

2021 Focus Groups: Summary of Findings

Sarah Bond
TPB Transportation Planner



visualize
2045 A long-range
transportation plan
for the National
Capital Region

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“I think [transportation] it's not just about moving people and buses and cars and trains from Point A to Point B, but it's how people actually experience these things and experience the stations and what makes you feel safe architecturally versus not feel safe. Blind spots, weird corners. I think, from a global perspective, I think we need to think in the big macro terms of moving people and goods from one place to the other, but we also think about how we experience those things as people. Whether we're young, whether we're older, whether we're physically able, whether we're physically challenged, and try to think a little bit beyond that immediate ‘this is faster, this is more efficient, this is cheaper.’”

-Isabella, Olney MD

Focus Groups: Purpose

The 2021 focus groups were designed and implemented to meet the five following objectives:

1. Understand the issues of transportation equity, safety, and climate change through the perspectives of different population groups.
2. Empower residents of the region to share stories about their transportation experience.
3. Gather firsthand narratives to directly incorporate the voices of the region directly into the public opinion research process.
4. Provide qualitative context to the issues of transportation equity, climate change and safety so that these issues can be considered in an equitable way.
5. Supplement the quantitative data from the Voices of the Region survey.

Focus Groups: Sessions

People from the core

People with low income

People from the inner suburbs

Young adults 18-25 years old

People 60+ years old

People of Color

People of Color (session 2)

Spanish speaking people

People with disabilities

People with High School Degrees or lower

People from the outer suburbs

Session Format

- The focus group sessions each lasted 90 minutes and they all were conducted virtually via Zoom.
- Each session was led by a facilitator from trained COG/TPB staff. A co-facilitator from COG staff took notes, kept time, and acted as general host for each session.
- Participants were encouraged to openly share their opinions and to be respectful of each other. The facilitator also informed the group that the sessions were being recorded and explained that everything said would be kept confidential.

Focus Groups: Analysis

- 17 hours of audio; 600 pages of transcripts
- MAXQDA: Qualitative data management software that is used to identify and manage emerging themes and do systematic comparisons
- Analysis process:
 - 1st Phase: Creating general codes to manage the data
 - 2ND Phase: Narrowing down the codes
 - 3rd Phase: Establishing general codes and codes for each sessions.

Summary of Findings

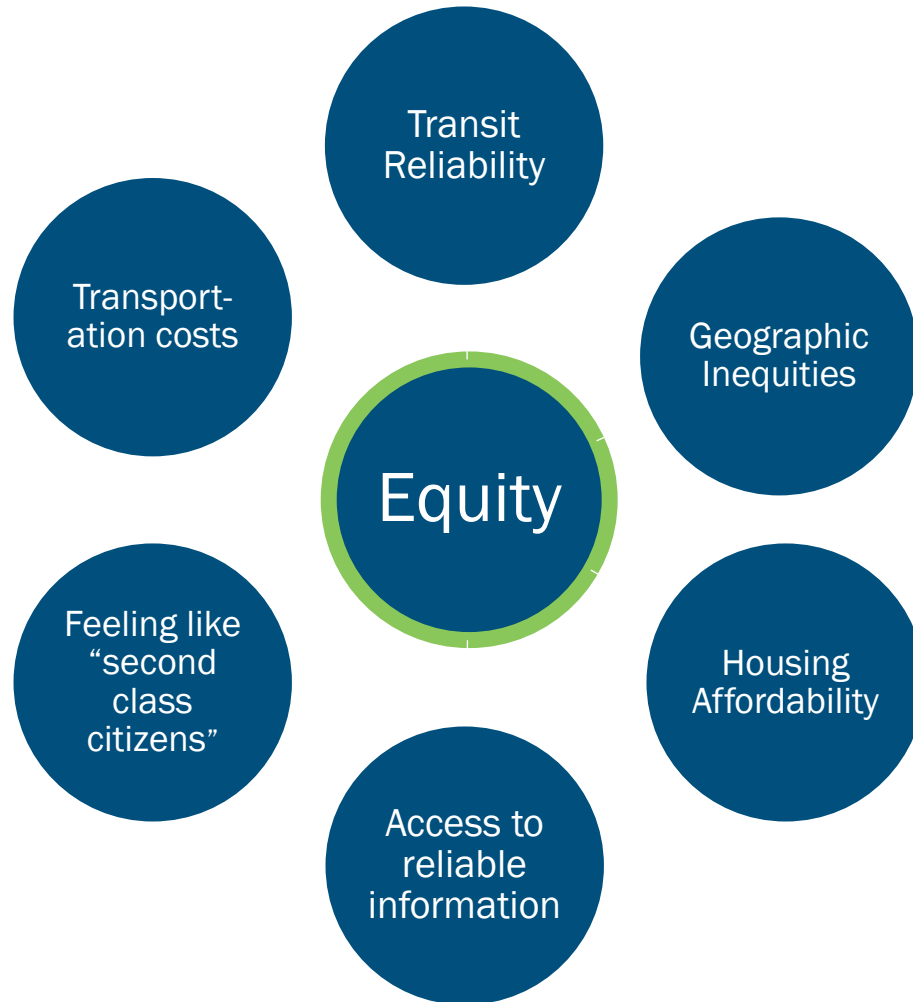
Equity: Questions

1

Based on your experience and/or observations, what are some equity issues that you believe should be getting addressed in transportation?

2

Tell me about things that transportation officials should consider in order to ensure equity in transportation?



“Someone offered me a job out in Rockville for home organization, which is what I do for a living. But she was offering 15 an hour, which is minimum wage here, but you add in the cost to me of going out there and coming back, the times plus the wait, it's not worth what I'm going to spend on Metro. The big problem for me is there's other jobs I would like but I cannot take because I can't afford transportation. [...] Then, trying to live off of this disability check and dealing with the continuing rise in public transportation cost and the access is– it's really nerve-wracking. It's crazy.”

Sharon, Washington DC

Equity: Key Takeaways

Transportation agencies can respond to concerns by:

- Expanding service windows or provide alternate types of services to accommodate late-shift workers and others that don't work 9-5 hours.
- Improving reliability, frequency, and service areas for buses.
- Minimizing transportation costs to lower-income individuals, including tolls and transit costs, especially distance-based Metro fares.

Safety: Questions

1

Imagine that you are going to your job, school, to the store. Can you describe what makes you feel safe when using your preferred method of transportation?

2

What can transportation officials do to make you feel safe while using your preferred method of transportation?



“I mean, honestly, if I have to leave out at night I will make sure that the bus stop that I go to is well lit. If it's not well lit [...] will purposely walk -- even if it's like a extra block to go to another bus stop that's more lit -- it's only because I'd rather be safe than sorry.”

- Nina, Washington DC

“When I walk at night from work, I’m concerned about not being seen by drivers, walking in dark places, not enough people around, and having to deal with crime. It’s too much. Safety is not only being in the car and driving safe. Its about housing, infrastructure, people, you know, also, transportation. But people only want to see one thing.”

- Raul, Alexandria VA

Safety: Key Takeaways

Transportation agencies can respond to concerns by:

- Recognizing that details matter, such as placement of transit stops and providing sufficient lighting around transit stops and stations
- Investing in transportation infrastructure that separates modal uses that travel at different speeds, such as protected bicycle lanes.
- Investing in infrastructure design, policy, and enforcement that limits aggressive behavior on roadways

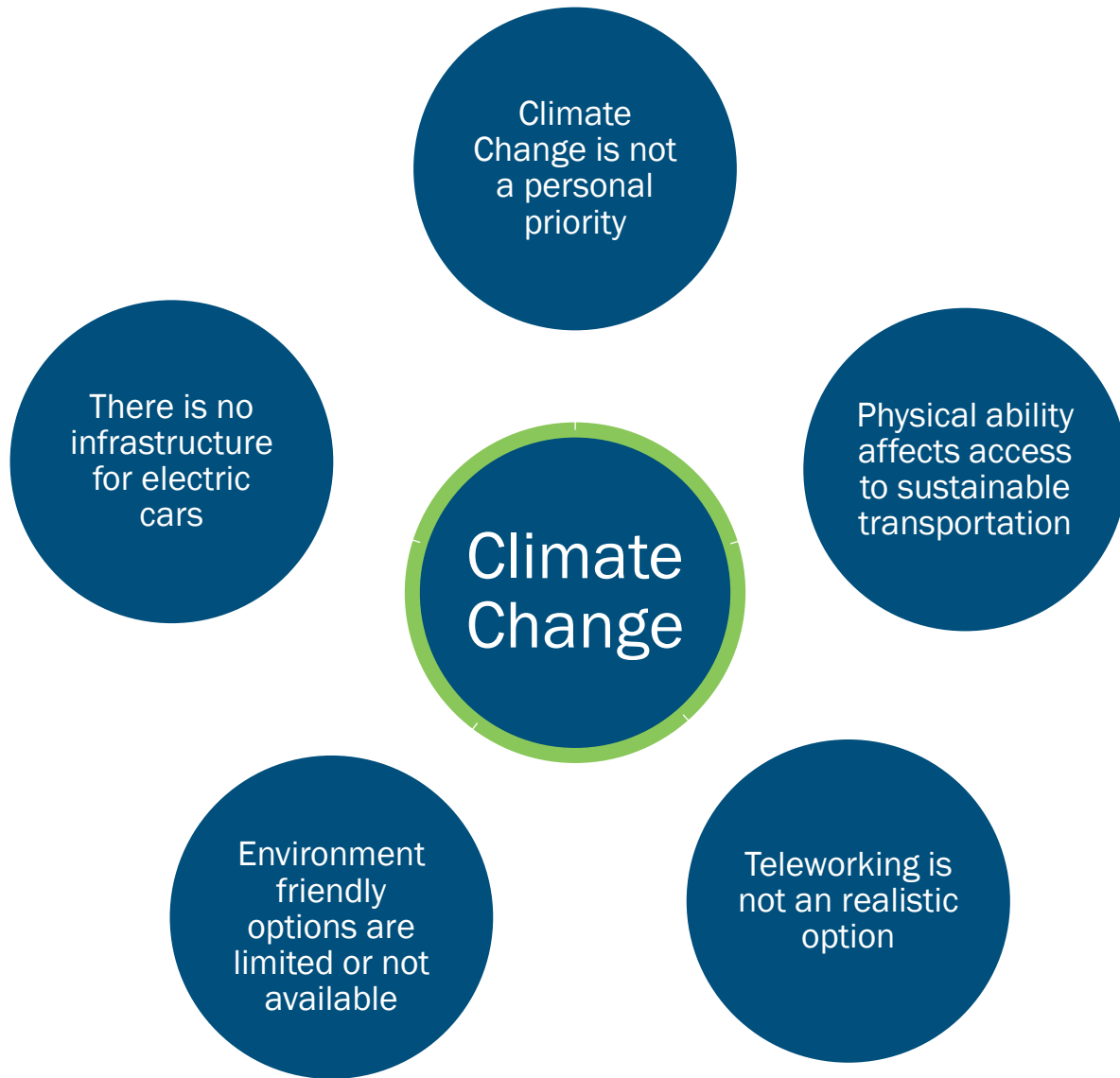
Climate Change: Questions

1

Imagine you have a magic wand that lets you do/have anything you want to reduce your transportation impact on climate change. Can you tell me about any transportation choices that you would make to reduce your impact on climate change?

2

We talked about changes that you would make with your wand. Can you tell me how transportation officials can help make these choices a reality?



“It's kind of like I look at it like if you're in an airplane you can't help somebody else if you don't take the oxygen first. And so you need to be healthy in order to be able to work in the environment for positive results. So you know, if you're deceased or you're incapable of being able to work in it, then you know, two birds is killed there. So I think I agree with most of the majority that health is most important, but I am very green oriented. I believe in the environment and all those things, and want to support it the best that I can.”

- Cindy, Washington DC

Climate Change: Key Takeaways

Transportation agencies can respond to concerns by:

- Recognizing that strategies and solutions to mitigate climate change are in competition with the immediate challenges of everyday lives, therefore solutions must be realistic and made feasible to be implemented broadly.
- Improving the supply of low-carbon transportation options, including making transit more frequent, reliable and convenient, making housing close to transit more affordable, and expanding electric vehicle infrastructure and access to electric vehicles.

Next Steps

- Staff invite and encourage TPB members to review the report
- The findings will be integrated into the Visualize 2045 plan update.
- Look out for Voices of the Region Story Map

Sarah Bond

Transportation Planner II
sbond@mwcog.org

mwcog.org/TPB

Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

777 North Capitol Street NE,
Suite 300

Washington, DC 20002

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