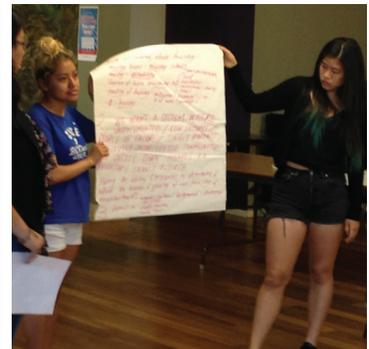
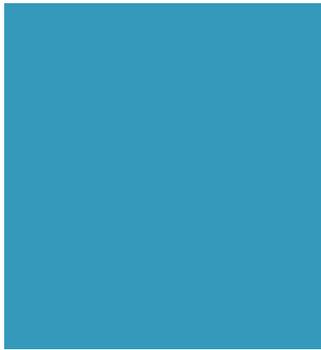


# Metro Discussion Groups



**August 5, 2015**



Multi-Cultural  
Collaborative

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## Executive Summary

This report provides a roll up summary of the first round of nine discussion groups held during June 2015. Metro provided questions related to equity, transportation, housing, parks and natural areas and community engagement. The MultiCultural Collaborative worked with six culturally based and one youth discussion group leaders to recruit participants, provide a discussion leaders guide, provide materials and take notes during the meetings. The transcribed notes and discussion leaders guides are provided in the appendices of this report, along with participant list.

In addition, the MultiCultural Collaborative convened and facilitated two subject matter experts discussion groups. Metro and the MultiCultural Collaborative recruited government and non-profit staff with expertise in one or more subject from the three county region. The discussion topics were the same; equity, transportation, housing, parks and natural areas and community engagement; however, the questions were focused on the participant's expertise in the subject matter, either as a service provider or policy expert.

### General observations

- For many participants, while they may have had equity discussions within their organizations, this was the first time they had the opportunity to discuss equity with Metro;
- Culturally specific discussion groups do not know very much about Metro's services, programs and roles in the regional policy;
- There is a wide variation in needs, priorities and how communities are talking and delivering services for equity, housing, transportation, parks and natural areas and community engagement.

### Recommendations

- Communities in the Metro region are talking about equity in many different ways and discussions with these groups should be tailored regionally and culturally.

- Metro may need to spend more time with certain communities than others to build relationship and trust to get authentic community engagement.
- Metro should continue to engage with these discussion groups so they can serve as ambassadors to their communities for Metro.
- Include a Metro transportation expert and/or TriMet staff at each meeting.
- Encourage Metro Council members to attend one or more discussion groups to listen to community issues and build relationships with their constituents.



## Introduction

In 2012, Metro Council initiated the Equity Strategy Program to incorporate and apply equity more consistently across Metro programs, policies and services, in collaboration with community, city and county partners. The larger context of Metro's Equity Discussion Groups project is two-fold: The first goal is to organize, recruit, facilitate, capture and summarize comments on four specific topics: equity, housing, transportation, and parks and natural areas. A series of six culturally specific discussion groups and a youth group, as well as topic specific expert group discussions was held in spring of 2015 and again in fall of 2015. The same participants will be invited back for the fall session but others may be sent in place of previous leaders. Through these meaningful conversations, Metro hopes to better understand community issues and priorities, interests and recommendations to advance equity in the region.

There are also several major initiatives and policy decisions facing Metro in 2015 that would benefit from increased community participation and input. By conducting these discussion groups, Metro's second goal is to better initiate and coordinate community engagement and outreach efforts in an attempt to reduce the burden placed on organizations that may have limited capacity to engage with Metro.



## Discussion Groups

### Project Description

The discussion groups were a joint effort between Metro's Community Relations division and Metro's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) program. The work will contribute to DEI's Equity Strategy and Action Plan created in collaboration with their Equity Strategy Advisory Committee, scheduled to come out in 2016.

The work resulting from Metro's Equity Strategy Program Discussion Groups will also build upon the recently published Equity Baseline Framework Report, which is the culmination of a year-long process initiated by Metro. In collaboration with a six person technical workgroup representing Community Based

Organization representatives, Metro commissioned a report to better define and evaluate "Equity" in our region; one of the six desired outcomes adopted by Metro Council in 2010. The other outcomes are vibrant communities, safe and reliable transportation, economic prosperity, clean air and water, and leadership on climate change.

### Approach to the Project

MultiCultural Collaborative is Metro's partner in this project. The MultiCultural Collaborative is a team of multicultural professionals led exclusively by professionals of color with deep subject matter expertise to ensure authentic relationships, quality research, and community trust in decision maker's advocacy. The MultiCultural Collaborative's work is grounded in an asset-based, appreciative methodology that seeks to center participants' responses to create meaningful strategies to ensure thriving as our communities evolve.

### Culturally based organizations discussion groups

The MultiCultural Collaborative subcontracted with six culturally based leaders in the region. The subcontractors identified ten to fifteen leaders from their community to participate in each of the discussion groups.

### Youth discussion group

The MultiCultural Collaborative also subcontracted with a local youth group to encourage civic participation in community issues and regional development efforts.

The Metro then developed a list of questions for the discussion groups to select from that included transportation, housing, parks and natural areas and engagement.

**The questions list can be found in Appendix 1.**

**The work resulting from Metro's Equity Strategy Program Discussion Groups will [also] build upon the recently published Equity Baseline Framework Report, which is the culmination of a year-long process initiated by Metro.**

The MultiCultural Collaborative developed three Discussion Leader's Guides to assist the facilitators in organizing and facilitating the meetings. Each Discussion Leader's Guide included an agenda, facilitation tips, logistics and a reporting form.

**Copies of the three Discussion Leaders Guides for the youth group, the culturally specific groups, and the subject matter experts can be found in Appendix 2.**

### Subject Matter Expert Group discussions

The MultiCultural Collaborative and Metro convened two subject matter expert groups, one at the Metro offices and the other at Hillsboro City Hall. The Subject Matter experts were chosen by Metro staff and represented a range of experts in transportation, housing and parks and natural areas. The participants represented local government and non-profit organizations.

## Culturally Specific Discussion Groups

### **Russian Slavic Community: Represented by the Russian Speaking Network of Oregon (RSNO)**

Anna Volkova and Maria Gvozdicova started their community work in 2008 with the Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization's (IRCO) Civic Engagement Project. In 2010, Anna co-founded the Russian-Speaking Network of Oregon (RSNO). She is very passionate in helping Russian-speaking communities, educating young and old people in civic engagement, especially in crime prevention. Anna worked on Metro's Watershed projects co-facilitating two youth workshop groups on native plants education. She is a graduate of the Center for Intercultural Organizing (CIO) Pan-Immigrant Leadership and Organizing Training and certification program and is a current Community Engagement Liaison (CEL) with the City of Portland's Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI).

*The RSNO facilitators for this group discussions project are Anna Volkova and Maria Gvozdicova.*

### **African Immigrant & Refugee Community: Represented by Africa House**

The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization's (IRCO) Africa House is a multilingual community-based center, based in resiliency philosophy, for African refugees and immigrants of all ages and their families. Among its many programs are: African Immigrant Mentoring, Leading Education and Acculturation for Refugee New Comers, Microenterprise Development



Services, Meyer Memorial Trust African Leadership Development, Africa House Antipoverty, and African Immigrant Mentoring as well as access to multiple services through a one-stop family-focused service center model. There are roughly over 12,000 African refugees who now call Portland home.

*The Africa House facilitators for this group discussion project are Sam Gollah and Therese McLain, both from MultiCultural Collaboraitve and Mohamed Abdiasis, Africa House Operations Manager.*

### **Asian American and Pacific Islander Community: Represented by Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)**

APANO was founded in 1996 with significant support from the Immigrant Refugee Community Organization (IRCO). In 2010, APANO formally became a 501c3 non-profit, tax-exempt organization whose mission as a statewide, grassroots organization, is to united Asians and Pacific Islanders to achieve social justice.

APANO believes that while Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities have made generations of contributions to American society, the shared history is that of persistent discrimination and inequities. API is a community of contrasts, with some communities doing very well, and some communities facing significant opportunity gaps, particularly in education, health and economic prosperity. These realities are well documented in national publications such as A Community of Contrasts 2011 by the Asian American Justice Center and the 2012 Asian Pacific Islanders in Multnomah County Report by the Coalition of Communities of Color. APANO was one of the community-based organizations that worked on Metro's Equity Framework Report.

*Facilitator for this group discussion project is Duncan Hwang, JD, APANO's Director of Development and Communications.*

### **Native American Community: Represented by the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)**

The Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) was founded by parent and Elder volunteers in 1974, and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 1994. Throughout its history, NAYA sustains its diverse traditions while expanding and modernizing programs and services to meet the needs of Native Americans. NAYA serves self-identified Native Americans, infant to Elder, from across the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area. In 2014, NAYA celebrated its 40th year of bringing the Native American community together to sustain tradition and provide mutual support. As an urban Indian agency, NAYA Family Center impacts the lives of over 10,000 individuals from over 380 tribal backgrounds annually. NAYA is participating as a community based organization with prime contractor, Verde, for the Metro project, "Connecting with Nature."

*Facilitator for this group discussion project is Cary Watters, Community Engagement Manager at NAYA.*

### **Latino Community: Represented by Latino Network**

Latino Network was founded in 1996 by community leaders who grew concerned about the lack of adequate resources to meet the needs of the growing Latino community. Since that time, Latino Network has evolved to become an organization that also encompasses transformational programs aimed at educating and empowering Multnomah County

Latinos. Low achievement scores, youth violence and high drop-out rates undermine the Latino community's potential. Latino Network address these issues by promoting early literacy, encouraging parent involvement, working with gang-involved and adjudicated youth and families, and providing academic support and activities to high school aged youth. Latino Network's work springs from the core belief in Latino community self-determination—that is, the ability of community members to participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their families.

*Facilitator for this group discussion project is Linda Castillo, Latino Network Director of Civic Engagement and Leadership.*

### **African American Community: Represented by Members of Urban League (UL) and Self-Enhancement Inc. (SEI)**

#### **Urban League (UL)**

Established in 1945, the Urban League of Portland (UL) is one of the oldest African American service, civil rights and advocacy organizations in the area. UL is part of a network of over 90 National Urban League Affiliates across the country and are recognized as one of the leading voices for African Americans and other people of color in the region. The Urban League of Portland's mission is to empower African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health,



economic security and quality of life. The UL offers workforce services, community health services, summer youth programming, senior services, meaningful civic engagement opportunities, and powerful advocacy. Urban league was one of the community-based organizations that worked on Metro's Equity Framework Report and inspired Metro to expand its "Ban the Box" effort agency wide.

### **Self Enhancement Inc. (SEI)**

SEI is Oregon's largest African American-led multiservice organization. SEI serves approximately 7000 African American youth and families per year through its comprehensive array of programs including: Youth Services (in-school, after-school, and postsecondary); the SEI Academy (a charter middle school); and SEI's Community and Family Programs (anti-poverty, family stabilization, and employment services). SEI uses a strengths-based approach to help helps students see themselves and their potential by helping them find their strengths, ignite their passion to learn and identify a plan that will move them in the direction of their dream. SEI has an 81% graduation rate, and has served schools and community members in the predominantly low-income neighborhoods of North and Northeast Portland for over 30 years. Metro partners with SEI on the Youth Engaging in Natural Sciences project, which has served 300 students.

*Facilitator for this group discussion project is human*

*rights and equity policy advocate, Cat Goughnour. Cat was a consultant for Metro's Equity Framework Report and is the Principal at Radix Consulting Group.*

## **Youth Discussion Group**

### **Youth Community: Represented by Momentum Alliance (MA)**

Momentum Alliance (MA) is a youth-led non profit, with experienced coaches, whose mission is to inspire youth to realize their power individually and collectively and to mentor future social justice leaders. MA's Student Alliance Project and Leveraging Momentum program help prepare diverse young people from underrepresented communities in Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington and Clark counties to become effective community advocates, leaders and decisions makers. MA was one of fourteen recipients of Metro's North Portland Enhancement Grants program. Recently, MA partnered with Metro to create a video on what equity means to the community (<https://vimeo.com/12776993>).

*The Momentum Alliance facilitators for this group discussions project are MA Co-Executive Director, Diego Hernandez and Anita Yap, Principal and Founder of MultiCultural Collaborative.*



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## Subject Matter Expert Discussion groups

Two subject matter discussion groups were held. One was on June 29, 2015 at the Metro offices and the other was on June 30, 2015 at Hillsboro City Hall. The MultiCultural Collaborative core team facilitated a full group discussion about equity and three break out meetings on the following topics: housing, transportation, and parks and natural areas. The discussion groups included staff members from a range of subject matter and locations.

A list of participants can be found in Appendix 3.



## Discovery

This section provides a summary of the discussion groups, including the culturally specific, youth and subject matter experts. The summary includes highlights on housing, parks and natural areas, transportation and the topic of equity. The discussion leaders identified emerging themes and culturally specific items. MultiCultural Collaborative identified Lessons Learned from each discussion group for future process, content and cultural understanding improvement for Metro's community engagement.

### Central Themes from Culturally Specific Groups and Youth Discussion Group

There are some central themes that run through the conversations led by the Community Based Organizations (CBOs).

In general "Equity" is viewed as meaning a condition where access to services and goods is available on an equal basis. This includes meaningful access to governmental institutions and their decision-making processes.

There is a consensus that in the policy areas under consideration, resources are not available in an equitable fashion, and in many instances, these inequities are linked. For instance, many in the groups noted that transit is aligned with housing and that many parks are not directly served by transit in a convenient way. They urge innovative solutions to meet this need such as transport for seniors to parks and outdoor recreation.

The groups consistently noted that it is important to move equity from a talking point or the buzzword of the moment to concrete actions. Actions, in other words, speak louder than words. A key is communication that builds trusting relationships with the communities. This requires "bottom up" listening and a resulting implementation of the community ideas.

However, part of Metro's challenge is that it is not as well known or well defined as a governmental entity as, for



example, the county or the state. There was consistent surprise about the number of parks and open space that Metro controls and its other activities.

A significant degree of cultural competence is vital to success in this area.

Some examples are:

- Recognizing the role that food plays in Russian and Slavic culture;
- Recognizing that time sensitivities in African cultures are different from Western;
- Recognizing the important community role that elders play in Native American communities; and
- Realize that community consensus needs can vary from culture to culture.
- Building trust between Metro and culturally specific communities will take time and should be factored into all community engagement plans.

Finally, here in the general comments, there was considerable consensus that greater efforts to involve youth in community discussions is important.

In the area of **Parks and Natural Areas**, the groups noted that access is important but so is upkeep of park and recreational facilities. They noted that in poorer areas, for instance, parks often lack toilet paper, are not regularly cleaned and are not safe at all times.

In **Housing**, the culturally specific groups universally mentioned the lack of affordable housing options as both a major issue in their lives and a regional problem.

Most of the groups expressed the sentiment that, as a regional government, Metro should convene the process to set guidelines and develop solutions.

In **Transportation**, the constant themes were the need for more efficient transit and for more affordable fares.

## Central Themes from Subject Matter Experts Discussion Groups

The summary below provides a combined summary of the emerging issues in each topic area. We are also providing geographic focused comments that can help inform Metro's approach to equity, based on these comments.

The subject matter experts were less versed in the needs of citizens on the ground but more savvy with regard to governmental processes and ongoing efforts in all areas.

There were considerable differences in outlook on the issues between the two gatherings, which highlight the challenge for Metro in fashioning a regional approach to these issues.

### Equity *Portland subject matter experts discussions*

Metro should continue the effort to determine the needs of the various communities and follow their lead in developing policy.

The other thread was that Metro should fashion a role that "un-silos" governmental actions across the region. For instance, enforcing the rules on housing discrimination should have a uniform approach across the region if we are to effectively end those practices.

### *Hillsboro subject matter experts discussions*

Metro needs to become more granular in its assessment of communities. They suggest that Metro avoid "pre-loaded" preferences or presumptions in planning. As an example they pointed out that a lot of planning for transit presumes a 9-5 working pattern. But to truly incorporate equity into policy, a significant number of lower income people work outside those hours. They work all night or swing shifts.

As with the culturally specific groups, both sessions stressed the need to build long term, sustainable trusting relations with communities.

### Transportation *Portland subject matter experts discussions*

The participants expressed a concern that there aren't adequate equity metrics to measure policy impacts. They noted that TriMet is in the process of developing an equity index. They urged that Metro get involved in that process so that a common set of parameters can be set up to guide the region.



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### **Hillsboro subject matter experts discussions**

The participants want stronger links between housing planning and transportation planning. If this is done correctly, we should prevent creating concentrated pockets of poverty and more mixed income neighborhoods which is beneficial for equity. This group also noted that planning in the suburbs is more car-centric because of the newer nature of the growth of neighborhoods. This requires a different approach to equity in planning.

### **Housing**

#### **Portland subject matter experts discussions**

Equity must be achieved through policies that are intentional and accountable. This means equity goals should be included in the Comprehensive Plan and there must be clear metrics for success. Examples suggested by the group: Stabilization of neighborhoods as a goal and metrics of proposed developments and plans. Employment analysis should be a part of the planning approval process. Will the project create employment opportunities for the people currently living in the community?

### **Hillsboro subject matter experts discussions**

The session began with an acknowledgment by the participants that the questions posed relating to gentrification and displacement did not correlate with housing issues in areas outside Portland. Hillsboro-Washington County participants believe that their area of the region has absorbed some of the displacement caused by gentrification in Portland. As a result, the emphasis should be on providing housing choices for all income levels. There was recognition that there is resistance in the areas outside Portland to regional planning. Metro could help by developing incentives instead of mandates to accomplish goals.

### **Parks and Open Space**

#### **Portland subject matter experts discussions**

Create a broad range of ways to access parks and open space (see the discussion in the culturally specific group sessions about access to parks). The group suggested better use of mobile playground and varieties of transport ideas. They also said better utilization of MWESBs in the design and development of these

resources would create spaces that meet the needs of the communities. Finally, youth involvement is critical here too.

### **Hillsboro subject matter experts discussions**

The Hillsboro group echoed the access discussion but added that language is a barrier to effective use of open space and parks. The use of Quick Response (QR) scan bar codes for smart phones could help. This group also suggested staging many free or reduced admission events to attract people. There is also a notion of sharing community resources for park events, such as equipment, personnel, etc.

### **Lessons Learned**

The discussion groups identified some key participants that they thought were missing from the discussion and would have liked to have them in the discussion to help inform their comments, such as TriMet, police, and libraries.

**Report Forms and raw notes from the subject matter experts group discussions on housing, transportation, and parks and natural areas: June 29, 2015 meeting, Appendix 4 and June 30, 2015 meeting, Appendix 5.**

## **Detailed Summary of Culturally Specific and Youth Group Discussions**

### **Slavic Community Summary: Russian Speaking Network of Oregon**

#### **Housing**

The group's discussions evolved around housing safety, affordability and quality. They were concerned about crime in the rental housing they lived, that the rent was unaffordable and waiting lists were 5-7 years to get public housing and the quality of the housing is poor.

#### **Transportation**

The participants like using the MAX and would like to see additional MAX routes. However, they pointed out that safety, cleanliness and sanitation, and reinforcing transit ride fees to all is fair.



### Parks

The group discussed that park amenities were important, such as toilet paper in the restrooms, playground equipment for toddlers (1-4 years), drinking fountains, benches and covered areas for families.

### Equity

When equity was discussed and what it means to them, in general people said it is about having equal access for everyone. One participant said that equity is communism.

### Community Engagement

Follow through from Metro is going to be important to the Slavic community. They asked several questions of Metro staff and they said they would get back to them. To date, no one from Metro has contacted them.

### Emerging Themes

The group was in agreement that driving a car is a privilege they never had in their countries. Even if they have cars, they lauded the MAX train as a good public means of transportation but safety on the MAX is an issue. Family is an important focus so services they avail of must meet the needs of family units, groups, and the larger culturally specific community.

### Culturally specific items to call out

- The group watched the video on equity that Momentum Alliance produced. However, it would have been helpful if the video were offered in other

languages, for example, in Russian for this particular group discussion.

- During the equity discussion, facilitator Anna Volkova asked if the group ever experienced issues of equity. It was noted that the group said no.

### Lessons learned

- Culturally specific food was not store-bought but was prepared by the participants. Food to the group was an important shared activity. In coming together as a community, food becomes an expression of sharing, giving, and welcoming others.
- The group said Portland should follow the bicycle lanes and rules in Russia. The cyclists come from the opposite direction of vehicles. That way, both can see each other, and more importantly, the bicyclists are more visible to car drivers. They said with this model, they have had very little car/bike accidents.

**Report Form and raw notes from the Russian Speaking Network of Oregon group discussion can be found in Appendix 6 of this report.**

### Youth Group Summary: Momentum Alliance (MA)

#### Housing

The participants talked about issues such as home ownership against generational poverty, young people being uprooted and impacted from academic achievements due to gentrification because they have to move further out of the city to find affordable housing. The group also said that queer youth have higher rates of homelessness and have fewer options for queer-friendly housing.

#### Transportation

The group discussed less transportation access and reliability outside the Portland area (e.g., Gresham), fares are not affordable for low-income communities and breaking down the stereotype that only the poor or criminals use buses.

### Parks and Natural Areas

The group discussed that parks in low-income areas tend to be dirtier and less safe and people are unable to go to other natural areas through public transportation or are not accessible to people with disabilities. It was also discussed that park fees have to be affordable and that there needs to be gender-neutral bathrooms.

### Equity

Everyone in the group has heard about equity and to them, it means having access, being able to get what they need, getting relatively equivalent outcomes, and centering policies on underserved and vulnerable populations.

### Community Engagement

- The youth participants discussed how young people are not given credence in decisions that affect the community and that engagement with diverse youth should be an ongoing commitment and not a one-time effort.

### Emerging Themes

The group appreciated the outreach to the youth in having them participate in important conversations on community issues that affects everyone. It is eye opening to hear other people's ideas and for everyone to have a chance to speak.

### Culturally specific items to call out

- The youth are seeking more conversations around gentrification, concerns about what looks like gerrymandering of the Metro boundaries, and politics that affect communities in Portland.
- The youth asked why the Metro council is all white.
- The youth should have a voice and they feel they bring value to the table by being critical yet open-minded at the same time, and they think in cross intersectional ways that could help shed other insights into policies, services and programs.



## Lessons learned

- The youth group wanted more time to discuss the key topics.
- It is challenging to understand the complex structure of Metro, how it works, how does funding work, and what jurisdictions or controls it has.
- Engagement is building trust and relationships and should thus be an ongoing process.

Report Form and raw notes from the Momentum Alliance (MA) group discussion can be found in Appendix 7 of this report.

## African Immigrant Community Summary: Africa House

### Housing

The group discussed that most of the housing they have access to is primarily located far away from their activities hub. Some get vouchers for housing, but still find it difficult getting housing in Portland and along the MAX lines.

### Transportation

The group said that most of them do not drive or have access to cars, therefore, public transit systems serve as the main mode of transportation. As a result, the group depends on TriMet for access to workplace and other activities. Key among their transportation concerns was how to easily access public transportation to and from home and job sites.

### Parks and Natural Areas

The group participants said that Blue Lake is a favorite gathering place. However, they noted the expense it entails to travel to and from the park due to poor public transportation access making it difficult for them to frequent the Blue Lake as well as other parks. Safety in parks was also discussed.

### Equity

The group discussed how equity is very important because equity is key to everything including housing, transportation, and parks and natural areas, and other



services. Africans want to work and to be productive citizens. Africans vote, pay taxes, gives back to refugee camps and communities and therefore should be treated equally like any other groups of people.

### Community Engagement

- Continue to engage with Africa House, and in particular engage with the youth of Africa House.
- Invite members from African House to be at the table. They would like to be involved in advisory decision-making.

### Emerging Themes

The group would like to see the Africa House and Metro actively engage in information sharing, for Africa House to be included in equity discussions, jobs and youth education/training. The group identified housing, transportation and access to park and natural areas as among the keys issues facing them, with housing and transportation taking the top #1 spot.

### Culturally specific items to call out

- The group perceives Metro as a great place for opportunities for the African Immigrants.
- Their biggest challenge is that they know very little about Metro. Africa House mostly deals with Multnomah County and the state; and getting insight into services provided by Metro will enable them to identify culturally specific issues and work to address them with Metro.

## Lessons learned

- There was a lot of confusion prior to the meeting as the location was changed twenty minutes before the start time and the meeting's original start time of 5:00 pm was arbitrarily changed to 6:00 pm by an individual who manages conference rooms. Though both incidents may appear to be a lax attitude, this can be attributed to an African "emotional time consciousness" in contrast to Western "mechanical time consciousness."
- The majority of the participants were curious as to how many parks Metro operates. They were astounded to know that Metro had quite a few parks within Portland and the region as a whole.

Report Form and raw notes from the Africa House group discussion can be found in Appendix 8 of this report.

## Asian Pacific Islander Community Summaries: Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)

## Summary of Sessions 1 and 2

### Housing

The group discussed the crisis in affordable housing and that "affordable" should still provide good quality and not poor quality. It was discussed that there is a need to look harder at policies such as rent control, and that with gentrification and displacement, housing has become a serious region wide issue. The group also said that the ideal housing situation would be to live close to public transportation.

### Transportation

The group discussed about better bus schedules, affordability of public transportation especially for the unemployed, safety due to poor lighting and shelters at bus stops, and that existence of pot holes at cross walks make it dangerous to walk, particularly for the elderly. Bike safety is a major region-wide concern and there needs to be better education for both bike riders and car drivers.

### Parks and Natural Areas

The group discussed the lack of parks, or if there are parks, they are not safe (drug deals, etc.) or there are no safe routes to get to the park (busy roads,



no sidewalks). They also talked about parks as an important community-gathering place and that cultural competency in parks is important as well as limiting bureaucracy that makes it difficult and expensive to avail of parks for community events and gatherings. Participants also want parks staff to consider planting indigenous plants and they need more community gardens.

## Equity

The group discussed that being able to access what people need, whether it's education, a better job, grocery stores, green space, etc. are crucial to have a full and self-determining life. It's connecting all of those things to an individual and a community. The group also talked about the necessity for institutional changes wherein systems are set up to produce equity, diversity, and inclusivity, where everybody shares in both the benefit and the burden of change, equally.

## Community Engagement

- There are differentials in power at decision-making bodies. Our elected don't look like us. Given that, how can our decision makers really represent our communities.
- There is a strong need for continued community capacity building to engage in process. We can't just have one off events but Metro should prioritize long term outreach and relationship building. Planning is always underway, so how are community members given the tools to participate over the long term.
- Find the right ways to communicate with community and identify the right messengers. Go to community centers, SUN schools, and provide translated documents. Adopt best practices in community engagement and standardize them. Metro is a "lumpy" organization that sometimes does equity and engagement really well, but other times convenience or lack of training overrides best methods in community engagement.

## Emerging Themes

- The group talked about how "community" is often vague. When community is discussed, are the voices of the communities that have lived and

worked in this area for a long time, or those who are disenfranchised by planning and development, — are they fully represented? Institutional changes are necessary so that systems are set up to produce equity, diversity, and inclusivity, where everybody shares in both the benefit and the burden of change, equally.

- Lack of access is a common theme.

## Culturally specific items to call out

- The group asked "how can their communities have opportunities and access without having to assimilate and kill their culture, history, and spirituality?"
- In transportation, paid fare enforcement is complex: the lack of enforcement on buses and MAX can help communities when they cannot afford to pay, but it can also be racially biased and often people of color become targets in policing of fares.
- The group discussed building capacity for immigrants, refugees, low income communities rather than just throwing money into a broken system and that this needs to be tackled at multiple levels through leadership that truly represents the people.

## Lessons learned

- The group stated that it would be great if everyone within Metro, the City of Portland, Gresham, TriMet, etc. were all on the same page. Projects are started simultaneously with other projects that are seemingly similar to each other. It shows the lack of



intra and inter-agency communication, and in some cases, CBOs have to be the bridge but it creates fatigue in participation.

- Across all issues there has to be accountability to the communities we want at the table and ensure their presence means something, which means honesty and authenticity in conversations. That — to them — is collaboration. The Metro Equity Framework is a good start.
- Pacific Islanders have the highest proportion of renters rather than homeowners.
- Metro needs to disaggregate demographic data. Different communities within the larger Asian Pacific Islander community experience different challenges. Aggregated data, grouping all Asian Pacific Islanders in one group paints a false picture.

Report Form and raw notes from the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) group discussion can be found in Appendix 9 of this report.

## Native American Community Summary: Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)

### Housing

The group discussed gentrification; that housing is the largest disparity in the community with evictions and court appearances revealing what is seen as racist dynamics and racial profiling. Housing upfront costs are expensive and only those with more assets can afford, and elders who live with their children feel they are a burden to their kids.



### Transportation

The group said that there should be low cost transportation and more public transportation for elders. They also talked about experiences of racial profiling on public transit, noting that Native Americans are not hired or represented as bus drivers.

### Parks and Natural Areas

The group discussed how they would like to see more proactive collaboration on parks with and by Native Americans. Going to parks can be stressful since the experience does not include representation of Native American cultural heritage such as the use of Native American language on signage, holding Native American cultural events, and building a longhouse as a destination. Access to parks is difficult because of access to public transportation from where they live and proximity to public transit lines near parks.

### Equity

The group discussed that Native Americans don't talk much about equity but rather demonstrate it, e.g., watching out for relatives well being, because everything is a living spirit and is inter-connected. In equity conversations, they noted that in Portland's southwest area, there seems to be no discussion about equity, but in the eastside of Portland, the topic is more relevant.

### Community Engagement

- The group stated that meaningful engagement means a welcoming environment where their voices are wanted and that issues specific to their community are heard.

- They need to know how their comments are evaluated and to hear back how their input or advice has created tangible results.
- There are very few references to Native Americans in Metro's materials and stories.
- They appreciated that Cliff Higgins (Metro) was there. He is part of the Siletz tribe.
- They appreciated that Metro was quiet and listening, that they saw this as a strength where there was no need to respond but rather to listen to people.
- Understand that our community experiences pain, trauma, maybe mental health issues and one Elder came across frustrated saying he doesn't feel they (Metro) listens.

### Emerging Themes

- Key topics of discussion: Gentrification, disparity, discrimination, stereotyping, poverty and racial profiling, most especially in housing.
- Respect and placing value on the well being of elders is important.

### Culturally specific items to call out

- There is an abiding tradition of respect and importance in honoring Elders. One is considered an elder man or woman, usually older than others in the family and community, who may not necessarily be elected or appointed but recognized and respected for their wisdom and spiritual leadership.
- There is a lack of understanding that in the Native American culture, silence is a form of respect.
- Importance is placed on protocols such as gifting, food, introductions and trusting the Elders on who they trust.

### Lessons learned

- The group feels they walk in two worlds on a daily basis where they are inundated with historical trauma and institutional racism, creating a life of living in crisis mode. At the same time, given their colonial history, they are a proud and resilient people.

- Consensus is highly valued and reaching out to grassroots rather than just grass tops ensures outreach efforts are inclusive.
- The group discussed that there is a wealth of information on disparities and various public processes and the same questions are being asked again and again. However, nothing has changed.

Report Form and raw notes from the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) group discussion can be found in Appendix 10 of this report.

## Latino Community Summary: Latino Network

### Housing

The group discussed the rise in home prices. They also brought up the concern that with low wages, apartments may have to accommodate multiple families for them to afford rent. This topic led to the discussion of high property taxes and causes of gentrification and displacement. They also talked about the issue of disinvestment in historic communities of color.

### Transportation

The group talked about disparities in infrastructure such as not having enough bus routes, or if there are bus routes, the issue could be alleviated further by adding more bus lines. The group also noted that in the Latino community, there may be issues with buying transit fare due to language barrier or literacy issues. Possible solutions were offered such as the ability to purchase tickets in familiar places (e.g, non-profit offices) and free bus pass as a recycling incentive.



## Parks and Natural Areas

The group commented that nature within the city limits appeals to people the Latino community and that activities in parks promote good health. But with urban growth boundary, what makes Portland beautiful and unique could change and green spaces may disappear and be replaced by concrete jungle. They also discussed concerns about the reduction in funding of parks and natural areas, saying people who want to enjoy parks end up having to pay higher entrance fees.

## Equity

The group commented that equity sounds good in discussions and on the paper, but there is no follow-up. Participants also said that with racial or ethnic differences, people become victims of racial inequities. The group, instead of asking themselves what equity is to them, wanted to know “how Metro is talking about equity and how is equity practiced within the agency and its Board?” They also asked, “how is Metro addressing the issues of disparities, bias, and racism?”

## Community Engagement

- It was important to have participation from a diverse group where some have experience with Metro and people who come from a diversity of work so they were able to bring different components of their lens to the table.
- They’re getting exhausted as a community about being consulted all the time and not being partners.

Metro can provide better communication, feedback loops, and opportunities for communities to participate and understand the different initiatives.

- We don’t know Metro, it was great to learn what they do. How can we be more engaged and have an active role in shaping policy, programs and hiring, retention and promotion.

## Emerging Themes

- To develop a strong relationship with the Latino community, an organization must cultivate trust through active engagement by seeking input and recommendations and including the community’s voice in the decision-making process. Plan with the community, not plan for the community.
- The group consistently wanted to hear Metro’s position on various issues that affect the Latino community and to hear their commitment and actions toward equity.

## Culturally specific items to call out

- The Latino community works well in networks as well as in a mentoring and “co-parenting” through the “Comadre (female)” or a “Compadre” (male) system. It’s an institutional relationship that goes beyond the nuclear family, one that could extend through a formalized godmother and godfather relationship through baptism, but can also extend



further into pre-existing bonds of friendship. This system is among the strongest type of bond in Latino communities.

- The Latino community assimilated into the American society, yet successfully maintains their heritage, language, and family cohesiveness.

## Lessons learned

- The Latino community places a high value on relationships, respect, and trust. To the Latino community, this means taking the time to know their community and letting its members know you. It means working closely and consistently with them to understand their concerns, issues, and desires. Engagement is reciprocal and is not a one-way street.
- To be credible, information should come from sources the community understands and trusts. This involves familiar language, people, institutions, and the use of media like Univision.

Report Form and raw notes from the Latino Network group discussion can be found in Appendix 11 of this report.

## African American Community Summary: Urban League (UL) and Self-Enhancement Inc. (SEI)

### Housing

The group discussed the urgent need for homeownership opportunities and affordable rental housing in the north and northeast areas of Portland. One participant stated that fifteen people from four families are living in her house because they cannot afford Portland's home prices. The group said that if you make too much money, you can't qualify for affordable housing, but if you don't make enough money, you can't afford to buy a home. Gentrification, loss of community, and forced displacement were very strong recurring themes in the housing discussion. Institutional and systemic barriers impede access to opportunities coming to their neighborhood.

### Transportation

The group discussed how transportation, cost of living and healthcare costs, are increasing, and people have to live on very low and fixed incomes. The group talked about how planning should give strong consideration to transit-oriented development that connects neighborhoods to opportunity.

### Parks and Natural Areas

The group discussed how parks and natural areas could be inviting community places and reflect their culture. Participants offered suggestions on how to make it more inviting such as growing food and setting up food carts that offer healthy options such as fresh produce. They also suggested developing community programs that involve African American youth and employs African Americans in parks, so that parks represent intergenerational users, citing Matt Dishman Center as an example. The group made mention of Cully Park as a wonderful example of how to do eco-cultural reclamation and said that they would like to replicate it.

They also said that Metro can help the community by removing the Masai exhibit at the Zoo as they don't have this type of exhibit of any other ethnic/cultural group.

### Equity

The group said that equity is about building trust. Therefore, honesty is important. Equity is identifying the gaps between the have's and have not's, and prioritizing resource allocation to share prosperity. The group said equity is about raising people up who are at the bottom and elevating them to a playing field that ensures access to economic opportunities as well as to information and education. Equity is parity.

### Community Engagement

- Culturally safe space was very important for people to feel that they can be honest and open.
- It was helpful and important to convene people who are not the "usual suspects" and get people who are direct service providers and who work in a range of different jobs. There is a tendency from our governance to always tag the same people, usually high profile people in the black community, and they

are often not the people experiencing many of the things Metro wants to know about.

## Emerging Themes

- Tokenization in government hiring and contracting practices. The group said that one person of color does not represent the voice of the community and that real inclusion requires recruitment and retention of people who understand and are from the community.
- The lack of trust and skepticism in the current government and agency systems was a recurring discussion. The group remarked that there are no people of color on Metro Council.
- Accountability in equity conversations to the African American community means measurable outcomes, milestones, and not just talks and plans.
- Take community wisdom and experience and apply it to Metro's strategic planning and implementation and report back to the community how and why they made those changes.

## Culturally specific items to call out

- The group felt positive about Public Health research findings citing poor individual health as an effect of institutional racism, historic trauma and serial forced displacement — epigenetics and PTSD. They feel that these studies point to real health issues brought about by racism as a cause of chronic stress, and recommend urban policies address them.
- Lost Generation due to gentrification was a key phrase used throughout the meeting lamenting that many African American's feel there is not much hope for them because their community was lost, so people are giving up.
- Metro has the opportunity to employ a strength-based frame through which to hear from those most impacted by inequitable outcomes caused by facially neutral policies.
- Implement policies such as Restorative Justice – Banning the Box and track metrics for successful outcomes.

- Develop a three-year, diverse African American Advisory Committee to ensure Metro has African American issues at the table at the regional level when discussing radical, continuous displacement.

## Lessons learned

- A culturally-specific, safe-space approach is revered and respected in this culture. Participants can speak openly about their lived experience without fear of censorship or reprisal and know remarks are not taken out of context. Because of institutional injustice, until trust is established, a "safe space" means a Black only room. Trust, or the lack thereof, was a common theme, and the group expressed both criticism and skepticism because of their experience with governments and agencies' lack of follow-through and accountability to the Black community.
- The opportunity for the African American discussion group to meet without Metro staff was successful because the participants were able to talk about difficult and painful regional issues and have it reported back in writing. This would not have happened if Metro staff were present.

**Report Form and raw notes from the African American community group discussion can be found in Appendix 12 of this report.**

## Recommendations/Next Steps

Based on lessons learned from the six culturally specific and youth discussion groups and the two subject matter expert groups, the MultiCultural Collaborative recommends the following:

1. Provide a Metro transportation and/or TriMet staff for each discussion group. There were many questions about transportation and the groups could have benefitted from having a representative provide information.
2. Tailor the questions for the discussion groups with subject matter experts, depending on the geographic location.
3. Metro should develop incentives for local governments relating to equity, rather than more regulatory requirements.
4. Continue to engage with these discussion groups beyond this project. Members of these groups could be candidates for advisory committees, if continued relationships are nurtured.
5. Encourage Metro Council members to attend one or more discussion groups to listen to community issues and build relationships with their constituents.
6. Develop a longer-term program to provide a cohort of diverse emerging leaders to learn about how to engage in policy discussions, work with Metro staff, testify before Metro Council and be ambassadors for Metro.
7. Generally, the culturally specific discussion groups were successful. Continue with the format and funding for these.
8. For the subject matter experts discussion groups, provide more advanced notice and coordination with other Metro and local government outreach efforts. Provide a coordinated communication and engagement strategy for continued equity discussions throughout the region.
9. Develop a matrix with the issues raised by each discussion group to determine relevancy and authority for Metro's action. If the issues are not within Metro's jurisdictional authority, determine which governmental or non profit agency is responsible for those issues and share with them.



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Based on consistent feedback from all the groups on community engagement, the MultiCultural Collaborative recommends the following:

1. Hire staff at Metro that represents culturally specific groups who speak the language, into positions of leadership.
2. Provide opportunities to learn how to apply for work at Metro and offer opportunities for internships.
3. Provide more opportunities for culturally specific groups to engage in learning more about Metro.
4. Provide social mixers at Metro for diverse communities to learn more about Metro, meet elected officials, and build trust.
5. Make sure that the recommendations from these discussion groups are reported back at the next round of discussion groups in the fall.
6. Engage with culturally specific leaders in the community beyond the “usual suspects”.
7. Develop a tiered system where different people from different parts of the community actively engage with Metro to ensure holistic understanding of issues rather than grass tops only involvement.
8. Include participation from Metro Council, Equity Strategy Advisory Committee (ESAC) or Metro Exposition and Recreation Commission (MERC), at the next round of discussion groups.
9. Metro should understand different communication styles. For example, with the elders, listening was valued. In other groups, answering questions was important. Finding the appropriate communication style without putting Metro’s mainstream values in the group dynamics is important.
10. Continue to hold meetings outside of the Metro offices in places familiar and safe for culturally specific communities.

## Conclusion

The first round of discussion groups will provide Metro staff with the insight and context for developing the Draft Equity Strategy and Action Plan. This report makes several recommendations that will help Metro improve their community engagement process and content for the next round of the discussion groups. The second round is scheduled for fall 2015 and will provide a feedback loop to the participants to assure that their concerns are integrated into Metro's Draft Equity Strategy.



