



OVERVIEW

Cities and bike share operators should have equity policies that direct or guide the system to serve residents equitably, including making the system accessible to traditionally underserved communities. At its core, equity means understanding and providing people what they need to be successful at an endeavor. The graphic in Figure 1 provides a simple distinction between equality (where each receives the same item), and equity. Articulating a specific equity policy helps to establish goals, build in accountability, and provides an opportunity to assess. A solid equity policy is an important first step in delivering an equitable bike share system.



Equality vs. Equity

Photo Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

CURRENT APPROACHES

In our recent survey of cities and bike share operators, fewer than one in three systems had specific equity policies or statements, while another 20% had either equity definitions passed down from the city that they used, or had working definitions based on programmatic activity. Large systems of 750 bikes or more were most likely to have equity policies or statements. Equity policies may identify:

- **Who currently is excluded from the benefits of bike share?** Identify specific underserved groups, such as low-income individuals or minority communities, or neighborhoods with the greatest need and/or fewest transportation options.
- **What system actions or program elements should be undertaken?** A general definition is to focus energy and resources on those experiencing barriers to bike share and listening to needs to eliminate the challenges that exist. Others might be more specific, such as providing reduced-cost passes to income-qualified individuals and a cash option for those unable to pay with a credit card.
- **How will you will manage your team?** Policies may specify staffing representation and contractor hiring requirements.
- **What past injustices and current circumstances necessitate current action?** Policies may detail reasons why certain residents have been excluded or face a disadvantage, including describing the consequences of the past injustices.
- **What end outcomes are sought?** Policies may specify end goals of equity programming, including that bike share should be accessible and available to support residents daily lives, improve public health, and connect residents to services, recreation, community and economic opportunities.

CONSIDERATIONS

In crafting an equity policy or statement, systems must consider tradeoffs between specificity vs. generality, brevity vs. detail, and straightforward vs. aspirational. Specific, detailed and aspirational policies provide the most guidance and set a high bar, while general, brief and straightforward policies may be more digestible, flexible and attainable.



Identify Specific Populations: Depending on the local context, systems may want to name specific equity populations they seek to serve (such as low-income residents, specific populations, etc.) in order to both acknowledge and commit to serving them. General goals such as “serving all residents” leave commitments open-ended, which can reduce accountability.



Build in Accountability: Specific actions, commitments and targets (e.g. signing up “X” members of a target community) provide both direction and accountability, while general approaches and goals (such as “provide a service that is inclusive, accessible, and affordable to all users”) can help guide day to day operations and how a system approaches equity programming.



Include Internal Equity: Internal equity policies may cover how the system hires and trains employees and makes programming and other decisions. Regardless of the focus of the statement (internal operations vs external activities), systems choose how public their policies become - are they posted on the website, articulated at public meetings, on kiosks, etc.



Contractual Inclusion of Equity with Partners: Cities should include contractual clauses with vendors addressing equity. They may have existing equity policies that would apply to bike share operators/vendors in their city, or that can be incorporated by the operators into their policy.

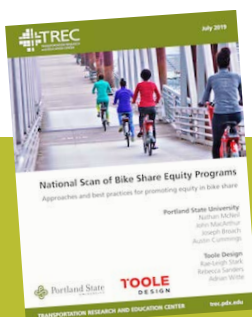
RESOURCES

Before crafting an equity statement, get familiar with key information, including:

- Understanding overall trends in bike share usage, including who tends to participate, who is left out, and what the key barriers are.
- Understanding the local context, such as the underserved populations and neighborhoods, and what stakeholders and groups should be engaged in the bike share process.

Recommended reading for developing a policy statement: [“Planning for Equity Policy Guide” from the American Planning Association.](#)

Credits for statement examples: Eugene, OR, Des Moines, IA, Memphis, TN, Portland, OR, Pittsburgh, PA, Chicago, IL, Philadelphia, PA, Milwaukee, WI, Boston, MA, New York, NY



MEASURING AND EVALUATING

Equity policies provide the opportunity and responsibility to periodically gauge progress and needs:

- In order to assess progress, cities and operators need to ensure that system data is available, including anonymized data for agencies or research. Policies and/or resulting programs should establish data practices that allow them to analyse trips or memberships in zip codes facing economic hardship.
- Establish regular (every 6 or 12 months) check-ins with staff, stakeholders or boards to assess progress around the equity policy goals and targets. Specific targets make it easier to assess progress, and harder to equivocate on successes or failures.
- Equity policies and goals should be reflected in line items on program budgets. Budget expenditure change over time on equity programming could be a metric.

Adapted from the “National Scan of Bike Share Equity Programs” report, this is part of the “Breaking Barriers to Bike Share” resource series. Comprised of ten topics, this series looks at bike share through an equity lens and provides successful approaches and recommendations for stakeholders to implement.