and needs. One person identifying as "the community" is not always representative of all communities in an area.

- **Some (but not all) people experience their community as a unit of identity** and share ties such as age, language, or ethnicity in addition to or instead of physical proximity. That means that physical geographies, such as neighborhoods, may include several communities whose values and needs might differ.

- **Planners often define community differently than some communities define themselves**. Planners may make distinctions based on census data, for example, while communities may self-identify based on other social connections or divisions. It's important to get to know communities on their own terms.

BALTIMORE

Source: Side A Photography

Principles for Building Collaborative Practice

Given the complexities and challenges of real world planning work, putting collaboration into practice can be more difficult than it would seem. Each city—and project, for that matter—is unique, and what works in one scenario may not be feasible or appropriate in another. A collaborative plan must be customized by working with local residents and any model will likely need to adapt and shift over time as situations, and stakeholders, evolve and change. Regardless of the process established with community partners, these principles should drive collaborative processes:

- Equity is at the core of collaboration
- Relationships require intention
- Community partners are experts, too
- Transparency and accountability build trust
- Power and resources should be shared
- Pushback is important

LOS ANGELES

Source: LADOT

PART II: MANAGING COMMON BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

Common Internal Challenges

Agencies and organizations where designers and planners work, too often are not structured to easily facilitate collaborative design processes with communities.

Project teams do not have enough budget, time, or staff capacity to collaborate.

- Identify key internal champions with influence on budget and priorities who can advocate for resources within the agency or the city's overall hierarchy.

Entrenched bureaucratic systems and silos make communication difficult.

- Proactively coordinate across projects, government agencies, and jurisdictions.
- Use the power you do have to connect community partners not just to a department, but to a reliable contact who will help.

There is no institutional or political buy-in for collaboration.

- Learn about the history and ongoing priorities from community leaders and advocates already involved in the neighborhood of their work.
- Look for opportunities to align internal advocacy with their external work, especially if supporting their external advocacy with an expert lens is prohibited.

Decision-making structures are unclear to community members and agency staff.

- Map decision-making processes and key stakeholders for internal reference and to communicate to community partners.

City staff and leaders assume that communities don't know what they want or need.

- Listen with openness to community concerns, and work to understand and address the bigger picture.
- Pay CBOs to be lead partners on collaborative engagement.

"Who is actually making the call? Do we have to go to elected officials to help put their finger on the scale? It can be very difficult to navigate what should otherwise be a clear public process."

-Graham (community advisor)

Common External Challenges

The collaborative process can break down in excluded or marginalized communities when there is a failure to build trust and create buy-in for new projects.

Conversations between community members and city staff become charged because of concerns about gentrification, housing, or other critical issues.

- Meet residents and organizations to explain objectives and connect programmatic goals to needs.

- Communicate with consistency and transparency.

Community members fear change or loss, or have difficulty envisioning a proposed project.

- Recognize that sometimes people just need to be heard.

- Work with communities to unpack what larger themes like safety, accessibility, and sustainability mean to them. Learn destinations they need to access, and what barriers they perceive.

- Clarify specific policies that drive a project for community members that may not know or understand why a project has been proposed.

- Present data that helps demonstrate the project need, such as crashes, speeds, etc., that are tied to citywide and neighborhood goals, such as safety or access.

- Engage key stakeholders in interactive co-creation workshops so they can learn by playing with key concepts and tradeoffs. Present these concepts using meaningful and relatable language, not just quantitative measurements.

- Seek information about conditions that communities know best. For example, find out where community members feel unsafe crossing the street or where biking connections are difficult or uncomfortable, and connect that data to larger policy goals.

Privileged stakeholders (e.g., wealthier residents, vocal minorities of "usual suspects", and/or specific groups that claim to speak for the entire community) dominate the process.

- Prioritize communities most impacted by inequity for deeper collaboration.

- Refer to broader policies and stated values that can ground decision-making amidst disagreement (e.g., a citywide racial equity policy).

- Take time to look for multiple community voices.

"Being able to talk about bikes in a way that is inclusive is key. It needs to be an intentional conversation and informing people of where compromise can exist"

-Brianne (community advisor)

Residents do not like the look of bike infrastructure or are confused why it is there.

- Share design concepts information in a way that is accessible and inclusive, and incorporate cultural or contextual cues in project design.

- Describe the value or features of a particular design concept. When deploying quick build materials, share why or how these add value, time, flexibility and/or note when they might be upgraded (see NACTO's UBDG Materials paper).

- Consider language access and communications platforms favored by particular communities (e.g., WeChat). Discuss needs and preferences with communities.

There are unspoken power dynamics between city staff and residents.

- Create explicit check-ins and forums for learning and accountability, so that communities know who to contact at each stage of project development and how.

- Integrate community input, technical analysis, and design decisions. For example, staff might show community priorities alongside metrics in rubrics that rate alternatives.

Source: Minneapolis Public Works TPP

Tip: Addressing Opposition from Different Communities Requires a Nuanced Approach

All cities include different communities with varying levels of influence and privilege whose pushback can and should be viewed in context. Fostering successful community collaboration in these contexts is challenging. Nuanced questions arise and must be addressed: Who is included in the definition of community? How should input be managed or included? How should technical expertise and local expertise be balanced to create the best outcomes, not just for the immediate community but for the city or region as a whole?

This paper focuses on historically disenfranchised communities who have largely been left out of the planning process. However there are many well-resourced neighborhoods and residents who have developed a playbook for limiting what city agencies propose and enact, often wielding their power to stop projects that make communities safer, more accessible, and more sustainable for the whole. With more resources and stronger connections to decision-makers, these communities—typically older, whiter, richer, more practiced, or some combination of the above—oppose critical transportation safety projects or important affordable housing developments, watering down or even sometimes completely derailing project development.

It is critical that public agencies understand the impetus behind pushback and develop methods to respond to the reasoning in each case, rather than allowing projects to become watered down, delayed, or derailed. Thoughtful, tailored, co-design can help. Successfully responding to opposition requires different, tailored approaches.

→ **In marginalized communities concerned about displacement:**

  » Listen to understand past and ongoing harms, then adjust projects or show how potential changes might address those harms.

  » Co-design solutions to incorporate design treatments that reflect local character.

  » Broaden project elements to include amenities specific to neighborhood needs, such as lighting, landscaping, pedestrian safety.

  » Plan for incremental implementation, with immediate improvements focused on safety through traffic calming, for example, with biking facilities in a later phase.

→ **In well-resourced communities asking for more:**

  » Demonstrate need elsewhere by sharing safety or connectivity analysis.

  » Show the distribution of spending over time, to show underinvestment elsewhere.

  » Build support by having a pipeline and answers for when work will happen while reminding people that networks aren't built in a day.

→ **In communities who are resistant to change or prefer unsustainable projects:**

» Demonstrate project need and connection to accepted citywide goals.

» Ignite stewardship among project partners, to show support for those who will benefit from the project.

» Tap champions or find a linchpin within the community; but stand firm, in full recognition that opposition shifts as projects move through the development process.

Outreach Plan

	Jan 2018	April 2018	July 2018	Oct 2018	Jan 2019	April 2019	July 2019	Oct 2019
Design & Implementation	**Design & construction**							
Reach Out to Stakeholders on Their Turf		**Local neighborhood meetings & community rides**						
Community Process and Feedback		**Community meetings**						
Activation Events			**Local events (e.g. Viva Calles, community rides)**					
Evaluating Impact		**Data collection & analysis**						

Political Valley

Based on other cities, San José should expect to see public opinion trajectory follow the "valley" path, with a sharp response of concern immediately preceding & following implementation

Approve

Disapprove

Source: NACTO Green Light for Great Streets

In 2017, NACTO worked with San Jose DOT to create an Outreach Plan to align their bikeway (Better BikewaySJ) project delivery schedule with engagement and messaging opportunities. The plan is mapped over a "political valley" curve — an analysis of the arch of public opinion toward similarly transformative projects in other cities — to help SJ DOT anticipate and prepare for public reactions to the project.

Acknowledging Context

Projects developed without sufficient awareness of local context, community experience, and direct collaboration with local residents do not just fail to create equitable outcomes, they also usually fail to achieve whatever access, safety, sustainability, or equity goals they set out to accomplish in the first place. Practitioners must recognize and consider context as they develop projects with communities, understanding that decades of institutional racism and disinvestment can breed distrust in government actors that may span generations.

In particular, it is important for practitioners to remember that there is a long history of intentional disinvestment and destruction of marginalized neighborhoods. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, city and transportation planners intentionally destroyed thriving low-income communities and communities of color by routing highways and arterial streets through them and by seizing land to build factories, depots, incinerators and other facilities that were not desired in other areas. The focus on moving suburban drivers to and from a downtown core led to streets that prioritize vehicle throughput and speed, even through residential areas. Today 75% of the 16 most dangerous streets in the U.S. run through low-income communities.

More recently, disinvestment often comes in a subtler form, as decades of systematic budget cuts have led city agencies to rely heavily on private-sector partners (such as business improvement districts, area employers, and local businesses) for basic service provision. This structure exacerbates disinvestment because wealthier, well-resourced areas can marshall funds to make up for what the public sector cannot provide. For example, in some cities, open or play streets projects may only be implemented in places where private sector partners can provide maintenance. In others, street safety resources get prioritized in places where residents have the resources to organize and complain.

Finally, it's important to understand that this disinvestment is exacerbated by flawed housing policy that has restricted the supply of housing in most urban areas, and led to steadily increasing housing costs and rents. Coupled with the legacy of redlining that restricted where Black families could purchase property, these rising housing costs gut communities and lead to gentrification. When rising rents happen at the same time as cities make new, unprecedented investments in streets and the urban realm, long-term residents can be understandably suspicious, asking why investments are finally happening when many members of their community can no longer afford to live there.

OAKLAND

Source: Scraper Bike Team

PART III: BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Getting Started

Collaborative processes require significant degrees of customization to ensure that they best meet the needs and realities on the ground. Depending on who is at the table, what they need, and what resources they have at their disposal, a process that works in one place might not work in another. Thoughtful collaborators will consider and customize a variety of elements, from large components of the process like the timeline or decision-making model, to small choices, such as where and when meetings occur or how notes will be shared, to help support a collaborative process.

In particular, practitioners should remember that stakeholders will differ from place to place. While formal voices, such as elected officials, appointed committees, major institutions, and CBOs, are important to include in a collaborative process, practitioners must also engage with individual community members to make sure all the stakeholders are at the table. In one neighborhood, a tenants' association or community garden group might be a key voice; in another, ensuring that vendors or a specific local store are part of the process may be essential to building trust. In other places, project users, such as bus riders, who are in the community but may not live there, are core participants in a collaborative process. Any process will likely need to adapt and shift over time, as situations evolve and stakeholders flow in and out.

Understanding when a lighter or more robust collaborative process is required is key. For example, a lighter version works where a high level of trust is already in place or timelines and resources are limited, while keeping in mind the goal to build up to deeper collaboration in subsequent projects as relationships build over time.

Putting Principles into Practice

Equity is at the Core of Collaboration

Without deliberate attention to systems of marginalization such as racism, classism, and ableism, these dynamics can negatively shape collaboration processes and project impacts. Here are approaches to consider:

- **Build an equity lens.** How are systems of marginalization typically perpetuated through the planning field? What risks do those patterns pose in the project at hand? Training on these topics for key team members can improve their knowledge and capacity.

- **Do internal work, institutionally and individually, to prepare for reciprocal partnership.** Internal advocacy to shift mindsets, build capacity, shift working norms, and develop new processes is critical to enabling deeper collaboration via outreach.

- **The relationship between a city or agency's engagement staff and their technical analysis teams is a particularly important area to focus on.** Technical analysis must be aligned with community contributions in order for the community's input to impact a project. Working with technical teams to identify key questions and variables for co-design and establishing iterative processes between analysis and community feedback is key. Translating technical questions back and forth for community co-creation is at the core of this work.

Centering Equity in Visioning for Emerging Mobility in San Francisco

In developing the District 10 Mobility Study, an engagement team at the San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) together with Reflex Design, an Oakland-based equity design consultancy, hosted a series of visioning and prototyping workshops in which technical staff worked with residents to co-create visions for emerging mobility services for their community. In collaboration with local CBO co-hosts, SFCTA staff and facilitators led activities that translated the benefits and limitations of mobility strategies, such as bike and scooter share, to residents for their consideration as they created ideas.

Through a series of multilingual workshops held in collaboration with three local CBOs, over 150 District 10 residents—involved as paid co-designers—and city staff designed more than 90 ideas to make transportation more equitable in District 10. These ideas were then analyzed for technical feasibility and synthesized into more detailed proposals for revision in a follow up workshop where trade-offs were clearly communicated. At this follow-up workshop, participants were able to give specific feedback and generated redesigns to improve each concept. The final proposals included ideas such as:


SAN FRANCISCO

Source: SFMTA

- A community shuttle for grocery shopping in partnership with a local shuttle company

- A translator and transportation coordinator to book and plan rides for the many non-English speakers who cannot currently use ride hailing apps

- A subsidized carpooling service to bring kids to school

The final set of 10 solutions to improve transportation were unanimously approved by SFCTA, which is now pursuing implementation by seeking funding, coordinating partnerships, and developing policy to support the ideas.

Relationships Require Intention

Intentionally cultivating respectful relationships with communities is the backbone of constructive partnerships.

- **Build sensitivity and awareness.**
  - » **Be curious about the community's experience with government:** What has a community's prior experience with government and outreach been like? Is there mistrust, and if so, why?
  - » **Be aware of institutional factors:** What institutional limitations (e.g., pending leadership transitions, staffing shortages, etc.) might affect this relationship?
  - » **Multiple data sources help:** Desktop research and tools such as one-to-one conversations with local leaders can provide important insight on these questions.

- **Find ways to connect.**
  - » **Identify an embedded community partner (e.g., a CBO or BID)** to work with, who brings deep local expertise about a specific neighborhood.
  - » **Meet people where they are** by showing up to existing meetings and other community events.
  - » **Show consistency,** which helps build trust.

- **Start as early as possible.**
  - » **Learn about existing community work and stated goals:** Are there opportunities to support what is already moving?
  - » **Collaborate with communities on project scope and priorities:** Can projects be designed from their inception to focus on needs directly raised by the community?

AUSTIN

Source: Austin Transportation
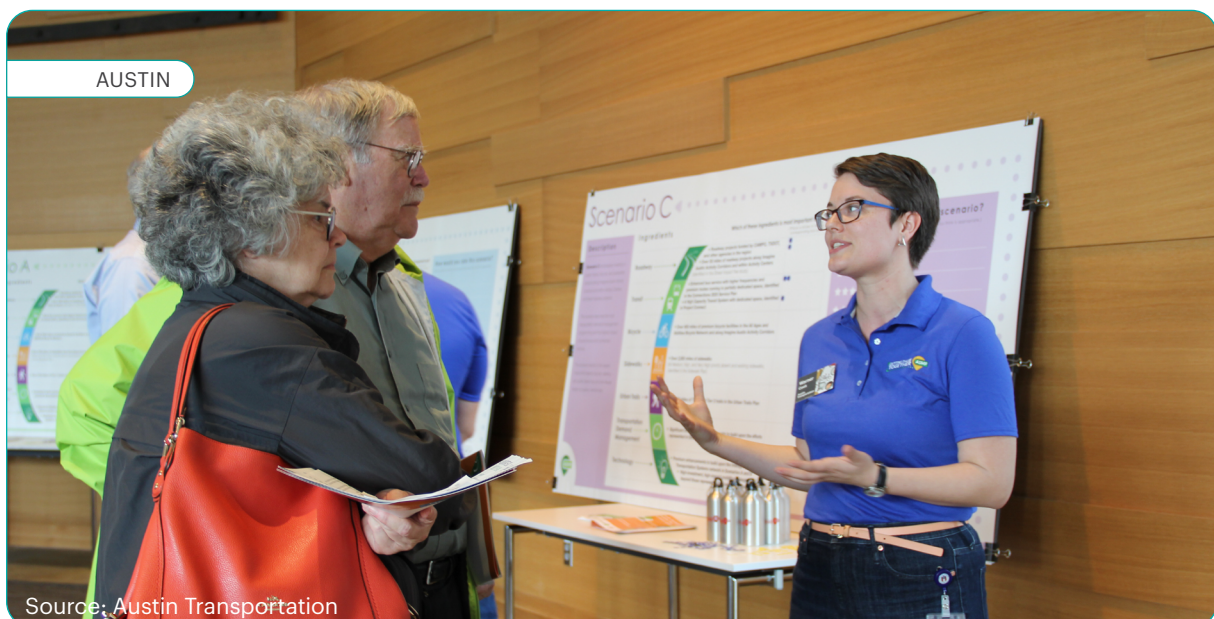
Community Partners are Experts, Too

Community partners bring invaluable expertise to project development, so partnership structures should reflect that value-add.

- **Formalize partnerships with key community stakeholders to help execute broader. collaborative engagement.** In collaborative engagement, community partners often play key roles in executing community outreach, facilitation, and other engagement (e.g., co-hosting workshops) with their networks. In these partnerships:

  » **Document roles and expectations with clear written agreements.** Tools such as (paid) contracts or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with CBOs and other key partners can offer important clarity, structure, and accountability to all parties.

  » **Be thoughtful about workload and roles.** CBOs often manage enormous amounts of work with limited staff and financial resources. This is particularly true in underinvested and disinvested communities. It can be helpful and equitable for better-resourced institutions to handle logistics and project management tasks to free up CBO staff to leverage their community expertise and spend their time and energy wisely.

▬ Tip: Establish Partnerships in Advance

Formal partnerships with CBOs can be difficult to organize on-demand due to government procurement hurdles and organizational capacity constraints. Alternatives to this ad-hoc approach include:

- An on-call or bench model, where clear partnerships with CBOs are organized in advance for projects as they arise. This approach can offer more opportunities for intentional partnership building and also may offer greater predictability from a community organization's perspective.

- Working together with CBOs to apply for grants that fund CBOs for project-related work.

- **Invest in expanding access and providing compensation for community partners from marginalized communities to collaborate in the planning process.** Engaging with city staff to co-design projects requires residents to spend time and energy above and beyond their regular responsibilities. They should be paid for their time and expertise, as a consultant would be, and accessing planning spaces should be easy and straightforward. This might mean engaging in multiple languages, offering online and in-person options to collaborate, considering age and ability, and more.

Power and Resources Should be Shared

Even in situations where final project decisions rest with elected bodies by law, planning processes include many interim decisions and opportunities for community power. Cities should build consensus around not just the project need, but also project scope, boundaries, and alternatives, available evaluation measures and processes, and elements of the engagement plan.

- **Share decision-making power with communities.** A good collaborative process will result in a decision that all stakeholders support, or at least understand and accept. When scoping a project, embed specific and explicit decision points where community collaborators can have a say. Be clear when and how decisions will be made, describe where elements are fixed by law or regulation, and be explicit about which decisions rest with officials.

- **Recognize that sharing power involves taking risks for institutional stakeholders.** Collaboration requires trust, clarity, flexibility and innovation. This approach may require more time, budget, or intensity, depending on the complexity of the project or the relationships–particularly when engaging with people who face disproportionately high barriers to participation.

Transparency and Accountability Build Trust

Explicit expectations, clear communication, and taking responsibility for intended and unintended impacts are key to building trust and effectiveness. This applies to community partners at all levels, from co-designer participants attending a single workshop to CBOs co-facilitating engagement.

- **Communicate context and set expectations.**

  » **Communicate goals and project scope:** How far can community input go and what is non-negotiable? Which of their needs can this project realistically be expected to address?

  » **Clarify relevant decision-making processes:** How will project decisions be made and by whom?

  » **Establish feedback loops, and follow up:** Reporting back to the community about what input is incorporated, why or why not, and general updates on project progress (especially unexpected delays or pivots) helps maintain trust.

- **Be willing to own mistakes and make efforts to repair them.** This is a shift from how government agencies have historically operated with many communities. A willingness to grow is more important than perfection. Avoid using the same engagement approach in a privileged community as in a marginalized community, and be sensitive to varied needs across various neighborhoods.

A Transparent Process for Station Siting in New York City

In 2011, in preparation for the introduction of the city's new, large-scale bike-share program, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) embarked on a massive, collaborative engagement process to determine how the bike share system would be rolled-out on city streets. The process began with informational conversations with stakeholder groups (such as elected officials, community boards, institutional players, community-based organizations, and neighborhood organizations), and demonstration events to reach the general public. In these conversations, NYC DOT staff laid out the vision for bike share in New York and explained the core, non-negotiable planning principles, such as "a 3-5 minute walk between stations" and a contiguous service area.

In collaboration with the stakeholder groups, NYC DOT staff also mapped out a planning process, establishing a mutually agreed upon timeline for when and how station locations would be proposed, vetted, and ultimately selected. The process included 159 public meetings, including dozens of neighborhood-specific community planning workshops, held in a variety of languages and co-hosted by the community boards, elected officials, and community groups. These conversations helped NYC DOT and stakeholders gather information from communities and individuals as to their general preferences on location types (e.g. on the sidewalk vs in the parking lane), unique conditions at specific locations that might otherwise not be readily apparent, and to spread information and set expectations about the project in general. This collaborative approach built trust, ensured that vital location-specific information was included in the planning process, and set a foundation for collaborative partnerships that are still thriving today.

NEW YORK CITY

Source: NYCDOT

Pushback is a Part of the Process

Not only is pushback a natural feature of collaboration, but it is also a helpful component of the process.

- **Listen to understand before trying to correct or share additional information.** Building understanding requires acknowledgement of community concerns shared in good faith, especially in communities with a deep history of government harm and neglect. Some pushback may be related to a fear of change, but other resistance may be linked to a larger context that isn't responsive to communities' top needs or priorities.

> **Tip: Context Can Explain a Lot**
>
> When facing pushback, planners can ask themselves questions like: Where does our work and our institution fit within the larger story of this community? Are we coming in with a project that meets a top priority for this community, or are they being asked to engage with us while also experiencing more urgent needs that are going persistently unmet, perhaps despite ongoing advocacy?

- **Learn together and be willing to pivot.** Educating communities about project goals and benefits is necessary to orient community members towards collaboration. But learning goes both ways, and planners should be willing to challenge their assumptions with openness to lived expertise. Sometimes a project should not be completed in its current form, or should not be completed before other policies or improvements are made.

- **Keep in mind that not all disagreement is a failure.** Gaining complete consensus is unrealistic and unnecessary for a project to move forward. Low-stakes, smaller-scale demonstration projects are one tool to explore further prior to achieving high levels of buy-in. These prototypes have the dual benefit of illustrating concepts and field testing their effectiveness.

- **Collaborate horizontally and advocate vertically to find solutions.** Working internally across teams, with peer agencies, and with decision-making authorities while co-designing with community partners can open up additional possibilities for meeting specific needs. Sharing behind-the-scenes information and key contacts with community leaders can be empowering in the face of bureaucracy. Keeping high-level decision-makers such as elected officials informed of collaborative processes can help with their buy-in.

> **Tip: Break Down Internal Silos**
>
> Working across silos can be a major challenge logistically and politically. Whether or not programmatic goals are coordinated at a high level (e.g. transportation projects with affordable housing targets), building relationships between key contacts at respective departments can help communicate information about connected community needs.

DENVER

Source: DOTI

PART IV: CASE STUDIES OF COLLABORATION IN ACTION

Building a Better Bike Share in Pittsburgh

In May of 2022, Pittsburgh Bike Share switched equipment providers,[1] rebranded as POGOH, and reduced their number of stations from 106 to 38. To ensure that the station reduction was done equitably, Pittsburgh Bike Share, a non-profit organization, convened a Community Planning Coalition to examine every system decision—from pricing to station siting—through an equity lens. The Coalition was made up of individual customers, community development corporations, and other interested stakeholders.

From the outset of the project, Pittsburgh Bike Share prioritized investing time and resources into relationship building to cultivate trust and center community members' lived experience. Much of this initial work meant addressing the barriers that have impeded meaningful collaboration with communities that have been historically marginalized in public decision-making processes. This included monetary compensation for participation, addressing the legacy of structural racism, and a commitment to continuous relationship building.

Removing barriers to participation and centering racial justice: The Community Planning Coalition had approximately 40 participants who met every month between 2021–2022. To compensate participants for their time and work, POGOH paid members a stipend of $1,000 a year to participate. Speakers with experience working for racial justice in transportation systems—including Charles T. Brown, Olatunji Oboi Reed, and Tamika Butler—were also invited to meetings to help spark ideas and guide the group's work.

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[1] From 2015 to 2021, Nextbike provided equipment for Pittsburgh's bike share system, then called Healthy Ride. In 2021, as Nextbike decided to focus exclusively on the European market, the Pittsburgh Bike Share switched to a new equipment provider, PBSC.

Building trust through continuous engagement: POGOH leveraged a community outreach team (three full time staff members) and a group of Community Ambassadors from local nonprofits to build awareness for the bike share. The outreach team and Ambassadors focused on engaging community members in conversation about the new stations and helping people learn how to use the bikes. POGOH also held a Community Day to provide an opportunity for residents to learn more about the program's Mobility Justice Membership, sign-up, test-ride a bike, and receive a free helmet. Importantly, the location for the Community Day event was held at Westinghouse Park, which connects three Pittsburgh neighborhoods with traditionally underserved communities, and where most of the system's Community Ambassadors are located. More recently, on November 8, 2022, POGOH launched a "Roll to the Polls" initiative that provided free unlimited 30-minute rides. Events like these promote the bike share system while creating a clear connection between civic engagement and civic infrastructure.

PITTSBURGH

Source: DOMI

More Equitable Outcomes: Prioritizing collaboration early enabled POGOH to center access and inclusion for communities that face the biggest barriers to bike share system membership. This dynamic led to more equitable project outcomes in the design of the revamped system. Some of these outcomes include:

- **Equitable pricing:** POGOH now offers a $10 per year low-income Mobility Justice Membership that can be paid in cash. This reduced rate also includes all e-assist bikes.

- **Equitable station siting:** Plans to build 23 more stations in 2023 will prioritize locations in lower-income areas and near essential services like grocery stores and pharmacies to improve access for historically underserved riders. For residents too far from a station at the initial rollout, the nonprofit is working to revamp 500 bikes left over from the old provider, and distribute them for free through different community-based organizations, with an emphasis on serving the housing insecure.

- **Equitable approaches to physical mobility:** Almost half of the bikes in the new system are electric-assist, which allows people of all fitness levels and differently-abled riders to participate. E-bikes also provide all riders with the opportunity to go further and ride longer. Additionally, the new bikes are lighter and smaller, making them more accessible to shorter riders and youth ages 14 and up.

- **Equitable mobility options:** In 2022, Pittsburgh launched a two-year pilot program called Move PGH. This single-provider model integrates different options of shared mobility that users access through the Transit app and at new Mobility Hubs. By connecting bike sharing to other other options like transit, moped share, car share, and carpooling, Move PGH aims to make mobility more convenient, accessible, and equitable by offering residents multiple transportation options that best meet their needs.

This example underscores how a direct collaborative design process with local residents amplified community experiences. By investing in collaboration, Pittsburgh Bike Share was better equipped to address and remove barriers that have historically impeded bike share membership among marginalized communities. Removing barriers to membership has created more equitable outcomes. More equitable outcomes have created a bike share system that works better for all residents and laid the foundation for increased accessibility as the network grows. Ultimately, more accessibility allows for increased ridership and greater sustainability and this collaboration ultimately led to more equitable outcomes and a bike share system primed to grow in ridership and sustainability.

PITTSBURGH

Source: POGOH

Collaborating with Community on Neighborhood Bike Networks in Chicago

Over the past decade, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) has implemented major bike network expansions across the city. To integrate collaboration into their community engagement process, CDOT utilized strategies including:

- 1-on-1 meetings and focus groups with community leaders
- Task forces of 20-30 residents within each neighborhood who helped identify what they wanted to see in a bike network
- A calendar of community events that CDOT staff would attend to get feedback
- Compensation for key partners via a paid citizen advisory council and a youth job training program

From the outset, CDOT prioritized well-connected, equitable bike networks through collaboration by partnering with local CBOs to form neighborhood-based task forces that could directly engage with other stakeholders. For example, the Belmont Cragin neighborhood task force partnered with a local bike shop on youth-oriented workshops, regularly met with local CBO the Northwest Center's youth council, and conducted walkability assessments with the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago's Children. This hyper-local focus helped identify issues of importance to the community, and enabled planners and the task force to design a neighborhood bike network that could address those issues.

CDOT staff working on the Neighborhood Bike Network project attributed multiple benefits to this collaborative approach. By collaborating with local partners, CDOT received valuable feedback about neighborhood perceptions of bicycling, identified key neighborhood destinations, and co-designed long term goals for the bike network. Collaborating across the city with neighborhood-specific task forces enabled CDOT to collaboratively develop incremental or quick build networks of bikeways that supported community goals by connecting neighborhood destinations. Building a bike network for a neighborhood all at once created a solid foundation for successful bike network implementation. In this case, collaborative strategies strengthened relationships in ways that improved project outcomes.

CDOT reports that bicycle infrastructure has more than doubled in the past decade and that the overall number of residents biking has increased. They attribute this in part to their Neighborhood Bikes Network process: community collaboration, data collection, network identification, community education and continued investment.

CHICAGO

Source: CDOT

APPENDIX: RESOURCES

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