

# BEYOND EQUITY - A Strategy for Developing Critical Leadership in Transportation

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FOR: BETTER BIKE SHARE PARTNERSHIP

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CITY TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

In partnership with the National Association of Transportation Officials (NACTO), the Better Bike Share Partnership (BBSP) wants to amplify the work and profile of Black, Brown, and Indigenous professionals of color and allies across the transportation sector. Through a professional development fellowship, participants will co-strategize, learn new skills, and expand their networks with the intention of institutionalizing a vision for equity and social justice within their organizations. The fellowship is designed to hold space for participants to become co-creators in the outcomes, benefits, and levels of interaction and will support the collective and individual growth of Fellows and the communities they work and live in.

This white paper is a detailed overview of the insights and research that informed the structure, desired outcomes, and experiences that were included in the BBSP Fellowship for Critical Leadership in Transportation.

# THE STATE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE TRANSPORTATION FIELD

## THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

“What is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership in others.”<sup>1</sup> - Ella Baker

Ella Baker was a leader in her own right; but her hallmark was her insistence on developing others as leaders. Having stood on the frontlines for social justice as a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Director, a Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee founder, and an exemplary organizer for human rights, Baker has gifted us with a strategy for effective leadership development--the revelation that there is, and must be, a leader in each of us. For Baker, this was not a philosophical euphemism; she believed this strategy--developing a leader in everyone--would be the only sustainable path to equity and justice. Baker’s vision for leadership development juxtaposed the reality of leadership in the transportation planning sector underscores a crisis across the transportation planning workforce and in the communities planners work in.

At this time, the Bureau of Labor Statistics does not publish demographics that specifically spell out occupational data in the transportation planning and transportation-related engineering fields (though this data is reported for most other professions). As such, it is difficult to arrive at an accurate snapshot of *who* is working in the transportation planning sector and *who* holds leadership positions. Statistics in planning-adjacent fields shed a little bit of light on the extent and potential of the leadership crisis the transportation sector is facing. For example, in 2015,

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<sup>1</sup> (2017). Ella Baker: Original Analysis 1903–1986. In E. Salem Press (Ed.), *Civil Disobedience, Social Justice, Nationalism & Populism, Violent Demonstrations and Race Relations*. Hackensack: Salem. Retrieved from <https://online.salempress.com>

the percentage of engineering degrees awarded to African Americans was 4% and this number has decreased annually since then.<sup>2</sup> While the statistics detailing racial representation within the engineering field are similarly sparse for Asian and Latinx graduates, the percentage of engineering degrees awarded annually has increased each year for those groups. This data reveals that this crisis of representation among the current body of leaders in transportation will likely persist for years to come, unless there is an intentional effort to develop the existing transportation workforce not currently in leadership positions.

Still, statistics don't bear the full extent of the crisis of leadership in transportation. In 2020, a Digital Survey of a dozen leaders in the transportation planning and transportation advocacy sectors revealed a pervasive (and maybe implicit) desire among executive leaders to preserve personal power and the structures that support it. Consistent with what secondary data sources reveal about representation in the transportation planning sector, 80% of the survey respondents were white men, mostly in the highest ranking positions in their organizations. Their responses also showed, in lieu of promoting those who would work toward resolving inequity and addressing impacts of transportation practices and investments, leaders were emotionally and operationally invested in establishing pathways to leadership that were intentionally rigorous and reified the void of racial representation in the field. More troubling: survey respondents appeared to boast about this and characterized this dynamic as altruistic in nature, at times even suggesting their high barriers to leadership denoted merit and validated efforts to increase diversity amongst leaders.<sup>3</sup>

A cursory search of social media discourse on this subject provides an anecdotal validation of this crisis in transportation sector leadership. For example, on Twitter, on any given day, one will encounter overt frustration (on the part of the transportation planning workforce) with the lack of evolution in leadership practices and leaders themselves, women telling heart-wrenching stories about toxic leadership structures and microaggressive workplace policies, actual microaggressive views regarding transportation planning, and dozens of planners and engineers who are exhausted by the voyeuristic demand for trauma narratives as a basis for even broaching the topic of needs specific to anyone who isn't white, able-bodied and heterosexual.

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<sup>2</sup> (2016). B.L. Yoder: Engineering by the numbers. Washington: American Society for Engineering Education. Retrieved from [https:// www.asee.org/papers-and-publications/publications/college-profiles/15EngineeringbytheNumbersPart1.pdf](https://www.asee.org/papers-and-publications/publications/college-profiles/15EngineeringbytheNumbersPart1.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> This survey was a context-gathering effort conducted by Dr. Destiny Thomas during the planning phases of a Better Bike Share Partnership Fellowship program

Give me a leadership program that doesn't lay bare and lay waste POCs' lived experience and trauma for the consumption and \*come-to-Jesus\* moments of the true audience

Some of y'all can't retain #WOC bc you don't know how to treat them once they enter your institutions.

If you put a house plant in the desert it's going to die.

You have to create the proper conditions if you are bringing someone to an environment not created for them. #tip

7:00 AM · 1/30/20 · [The Social Jukebox](#)

I just got it today! You can buy it on Etsy (the other options are "ban cars" and "ban lawns")



One good thing about everyone working from home is that black people get a break from code switching 40 hours a week.

12:29 PM · 3/16/20 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

Women, of various intersectional identities, tend to be most negatively impacted by the crisis of leadership in transportation, despite increasing efforts to develop women leaders. While Dr. Kecia Thomas (2013) does not work in the transportation sector (she's an educator) her detailing of a dynamic she refers to as "Pet-to-Threat" mirrors depictions put forth by those in the planning field who have struggled to promote because they are far in proximity from the traditional construct of an ideal leader. Thomas notes, "I think in every career trajectory there comes an opportunity for a promotion or leadership, where the individual has a level of influence or power to make significant changes and to rethink how business is done. That's when women are probably most vulnerable to getting recast as threatening, because their colleagues are pushing back on the person legitimately exerting their influence in the workplace."<sup>4</sup> Organizations and municipalities across the United States are working to develop equity campaigns, but those working within these entities tell of lackluster range and impact of these efforts.

## Relegating the "impractical" task of equity

The myth of impracticality is one of the ways today's leaders resist increasing access to leadership. When existing leaders in the transportation planning field are asked to consider adopting official equity frameworks for personnel practices and project development, the myth of impracticality is a common device for resisting potential disruption to the status quo. When the

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, K. M., Johnson-Bailey, J., Phelps, R. E., Tran, N. M., Johnson, L. (2013). Moving from pet to threat: Narratives of professional Black women. In Comas-Diaz, L., Green, B. (Eds.), *The psychological health of women of color*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Digital Survey participants had an opportunity to recommend ways to widen the pool of leaders and improve equity outcomes through leadership development, participants characterised equity-related work as being “impractical”--especially if a desired outcome was publicly acknowledging or atoning for organizational or structural inequity. For example, one respondent worried that overt atonement would be “difficult for other people in the field to grapple with.” This feedback is an example of the ways key decision-makers champion equity aims while simultaneously undermining those objectives with the retort of impracticality. One survey respondent suggested offering organizational leaders a training or strategy session to help them “create a vision for what atonement would look like and what measures could plausibly be advocated for.” Ironically, the same survey respondent pointed out, “The structure of transportation is grounded in engineering and based on top-down design [that] does not question the assumptions and values which underlie the current ideas about how transportation systems are designed.” Leaders are aware of the barriers to organizational evolution and leadership development, yet disinterested in owning the processes by which those barriers would be removed.

According to participants of a virtual National Strategy Session<sup>5</sup>, as a result of the struggle organizational leaders tend to have when it comes to leaning into equity policies and personnel practices, the work of equity becomes relegated, but not delegated, to those most likely experiencing the brunt of inequity within the organization. National Strategy Session participants asserted the task of improving access to the profession is usually relegated to highly visible equity-oriented planners and advocates within the field who’ve worked hard to bring attention to equity gaps. Visibility and a seat at the table appear to be the extent of intentionality when it comes to advancing equity aims for the purposes of growing leadership. In fact, in the absence of widespread visibility, these assignments are rarely perceived as the work of a leader. Whether or not executive-level decision-makers are aware of the roles they play in producing equity gaps, the impacts of their decisions push would-be leaders out of organizations and agencies quite frequently.

## Respectability, assimilation, and the professional professional

For many entry to mid-level transportation professionals, leaving spaces that stifle professional development is not always an option. The alternative is to stay and to perform assimilation to workplace culture as best as possible. Digital Survey respondents (predominantly white men in executive positions) named traditional transportation spaces, universities, planning firms, and government agencies as “viable” sites for professional development, making it very clear that the construct of “valid” professional development relies on existing systems and spaces where equity is often an afterthought. In these environments, potential leaders frequently battle “imposter syndrome,” a phenomenon wherein “high-achieving individuals who, despite their

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<sup>5</sup> This National Strategy Session was a context-gathering effort conducted by Dr. Destiny Thomas during the planning phases of a Better Bike Share Partnership Fellowship program. Participants included 49 transportation professionals representing vastly diverse backgrounds varying in degree of experience, racial identity, gender identity, sector, and age.

objective successes, fail to internalize their accomplishments and have persistent self-doubt and fear of being exposed as a fraud or impostor.”<sup>6</sup> Regardless of how one chooses to respond to challenges to their validity within the transportation sector, the mental and emotional labor invoked by these hostilities is highly stressful and threatens the psychological well-being of those not revered as technically or professionally valid.

## THE CRISIS OF EQUITY

“I am the history of the rejection of who I am.” - June Jordan

The history of who we are, as a field, has established an identity of “rejection” that is spoken about as a moment in time, as opposed to an assault on living, breathing people. The crisis of leadership is, at its core, a by-product of longstanding practices of structural inequity. In “Poem about my Rights,”<sup>7</sup> June Jordan gives “the rejected” of the field--and of the communities the field has impacted--a lexicon and a linguistic cadence to convey the magnitude of the violations trespassed upon so many by way of structural inequity. Jordan details the ways the construct of personhood not only causes her to be subject to harm everywhere she goes, but she also is not given the latitude of self-agency to speak out when she has been harmed. The poem itself is a graphic, yet accurate depiction of what it is like to exist in a world, in a profession, wherein your very presence makes you wrong and worthy of mistreatment. Perhaps this isn’t the true intention of leaders in transportation--to violate aspiring leaders who’ve emerged from the communities the field attempted to bury alive--but the impact persists.

The term “equity” holds different meanings and context across the transportation field, depending on individual access to decision-making power, and depending on positionality within the broader sense of community and society. Similarly, the ways in which inequity persists spans many cultural identities and lived experiences. The current crisis of equity is one that disregards the hostile nature of design practices and the direct impacts on people living with disabilities. It is a crisis that penalizes transit riders living in poverty caused by the planning sector. This crisis relegates Black women to soothing a 500-year old wound. This crisis ignores an entire spectrum of gender identity. It refuses to acknowledge the land that was stolen. For these reasons and more, the transportation planning sector cannot stop at diversifying leadership. Representation is a factor, but certainly won’t solve an equity crisis.

### Lack of representation

Representation continues to be a critical gap within the transportation field. Those facilitating racial equity conversations are not usually representative of those most directly impacted by

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<sup>6</sup> Kolligian, J., & Sternberg, R. J. (1991). Perceived fraudulence in young adults: Is there an "impostor syndrome"? *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 56(2), 308–326. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5602\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5602_10)

<sup>7</sup> Jordan, June. (2005). “Poem About My Rights” from *Directed By Desire: The Collected Poems of June Jordan*. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press.

inequities. Even when representation can be quantified at the decision-making levels, not enough people in decision-making positions have a lived or emotional connection to the crisis of equity. In the same ways racially biased narratives have contributed to the construct of the desirable transportation end-user, these narratives have led to the construction of the desirable planner, engineer, student and decision-maker. There are concerns that the next wave of transportation academics, practitioners, and leaders will not represent the constituents they serve, their cultural/lived experiences, their unique needs, and the ways healing and atonement should be incorporated in planning methods and policies.

Equity tends to be relegated to advocacy spaces; this includes the task of outreaching to Black, Brown, and Indigenous people of color and low income communities. The inherent challenges with this tendency is the tokenizing notion that equity is somehow separate from technical scope and therefore only suitable work for those outside of (lacking institutional footing within) the formal transportation field. Even as planners and advocacy groups attempt to adapt to this relegation, myths regarding potential cross-racial tensions and equity rabbit-holes are leveraged as dissenting retorts to investing in meaningful engagement.

### “The field’s” contributions to structural harm

Across the transportation planning sector, professionals are beginning to acknowledge the racist history of urban and transportation planning. The equity gap, however, shows up as sluggish attempts to resolve the harm and erasure that stems from these racist histories.

Organizationally, structural harm is perpetuated through the industry-wide notion that in order for equity to be validated (and resourced) it has to be linked with (or even justified by) more commonly accepted technical and engineering analyses. However, an equity framework should be a component of a broader plan to acknowledge and atone for past and present harms. Over-reliance on technical feasibility widens the gap between communities and implementing agencies. Generations of hyper-technical approaches to planning have resulted in a vast degree of mystery, dual-directional mistrust, and lack of capacity for community-based planning. The point of juncture for resolving these harms is atonement.

In “Between Vengeance and Forgiveness,” Martha Minow described atonement as being “repair of social connections and peace rather than retribution against offenders [and] building connections and enhancing communication between perpetrators and those they victimized, and forging ties across the community.”<sup>8</sup> Roy L. Brooks has argued that the core of atonement is acknowledgement and an apology for past harms wherein financial offerings (from a torts standpoint) denote the seriousness and genuineness of that apology.<sup>9</sup> The transportation planning field could do more to establish funding and process mechanisms that demonstrate a genuine sentiment of atonement in communities most impacted by structural racism and the

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<sup>8</sup> Minow, M. (1998). *Between vengeance and forgiveness: Facing history after genocide and mass violence*. Boston: Beacon Press.

<sup>9</sup> Brooks, R. L. (2004). *Atonement and forgiveness: A new model for Black reparations*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

planners, engineers, and advocates that come to the field directly from those communities. The existing incongruence of resources generally presents as a lack of intra-community connectivity, privileging of certain mobility modes over others, inequitable approaches to policing, inequitable burden of revenue generation on lower income communities (by way of fees and fines), and the centering of developer aims which rarely represent the pervasive needs and interests of existing residents and business owners.

## Ornamental equity

There is an industry-wide buzz regarding racial equity but these discussions appear to be shallow and diluted in nature and rarely reach a point of planning for or investing in shifting power. For example, there continues to be an over-reliance on project-based community engagement, rigid timelines, and deliverables that fall short of making room for critical analysis and relationship building. There is a core contingency of planners and advocates interested in advancing equity within the field and very few of them are in leadership positions. Moving beyond an ornamental or inauthentic facade of equity, a macro-analysis and approach to adopting a posture of equity is necessary. Staff who are currently carrying equity-related workloads (like community engagement, displacement avoidance, and gendered travel studies) on their shoulders often express an incongruence between their organization's public-facing equity values and the internal values and inequities they encounter in their daily work-lives. These same staff share stories about times when equity-related objectives and projects required them to engage in long-term advocacy within their organizations yet the successful outcomes of those projects were credited to white colleagues. This dynamic has led to the fortification of white-centered narratives in equity discourse and the subsequent lack of sustainability and authentic conversations regarding equity moving forward.

## Microaggressions

While microaggressions show up in professional spaces in various ways and between people of various backgrounds, Black women experience microaggressions at extremely harmful rates. In addition to frequently feeling erased or de-credited in the professional sphere, Black women encounter microaggressions by way of competitive comparisons between them and other women of color. To be clear, racism fuels the spirit and effects of microaggressive behavior displayed as microassaults (blatant erasure or disregard of one person to the direct benefit of another) as well as microinsults (underhanded comments that promote shame and embarrassment regarding one's cultural or racial identity). Microaggressions appear to be ingrained in the performance of professionalism within the work environment and they rob people--often Black women--of their dignity and validity.

## The crisis of policy and data

Equity gaps in data collection and analysis and the policies that derive from them continue to undermine outcomes and quality of life in communities impacted by the transportation sector. Even when data collection and analysis efforts attempt to lend themselves to equity aims, there



is a lack of effort to disaggregate data. A common example of this is the emerging prevalence of the “People of Color” category which lumps impacted communities into a single identity with minimal consideration for more nuanced impacts and solutions within that category. This results in stockpiles of quantitative data that perpetuate dominant ideologies.

The most harmful implications of non-critical data-driven practices within transportation are the policies and programs that derive from them. The combined effect of inequitable data parameters and the inability to establish an industry-wide equity stance, laws, regulations, and mandates results in equity being managed and evaluated as code compliance with arbitrary application from day to day. This is particularly the case in the handling of race and ability--with the resulting outcomes being especially hostile to impacted members of racially marginalized communities and the disability community.

## A STRATEGY FOR CRITICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### BRINGING *PURPOSE* TO OUTCOMES

“Our grief doesn’t define us; it propels us to do something to bring change.” - Sybrina Fulton

Many entry to mid-level transportation professionals have chosen the transportation planning field as a venue for fulfilling a purpose or calling connected to their own lived experiences and relationships to trauma. Sybrina Fulton wrote about her journey through processing grief and trauma and transmitting those emotions into purpose-driven outcomes. Fulton is the mother of Trayvon Martin--a teenager that, while walking home, was gunned down by someone who admitted to believing that Black men are innately suspicious. Fulton, with all of her pain, reminds readers, “Our grief doesn’t define us; it propels us to do something to bring change.”<sup>10</sup> So many people come to transportation planning on the heels of a traumatic experience that revealed a flaw in the field. Through this spirit, emerging transportation professionals could be developed as leaders to bring a much-needed sense of purpose and equity to the transportation sector. Here are some ways the Transportation Sector can lean into purpose-driven outcomes:

#### Put forth purpose-driven policy proposals

There is an immediate need for policy-based interventions that work to resolve equity gaps. Examples of policy-based projects include: 1) developing a plan for comprehensive free transit, 2) creating a tool or process for measuring progress and accountability for equity values, 3) developing a process for analyzing investments and policies through a critical lens, and 4)

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<sup>10</sup> Fulton, S., & Martin, T. (2018). Rest in power: the enduring life of Trayvon Martin. New York: Spiegel & Grau.

evaluating what benefits those investments bring to communities that have been harmed by traditional metrics in the past.

## Learning planning concepts that improve quality of life outcomes

Much like policy-based projects, projects that improve quality of life outcomes are timely and appropriate for the current state of transportation planning. Transportation projects should aim to resolve disparities in access to housing, jobs, healthcare, groceries, and other quality of life destinations. This can be coupled with a reinvigoration of an industry-wide focus on concepts that would eliminate traffic deaths through more holistic street design.

## Operationalizing equity

Emerging leaders could collectively work to inform widespread operationalization of equity values. Operationalizing equity could include: 1) developing an industry-wide narrative for “equity”, 2) developing a solution or conceptual design that centers access for the disability community, 3) developing a community-based plan that upholds restorative principles such as reparations, 4) a campaign to politicize the ways “technical” gets defined in the field, 5) advocating for equitable hiring and personnel practices, and 6) conducting a formal analysis of non-traditional disciplines that prepare people to become transportation professionals.

## Surviving and confronting inequity in the workplace

New leaders need support developing tactical strategies for managing and responding to inequity and microaggressions within the work environment. New leaders could benefit from projects that are experiential in nature and create space to: 1) practice initiating conversations about race and equity, 2) communicate needs and leadership style preferences to supervisors, 3) develop effective code switching strategies, 4) reclaim space and power from leaders not willing to listen and lean into requests for equity-related change, and 5) advocate for personal and collective pay parity. These experiential learnings would be best accompanied by resources that emerging leaders can carry forward throughout their careers. These resources could include templates, coping strategies, persuasive techniques for communicating with engineers, and tips for engaging elected officials.

Just as it is important to equip emerging leaders with strategies and experiences for surviving inequity in the professional setting, it is equally as important to be transparent about the emotional toll and stress of inequity. This unhealthy dynamic is often what keeps the field from evolving equity aims, representation goals, and civic engagement.

## STRATEGIES FOR CENTERING THE INDIVIDUAL THROUGH COLLECTIVE LEARNING

“I am my best work.” - Audre Lorde

Given the role that erasure has played in the crisis of leadership and equity across the transportation planning sector, it's critical that professional development opportunities meet the personal evolution needs of those most negatively impacted by the legacy of planning. In her book, "A Burst of Light," Audre Lorde proclaimed, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence...It is self-preservation."<sup>11</sup> New models for professional development should incorporate opportunities for personal development, kinship formation, and other forms of compassionate frameworks that support healing while imparting dignity through self-preservation. Here are a few strategies for collective personal development:

## Self-selecting affinity spaces

Affinity spaces are self-selected groups that converge around a common lived experience or cultural identity. For emerging transportation leaders, the history of criminalizing public gatherings for certain groups further necessitates spaces geared toward Black, Brown, and Indigenous people (separately and collectively). It's also important to show heteronormative and white professionals methods for forming ally spaces with the sole intention of developing strategies and leadership skills that correlate with restorative justice principles. These spaces could be participant-led/curated spaces at the local/regional level to promote the development of leadership skills while also resourcing healing and peer learning opportunities.

Increasing diversity campaigns and metrics means more professional spaces are engaging employees in conversations about race. The shortcoming many people encounter is that superficial or rudimentary discussions about race and equity typically happen at the expense of the time and dignity of traditionally marginalized people. Affinity groups serve as a meaningful way to unpack and strategize around equity gaps while encouraging social cohesion and peer-to-peer support.

## The value of peer mentors

The crisis of leadership and equity lends itself to a degree of scarcity when it comes to the available pool of mentors that are representative of the people most negatively impacted by pervasive inequity. Peers and trusted allies serve as a culturally relevant alternative to traditional mentorship formats. Giving emerging leaders an opportunity to share their professional journeys in a cohort format serves a dual purpose of improving representation and acknowledging leadership qualities that have been erased or downplayed in the past. It would be ideal to find a way to create sustained network building that doesn't end when the leadership development opportunity ends. Informal opportunities for gathering and communication are also important to the development of trusting and meaningful relationships. Given the history of marginalization, particularly of Black women, in the transportation field, the construct of "mentor" would have to move away from a requirement of senior-level experience within the field.

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<sup>11</sup> Lorde, A. (2017). *A burst of light: and other essays*. Mineola, NY: Ixia Press.

# PRIORITIZING OVERT DISSIMILATION

#SayHerName - Kimberlé Crenshaw

Impactful professional development opportunities will teach participants to dissimilate from spaces that perpetuate notions of respectability, acceptability, and ideal personhood. Dissimilation is a daunting undertaking, but would help new leaders maintain a healthy sense of self while disrupting unhealthy work dynamics. Say Her Name is a resource established by Kimberlé Crenshaw intended to help “media, organizers, researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders to better understand and address Black women’s experiences of profiling and policing.”<sup>12</sup> This act of intentionally naming the individual woman is an act of resisting pressures to fit into a normative identity narrative. While the campaign itself centers and promotes visibility of the ways in which Black women are harmed by policing practices, the framework applies to the transportation sector. Dissimilation as a professional development tool will help the broader transportation planning field understand the ways planning hiring practices, projects, and policies have been particularly harmful to Black women and transgender people. Here are a few strategies for dissimilation through professional development:

## Customized, values-centered programming

Professional development opportunities should center the individual values of participants. To truly honor equity and social justice as underpinnings of a professional development program, the facilitator or employer should establish a process that would be flexible and mindful enough to meet participants exactly where they are. These values should be apparent throughout every aspect of the program and participants should be asked to communicate their programmatic and logistical “needs” so that the program can accommodate each individual during the program’s planning stages.

## Promoting connections and visibility

Network building and high-visibility promotion is an effective strategy for redistributing power to those historically marginalized by planning practices. Those facilitating professional development programs should create opportunities for participants to share and present their work on industry stages with the support of their cohort and peers. Gatherings and field learning experiences should be anchored to multi-conference “tracks” whenever possible. Long-term support for participants vying for seats on commissions and committees would be especially helpful to mid-level professionals. Mentorship components should functionally operate as a team or bench of specialized coaches, as opposed to one-on-one relationships. The basis of this recommendation is that, oftentimes, support systems are fluid and contingent upon specific, yet changing needs over time. As such, it seems appropriate to give emerging leaders access to a team of people whose expertise spans an array of relevant topics and cultural perspectives.

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<sup>12</sup> #SayHerName Brief. (2015). Retrieved from <https://aapf.org/sayhernamereport>

# (RE)DEVELOPING LEADERS

## A CALL TO ACTION AND THE VERACITY THAT THIS MOMENT REQUIRES

Professional development in the current state of the transportation planning sector has to serve a dual purpose of 1) healing and meeting emerging leaders who have been relegated to the margins of the field, and 2) preparing emerging leaders to meet themselves outside of the narratives and harms imposed on them by policies and decision-makers not intending to serve their needs or communities. These steps are not a comprehensive list of professional development interventions, but these recommendations should be interpreted as an outline of actionable ways to elevate and support those who would otherwise be excluded from leadership development opportunities. These crises--and their human toll--will continue to show up in communities absent bold and amply resourced investments in the development and retention of people who've been negatively impacted by structural inequity in the transportation sector.

Professional development plans that meet the need of this moment should: 1) elevate voices and visibility, 2) develop and enforce an equity posture, 3) leverage culturally-relevant management models, 4) incorporate an atonement element, 5) promote self evolution and preservation, and 6) offer a kinship-centric mentorship structure.

## A MODEL FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ROOTED IN EQUITY

### A high level framework for critical leadership development

This outline is an overview of a Fellowship that includes desired outcomes and experiences that exhibit critical leadership development. The fellowship is flexible in nature, holding space for participants to become co-creators in the outcomes, benefits, and levels of interaction. This fellowship is designed to support the collective and individual growth of a cohort with guidance and support in these ways:

- Facilitator/liaison will develop curriculum content and provide navigation support for participants for the duration of the fellowship. The facilitator will also serve as a host for all convenings, developing agendas and coordinating with local perspective providers
- Host organizations will serve as a support for the facilitator in identifying/hiring trainers, developing convening content and also managing all logistics
- Travel, lodging, and meals will be covered by the host organizations

- A 3-person team of specialized coaches consisting of local practitioners. Specialties include:
  - Behavioral health professional
  - Mobility equity advocate
  - Executive-level planner/engineer
- Long-term access to a network of partners and resources (toolkits, templates, directories, one-pagers, checklists, guides)

The fellowship requires a 12-month commitment to participate in the following activities:

#### **ORIENTATION - In-person convening**

- Anchored conference
- Day One: Developing a Posture of Equity and Social Justice
  - Learning areas: Disability justice, Forming affinity groups, labor movements, food justice, racial justice
- Day Two: Personal Growth Mapping, Power Mapping and Group Project Selection
  - Learning areas: Interdisciplinary planning, local impact projects
- Day Three: Local perspective skills workshop w/ Mobility Justice Coach and convocation ceremony
  - Learning areas: Youth engagement, mobility justice frameworks

#### **VIDEO CONFERENCE - Remote Convening**

- Affinity group check-ins
- Group project update presentations

#### **OFFICE HOURS - Public Speaking/Presentation Coordination - Remote Individual Task (ONGOING, MINIMUM ONE CHECK-IN PER MONTH PER FELLOW)**

- Individually coordinate with facilitator to apply to, prepare for, and rehearse a panel or workshop project

#### **VIDEO CONFERENCE - Remote Convening**

- Affinity group check-ins
- Group project update presentations

#### **WORKPLACE ACTIVATION - Individual Project**

- Host a local brown bag, dinner, or workshop convening local colleagues to discuss and strategize about a relevant topic of interest

#### **VIDEO CONFERENCE - Remote Convening**

- Affinity group check-ins
- Group project update presentations

#### **SERVICE LEARNING GATHERING - In-person convening**

- Anchored conference
- Day One: 360 reviews and Preparing for Service-Based Learning

- Learning areas: navigating professional barriers to equity values, confronting microaggressions and other difficult conversations
- Day Two: Local perspective skills workshop w/ Technical Planning Coach
  - community-based planning principles, strategies for displacement avoidance
- Day Three: Community-Based Service/Project
  - Meaningful community engagement

**VIDEO CONFERENCE - Remote Convening**

- Affinity group check-ins
- Group project update presentations

**VIDEO CONFERENCE - Remote Convening**

- Affinity group check-ins
- Group project update presentations

**WORKPLACE ACTIVATION - Individual Project**

- Host a local brown bag, dinner, or workshop convening local colleagues to discuss and strategize about a relevant topic of interest

**VIDEO CONFERENCE - Remote Convening**

- Affinity group check-ins
- Group project update presentations

**HEALING AND ATONEMENT GATHERING - In-person convening**

- Anchored conference
- Day One: Final Project Presentations
- Day Two: Rites of Passage (program completion ceremony) and Local perspective skills workshop w/Behavioral Health Professional
  - Learning areas: dissimulation, self-promotion/preservation, networking, career planning
- Day Three: Closeout