



# San Mateo 101 Express Lanes Equity Study

## Draft Guiding Document

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### Introduction

This document is intended to guide the creation of the San Mateo 101 Express Lanes Equity Study. This study will recommend a first-in-the-region Pilot Equity Program for consideration and adoption by the San Mateo County Express Lanes Joint Powers Authority (SMCEL-JPA) in Spring 2021.

This Guiding Document identifies the Vision, Desired Outcomes, Challenges and Target Populations for the Equity Study. Interim and final work products prepared for this study, as well as critical path decisions in the process, will refer back to the Guiding Document to provide direction, focus, and a sense of priority.

This Guiding Document is based on interviews with key stakeholders conducted by the project team in July and August of 2020, and will incorporate feedback from the Equity Study Advisory Committee and SMCEL-JPA Board of Directors.

### Our Vision

The Pilot Equity Program will be responsive to the transportation needs of historically underserved communities in San Mateo County and provide meaningful benefits to those communities. The Equity Study will prioritize program flexibility so that the Pilot Equity Program can be adaptive and evolve over time, in parallel with the phased implementation of the San Mateo 101 Express Lanes and in response to changing community needs. The Pilot Equity Program will also strive to integrate seamlessly into a regional equity strategy across the Bay Area's express lanes network.

### Desired Outcomes

- Develop an implementable Pilot Equity Program that is flexible and can adapt to changing needs and community feedback over time.
- Identify equity strategies that are most beneficial to underserved communities who live near the lanes, as well as low-income travelers who are likely to utilize the Express Lanes.
- Where possible, identify equity strategies that are replicable and could potentially be applied or expanded to other express lanes in the region.
- Ensure communities who have had historically low involvement with planning decisions see their input broadly reflected in Equity Program design and implementation.
- Encourage mode shift from single-occupancy vehicles to transit and other high-occupancy modes, especially within the Express Lanes.
- Improve the safety and connectivity of the active transportation network in communities adjacent to the corridor.
- Ensure the Pilot Equity Program supports the Express Lanes project benefits and goals, including improving mobility, travel time, and reliability.



## Challenges

The Express Lanes pose several challenges that the Pilot Equity Program aims to address, including:

- Charging single-occupant vehicle users for access to infrastructure may generate inequity by improving mobility only for those who have the means to pay a toll.
- Those without the same means to pay are often those who face more severe consequences for being late as a result of traffic, like job loss, late fees, etc.
- The impact of the housing crisis and the resulting pattern of displacement means that underserved communities are increasingly forced to commute greater distances, and potentially have a greater need to utilize the Express Lanes to reach job centers and other opportunities.
- The Express Lanes will only benefit those without cars if they have access to affordable public transit or other shared modes that utilize the lanes to substantially reduce travel time and improve reliability.
- There are significant barriers to implementing an Equity Program (e.g., eligibility requirements, lack of digital access to resources, banking/credit limitations, language barriers) that may limit the ability of underserved communities to benefit from it.

## Target populations

The Pilot Equity Program proposes to address these challenges by prioritizing the transportation needs of underserved communities in San Mateo County whose members either use the Highway 101 corridor and/or live near it. Both groups are prioritized for different reasons.

Freeway users from underserved communities in San Mateo County are prioritized because they may be unable to afford the toll or meet the minimum carpool requirements to use the Express Lanes. Residents of neighborhoods near the freeway are prioritized because of the longstanding impacts on health, accessibility, and quality of life that are associated with living near the freeway.

Target populations to be analyzed in this study include **low, very low, or extremely low income households** with a particular emphasis on those households that intersect with one or more of the following characteristics:

- Latinx
- Black
- Southeast Asian or Pacific Islander
- Indigenous/Native American
- Limited English proficiency
- Single female-headed
- No- or low-vehicle ownership (defined as 1 car per 3 or more working adults)
- Transit-dependent
- Older adults
- Youth (17 and under)
- Disabled/Paratransit users



This list is deliberately expansive for the purpose of analysis. Eligibility criteria for the Pilot Equity Program will be defined in subsequent phases of work and will likely include some combination of the aforementioned characteristics.

#### *Analysis of Target Populations*

For the purposes of analyzing travel behavior, demand, and unmet needs, this Equity Study will define target populations geographically. We will identify census tracts that show an over-representation of groups with the characteristics noted above. Initial mapping shows that the majority of these census tracts are within one mile of Highway 101.

#### *Directing Equity Program Benefits to Target Populations*

Equity Program strategies that take the form of capital improvements, fixed-route transit service, and other place-based investments should target the census tracts with the highest concentration of targeted populations, as identified through the course of this study.

Equity Program strategies that take the form of direct payments or incentives for individuals or households should be directed to all San Mateo County residents who meet eligibility criteria consistent with the characteristics listed above, as refined through further analysis.