



# An Evaluation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations' Climate and Equity Goals

March 2025



## Issue

California needs to meet its goals for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation. The current planning process of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) could incorporate additional considerations and actions to better address climate change and equity concerns. Things like transportation projects that increase road capacity, development in auto-oriented locations, or lack of homes affordable to people near their daily destinations can lead to increased vehicle miles traveled.

Growth in vehicle miles traveled imposes disproportionate effects on low-income and minority populations in the form of added noise, vehicle crashes, and vehicle emissions. All of this negatively affects public health and quality of life.

## Goal

Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) wanted to determine the extent to which MPOs incorporate state climate and equity goals into project selection to help achieve regional GHG reduction targets.

## Method

The research team examined the transportation planning activities of seven California MPOs. They focused on MPO planning and programming to meet climate goals mandated by Senate Bill 375 and advance state equity goals.

## Key Conclusions

- MPOs face challenges incorporating climate change and equity concerns into their planning and programming processes.
- Some MPOs lack the resources and expertise to conduct rigorous project evaluations.
- Local governments and funding constraints can limit MPOs' ability to prioritize climate and equity goals.
- Stronger support from the state would help effectively address climate change and equity concerns.

## More Information

This is a summary of [contract 21RD008](#) which ended October 2023. This project was conducted independently and not in connection with any regulatory proposal or other action considered by CARB. For more information, visit [CARB Research](#) or contact the [Research Division](#).

## Findings

All seven MPOs incorporate climate and equity considerations into their goals, objectives, planning processes, and assessment methods. However, the extent of this incorporation varies across the MPOs and their funding programs. Several have made notable progress in recent years, particularly in seeking more input from communities and advocacy groups not historically represented in regional planning processes. Including a project (e.g., transportation, climate, land use, etc.) in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) sets the stage for its sponsors to pursue subsequent project development activities.

The project suggests that incorporating climate and equity criteria early in the RTP preparation process enables future projects to meaningfully contribute to achieving these goals.

