



600 NE Grand Ave.  
Portland, OR 97232  
503-797-1780

[www.oregonmetro.gov](http://www.oregonmetro.gov)

## Metro | *Exposition Recreation Commission*

June 15, 2016

Dear Council President Hughes and Metro Council:

The Metropolitan Exposition and Recreation Commission (MERC) is pleased to support Metro's Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion ("Strategic Plan"). The Commission has had the opportunity to review the content of the Strategic Plan and was impressed with both its breadth and depth. We believe that this document charts a crucial new path for Metro to become a better public agency for the benefit of all communities in the Portland metropolitan region.

The Strategic Plan presents a compelling case for Metro to use a racial equity approach in order to make sure that traditionally marginalized communities, especially people of color, are more effectively served by the agency. The Portland metropolitan region, like the rest of the country, is experiencing rapid demographic change. Communities of color are the fastest growing in the region, and they also continue to experience great disparities in all aspects of social well-being, as compared with the white majority community.

By proposing that Metro work on five long-term goals to remove barriers to success and achieve more equitable outcomes for communities of color, the Strategic Plan presents a series of realistic and ambitious objectives and action items. These goals, objectives and actions, together with a robust evaluation framework and a decision-support tool, will help leadership and staff to incorporate racial equity into all aspects of Metro's work. But, we note with concern that many of the goals, while recognizing limited resources, limit the action items to working with existing resources. MERC urges the Metro Council to commit to allocating sufficient resources (including new resources as needed) to allow more effective and efficient work towards the Strategic Plan Goals.

For example, an objective under the goals of engaging communities of color and allocating resources in a way that advances racial equity requires conducting user testing to improve accessibility and usability of digital tools to increase involvement – but not until after FY 2017-18. MERC has repeatedly expressed concern that the increasing societal focus on digital technology may mean reaching more people in the majority community at the expense of further disenfranchising communities of color who may not have computers in their home, high speed internet access, or otherwise be digitally proficient. MERC supports an allocation of new resources that allows such research to be conducted sooner, and that would fund effective outreach and engagement to communities of color, whether that be through investments in community organizations or additional Metro staff.

The aggressive approach taken by Metro staff to ensure meaningful participation by communities of color in the creation of the Strategic Plan paid off in creating a thorough and thoughtful plan. The Commission appreciates the multiple updates and opportunities to provide feedback that we have received throughout the creation of the Strategic Plan. And we are pleased to see that the Strategic Plan implementation and evaluation continue to include significant community participation and oversight.

For these reasons, the Metropolitan Exposition and Recreation Commission wishes to express its strong support for Metro's Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and urges Metro Council to adopt and implement it.

Sincerely,



Elisa Dozono  
Chair, Metropolitan Exposition and Recreation Commission

cc: MERC Commissioners  
Martha Bennett  
Metro Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Staff