

 **Metro** | *Memo*

Date: Monday, May 16, 2016
To: Martha Bennett, Metro Chief Operating Officer
From: Equity Strategy Advisory Committee
Subject: Comments and recommendations on Metro's Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Cc: Scott Robinson, Metro Deputy Chief Operating Officer, and DEI Program Staff

The Equity Strategy Advisory Committee (ESAC) members have had the opportunity to review the final draft of Metro's Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion ("Strategic Plan"). ESAC members appreciate the work and thoughtful consideration that staff and community members put into creating the final draft of the Strategic Plan.

We strongly support the content of the Strategic Plan, including:

- The racial equity approach. Metro makes a powerful statement by leading with race and focusing its equity work on removing the barriers that affect people of color and improving equitable outcomes for these communities. The racial equity approach also brings Metro into a growing national movement of jurisdictions that are embracing racial equity as the way to be more effective in serving all communities.
- The internal and external focus. The Strategic Plan's goals, objectives and actions focus on both Metro's central services and on the agency's role in the region to provide leadership to advance racial equity. This dual internal and external focus of the document is crucial.
- The comprehensive nature of the Strategic Plan. This document stands out because of the breadth of its scope, from articulating an equitable vision for Metro, to identifying five long-term goals with their objectives and actions, to creating an implementation and evaluation framework and tools, to making a credible case for taking the racial equity approach. Metro should be recognized for creating this uniquely comprehensive and forward-looking document to advance racial equity.

We also support the following elements of the process to create the Strategic Plan:

- The extent of community engagement. Metro involved a significant number of community members and leaders in the creation of the Strategic Plan including ESAC members and stakeholders from a number of sectors. Metro also benefited from the participation of subject-matter experts in the creation of this Strategic Plan including staff from local community-based organizations and consultants from around the region and at the national level. Their contributions have greatly strengthened this Strategic Plan. Meaningful partnership should continue in the implementation phase.
- The foundations for the Strategic Plan. Metro has built the document on the foundations laid by the agency's Diversity Action Plan and by its public participation and inclusion efforts. Instead of superseding these existing efforts, the Strategic Plan demonstrates how the agency will coordinate its racial equity work with the efforts to serve all the other historically marginalized communities.

At the same time, ESAC members have identified areas for Metro to improve on in order to be successful in the implementation of the Strategic Plan:

- Accountability. Metro needs to create greater transparency around its work in order to show what progress the agency makes. Community participation and accountability in the implementation of the Strategic Plan will be extremely important. Metro needs to partner with the community to provide open access to information. This will allow the community to evaluate Metro's success, and also to celebrate the agency's progress toward achieving its crucial racial equity goals and objectives.
- Sense of urgency. Metro needs to demonstrate a greater sense of urgency in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and all other actions to advance equity. The agency needs to act swiftly and decisively when implementing this Strategic Plan to address the needs of communities who are experiencing significant disparities today. Setting and evaluating goals and actions will demonstrate this sense of urgency, and will also increase accountability. Sense of urgency and accountability are directly related.
- Regional leadership. Metro is in a position of leadership in the region, and it has a great deal of influence, so the agency needs to leverage these to advance racial equity region-wide. Metro needs to work more closely with partner jurisdictions to make sure that this Strategic Plan is relevant to them. Metro elected officials and leadership need to tell the Metro equity story and encourage their peers to create their own stories.
- Determination. Metro needs to take bold initiatives to advance racial equity. At the same time, the agency needs to recognize that making mistakes is an integral part of being successful in this journey. Metro needs to learn from those mistakes, share the learnings, and be inspired to stay the course toward greater racial equity.

Recommendations:

Based on its members' review of the final draft of the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, the Equity Strategy Advisory Committee recommends that:

1. Martha Bennett, Metro Chief Operating Officer, forward the final version of the Strategic Plan to the Metro Council for their consideration and adoption, and
2. Metro create a new advisory committee, appointed by the Metro Council, to provide community oversight and guidance in the implementation of the Strategic Plan. This new advisory committee should be representative of the diversity of the region, and receive support from Metro to be effective and visible.

Metro's Chief Operating Officer has clearly shown total commitment to the development of the equity strategy. ESAC also recommends that going forward this commitment be expressed through thoughtful and passionate leadership when Metro staff begin the implementation of the Strategic Plan. By demonstrating willingness to increase the agency's accountability, sense of urgency, regional leadership and determination to advance racial equity, Metro and its partners will make the Portland metropolitan region a truly great place for all communities.

Sincerely,

Carl Talton
ESAC Chair