



Smart Communities and Equity

Opportunities to Improve Equity

Equity in transportation refers to the equitable distribution of benefits, burdens, and costs of our policies and infrastructure investments. In today's society, public agencies are challenged with ensuring the long-term viability and livability of their community and that all citizens, regardless of race, income, gender, age, or ability, have equal access to employment and social services. Transportation and Smart Communities can play a role in addressing social equity through a variety of means.

Accessibility

Transportation is an important element of accessibility, essential for reaching education, employment, and health care. Smart Communities can improve access to transportation options that support these activities and expand ladders of opportunity for citizens. Smart elements should consider the differing mobility needs for all socioeconomic segments of the population and should address citizens with disabilities, providing affordable, safe, and comfortable alternatives for all travelers. For example, the City of Madison, WI, USA is building a connected vehicle corridor that includes next-generation transit signal priority on an arterial serving low-income neighborhoods whose residents depend heavily on buses to get to work or school.

Data

Smart Communities can integrate vast amounts of transportation data with other non-transportation data sources. These data can be used to support operations and assess trends and needs in the community. Transportation professionals should aspire to collect and analyze data representative of all system users and account for biases that arise from relying on data from high-end technologies in vehicles or personal devices.

Community Engagement

Transportation professionals should use all tools available to them when gathering community feedback, but should consider the biases introduced by different approaches. Public meetings, online surveys, and community events each have strengths and weaknesses as engagement strategies. Smart Communities can be leveraged to identify challenges with engaging specific communities and ensure staff are responsive to all community members regardless of how information is obtained. Prioritization based on need, rather than request, ensures improvements serve those who need them most.

Smart Partnerships

New or innovative partnerships, with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, or private companies, can provide opportunities to develop a smart community and support efforts related to social equity.

How ITE Can Help

The first step for ITE members is to join the Smart Communities page on ITE Community: <http://bit.ly/2zooOMm>. Additionally, members with experience or insight into equity issues can play a role in furthering the conversation on this topic and volunteering to help develop resources for your peers. If you have questions or would like more information on the ITE Smart Communities initiative, please contact the ITE Smart Communities Task Force (SCoTF) at smartcommunities@ite.org.