



MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Committee
From: Health Equity Working Group
Date: September 22, 2017
Re: Draft Strategies for Health Equity

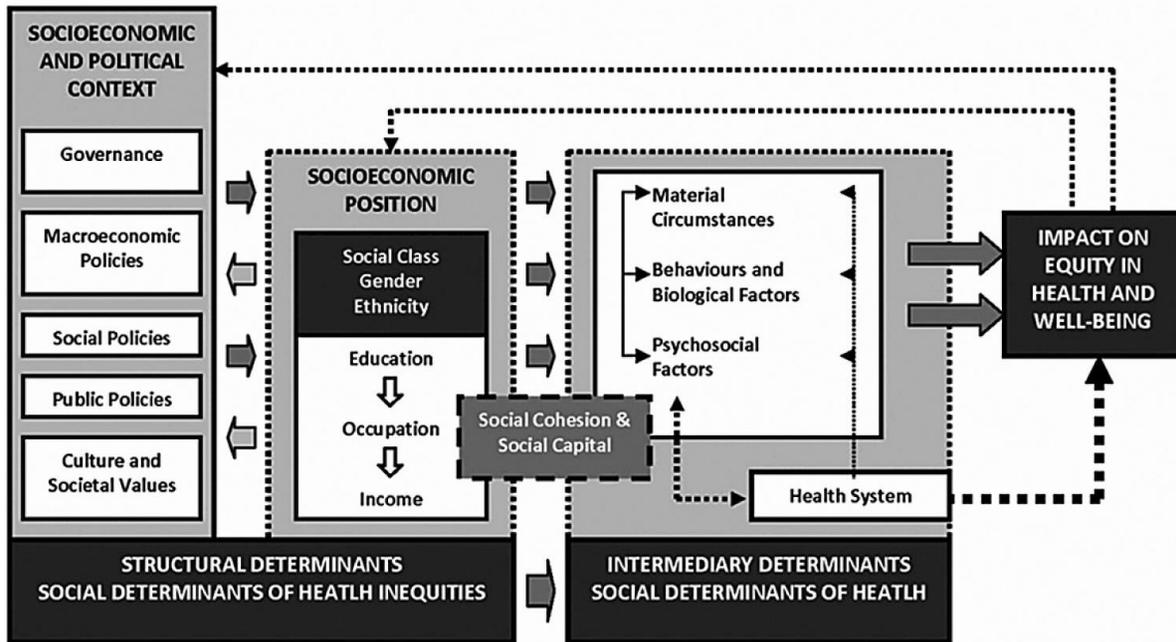
The health equity strategy paper will identify strategies for ON TO 2050 to advance health equity in the region. Jobs, transportation, taxation, land use, housing, and environmental justice all impact health outcomes. The interconnected nature of these topics and their relationship to health inequity is essential in understanding and intervening at the structural level for advancing health equity. ON TO 2050 will help achieve CMAP's vision for health where all of the region's residents will reside in livable communities with equitable access to the resources and opportunities necessary for optimal health and well-being. Building on the work of the resource group over the past 5 months, this memo summarizes potential strategies for the health equity strategy paper.

Framework

As a field, public health has increasingly used the *Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)* framework to describe how broader factors influence the health of populations. In order to plan for the health and well-being of the entire Chicago metropolitan region, the Health Equity Strategy Paper will incorporate SDOH as a leading conceptual framework. SDOH describes the conditions in which people live, work, grow, play, worship, age, and die. All of these conditions impact health, and all are shaped by public policy and planning. CMAP has recognized the importance of SDOH in its GO TO 2040 comprehensive regional plan, and the goal of this strategy paper is to further the organization's commitment to incorporating a health equity lens into its strategies across different areas.

To have the greatest possible impact on reducing health inequities, strategies must address social determinants of health inequities. The goal is for the ON TO 2050 plan to incorporate strategies for changing the norms, values, policies, practices, and processes that determine the distribution of determinants. The Health Equity Resource Group has been working to provide background research and analysis on how strategies in the ON TO 2050 comprehensive regional plan can address the broadest possible social determinants of health and health inequities.

Model Illustrating the Social Determinants of Health



Source: CSDH (2007)

Preliminary strategies for achieving greater regional health and health equity

This strategy paper aims to articulate how a health equity lens can be incorporated into strategies across ON TO 2050 topic areas. Thus, it builds on many of the strategies already outlined in other strategy papers and incorporates processes for measuring health and health equity impacts. We have divided recommendations into five key areas that relate to other areas of ON TO 2050, and we lay out some preliminary strategies for each key area, the details for which will be fleshed out much further in the strategy paper.

Strategy area 1: Ensure environmental justice and climate resilience

The effects of climate change have significant implications for the built environment, economies, and ecosystems—all of which impact the living conditions upon which people's health depends. As the Climate Resilience strategy paper describes, climate change impacts in northeastern Illinois will include more frequent and severe weather, extreme heat, and drought, which will heighten risks of illnesses and mortality as well as emotional distress and property damage. Building resiliency into public policy, planning, and infrastructure will help communities withstand and recover from many overlapping challenges posed by climate change and other related environmental issues. As an integral component of Inclusive Growth, a focus on equity and environmental justice is necessary in this process to help the most vulnerable communities build resilience against environmental challenges and advance the goal of improving quality of life for all residents in the region.

Apply an environmental justice approach in development decisions/projects.

As the Chicago region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, CMAP must comply with provisions of the Environmental Justice executive order and FTA Circular 4702.1B implementing Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. These rules require CMAP to evaluate and

address the impact of its plans and programs on minority and low-income communities. Environmental justice has already been incorporated in several CMAP transportation planning and investment efforts. In programming Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) funds for transportation projects, which facilitate direct emissions elimination, CMAP calculates a metric to evaluate areas with high concentrations of particulate matter emissions (particle pollution) and large minority and low-income populations. Following a recommendation in the Inclusive Growth strategy paper, CMAP is also developing a Regional Strategic Freight Direction to address freight impacts in Economically Disconnected Areas (EDAs), which disproportionately bear the negative externalities of goods movement.¹

However, to broaden the reach of environmental justice in investment and development decisions in local communities region-wide, many strategies will also require partner agencies and municipalities to take the lead.

- Municipal and county public health departments should enact ordinances to protect residents from exposure to environmental pollutants. These regulations could include restrictions on industrial chemical shipping and storage (e.g. Petcoke and manganese); enforcement of existing lead paint removal requirements; and new minimum targets for municipal lead pipe removal in conjunction with existing water service modernization efforts. Municipalities should also partner with organizations such as the Metropolitan Tenants Organization and the Civitas ChildLaw Center at Loyola University to develop programs and secure funding to incentivize proactive inspection and abatement of lead and other harmful substances from homes.
- To advance environmental justice, CMAP will research and implement best practices for environmental justice integration into local planning and transportation funding. CMAP's Local Planning Program offers resources that help municipalities to develop policies that support the goals of GO TO 2040, both through the Local Technical Assistance program and through more general model ordinances and toolkits. CMAP will continue to develop and disseminate resources to provide municipalities, transportation departments, and transportation providers with tools and practices to implement environmental justice into their local processes.

Build resilience for climate change, particularly in under-resourced communities.

CMAP's Climate Resilience strategy paper covers a wide range of recommendations to build climate resilience through land use planning, infrastructure planning, natural resource management, economic development, and capacity building.² Recognizing that certain populations have greater vulnerability from climate impacts and associated health risks, the strategy paper emphasizes equitable reduction of vulnerability by ensuring that the most vulnerable communities have infrastructure and service capacities to withstand and recover from climate impacts.

¹ Economically Disconnected Areas are census tracts with high concentrations of either: 1) Low-income households and minority population; OR 2) Low-income households and limited English proficiency (LEP) population. See Inclusive Growth strategy paper.

² Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, [Climate Resilience](#), December 2016.

Strategy area 2: Integrate healthy community design approaches to support the health of residents

GO TO 2040 recommended achieving greater livability through land use planning and multimodal infrastructure improvements. Community design and planning to create a livable built environment can have significant impacts on public health by various mechanisms, including opportunities for physical activity, economic vibrancy, mental health, and mitigating community violence. As investments are made in infrastructure, housing, and other aspects of the built environment, integrating health equity can ensure that the greatest potential benefits are realized for all residents.

Continue to promote active transportation in local planning and create walkable communities.

With increasing linkages between our travel choices and health outcomes, many health professionals are turning to non-motorized transportation to reduce air pollution, prevent traffic injuries and deaths, and lower obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer rates. The Centers for Disease Control has created a Transportation Health Impact Assessment Toolkit for planning and health professionals.³ Strategies proposed for promoting positive health outcomes include: reducing VMT, expanding public transportation, promoting active transportation, incorporating health community design features, improving safety for all users, and ensuring equitable access to transportation networks. AARP has also shown a commitment to livable communities and complete streets, to help senior populations “age in place.”

Through the LTA program, CMAP has assisted several communities in the region develop transportation plans that promote non-motorized transportation and integrate Complete Streets policies. These include several Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans (e.g. Arlington Heights, Evanston, Downers Grove), Transportation Master Plans and Access Studies that make recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements (e.g. Crystal Lake), as well as the South Council of Mayors/SSMMA Complete Streets and Trails Plan. In collaboration with the Active Transportation Alliance and the National Complete Streets Coalition, CMAP developed a Complete Streets Toolkit to help communities incorporate a Complete Streets approach into local planning, design, and construction processes and documents.⁴ CMAP and its partners should continue these and other efforts to help localities enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel and access for all users, regardless of their age, abilities, or mode of travel.

Expand housing choice to improve housing affordability.

Housing affordability is an important determinant of health. It allows for better savings and wealth accumulation, which offers residents more resources to access services such as health care and healthy food, as well as reduced stress, a key factor in many chronic health issues. Quality housing mitigates health risks from living in unsanitary housing conditions. As such, expanding housing choice so that all households in the region can find a quality affordable home that fits each household’s preferences is key to achieving health equity. The strategy paper on Expanding Housing Choice outlines strategies that CMAP and its partners can undertake to comprehensively address the barriers to housing choice.⁵ As the strategy paper indicates, while CMAP is already working to expand housing choice in the region through

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, [Transportation and Health Tool](#), October 2015.

⁴ Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, [Complete Streets Toolkit](#), March 2015.

⁵ Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, [Expanding Housing Choice](#), May 2017.

Homes for a Changing Region and other LTA projects, the broad nature of the challenges require actions from private sector developers, financiers, multiple levels of government, individuals, and many others. Undertaking the range of planning, assistance, research, and convening strategies outlined in the paper will lessen those barriers and thereby improve housing affordability, and by extension public health, in the region.

Update development regulations to guide healthy land use planning and environmental design

Adapting current zoning policies to allow for consideration of public health and health equity will allow municipalities to simultaneously address multiple determinants of health in a cost-effective and sustainable way. Local governments can use health data to create development regulations and siting requirements that promote health in the long-term. For example, restrictions could be applied on industrial development in proximity to residential areas, or requirements can be set for locating schools in safe, walkable places. By incorporating environmental design standards, such as appropriate lighting, quality open spaces, and guidelines for securing vacant and abandoned buildings, zoning can also be utilized to prevent crime and increase public safety. CMAP should support local initiatives for healthy zoning and continue to provide guidance and technical assistance through LTA to help municipalities adopt zoning ordinances that advance health equity goals.

Develop a quality of open space standard for all areas

Ensuring that access to quality open spaces is equitable across geography, race, and income is essential to health equity in the region. Parks and green spaces not only contribute to better air quality, reduced urban heat island effect, and more recreational opportunities, they can also enhance placemaking and improve climate resilience, ultimately benefiting both physical and mental well-being of communities. GO TO 2040 recommended increasing park accessibility and CMAP has since developed several indicators to evaluate access to open space in the region. CMAP should continue to refine these metrics, expanding evaluation to not only access but also quality, and incorporate the analysis when determining areas for priority conservation or investment. CMAP should also pursue opportunities to increase access to quality open space through LTA projects, especially in underserved areas, and by encouraging municipalities to adopt regulations such as minimum open space requirements in new developments.

Strategy area 3: Ensure that all communities have equitable access to economic opportunity and resources

In the Inclusive Growth strategy paper, CMAP analysis shows that high levels of economic inequality are limiting our region's ability to grow. Inequality unfolds across a number of dimensions, limiting some residents' opportunities to succeed due to the community they live in, their inherent personal traits like race or ethnicity, and/or their socioeconomic status. Limited opportunity can extend across generations, circumscribing the lifelong earnings and entrepreneurial potential of residents through decreased access to quality education, employment, housing, or transportation choices, all of which have significant repercussions on public health. Strategies that promote overall access and opportunity will focus on ensuring positive health outcomes across socioeconomic factors.

Expand high-quality transportation options in excluded communities

Providing transit service that runs frequently, has longer hours of service over night, and connects to major job centers is a key strategy for connecting excluded residents to opportunity. CMAP should evaluate the existing level and quality of transit service -- and how well it supports access to the region's employment centers from EDAs and provide guidance on changes or additions to available transportation resources that would improve mobility options in EDAs, including possible roles for ride sharing companies. Additionally, CMAP should evaluate the job opportunities that are accessible using the existing transit options available during various time periods (i.e., using peak hour service vs. off-peak service).

Develop Variable Transportation System Funding Concepts

Innovations such as variable transit fees, non-user fee revenues, and congestion pricing are important transportation management tools designed to decrease automobile dependency and make public transit more accessible and efficient. In doing so, these strategies promote public and non-motorized transportation while reducing emissions, ultimately leading to positive health outcomes stemming from healthier, more active lifestyles and improved air quality. CMAP should encourage regional transit agencies to investigate various funding concepts in an effort to increase public transit use and promote active transportation.

Strategy Area 4: Standardize best practices that promote health equity

Health equity can be understood as an inclusive process of assurance of the conditions for optimal health across diverse groups. Developing standardized equitable practices and processes with a focus on advancing health and health equity will help ensure that public projects and planning promote health equity.

Continue to foster inclusive public outreach processes

Disadvantaged or underrepresented population groups often lack representation in the development and political process. Without giving all population groups an equal voice, health equity is difficult to achieve. A primary goal of all CMAP's LTA projects is to elevate community engagement in planning -- particularly focusing on engaging populations and issues that are typically underrepresented in previous planning processes. The health strategy paper will investigate strategies to help communities address public health concerns through broader-based stakeholder engagement, collaborative processes, and other forms technical assistance. The health strategy paper will identify model practices and existing resources that municipalities and public health departments could use to increase community engagement with local residents in an effort to advance health equity.

Support health impact assessments for substantial transportation and development projects

Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) are powerful tools designed to empower communities to make informed decisions that improve public health through community design. Where Environmental Impact Statements have become standard procedure for making sound development decisions while protecting environmental interests, HIAs are still underutilized in project selection and development. Effective use of HIAs highlights how specific developments affect health in certain populations, helping to address health inequities by prioritizing key transportation and infrastructure projects in disadvantaged communities. CMAP should

recommend conducting HIAs in the planning and development processes of major transportation and infrastructure projects.

Develop and implement displacement prevention strategies

Displacement can have significant implications on public health. Among other concerns, employment, income, mental health, and overall well-being related to increased levels of stress are all adversely affected when residents are displaced. CMAP should seek to further understand how community displacement relates to development and transportation projects, along with policy remedies that limit impacts, such as the use of Community Benefits Agreements.

Strategy Area 5: Improve data collection, analysis, and availability to inform decision-making and policies

Dependable and timely data can track progress in improvements in social determinants of health, structural determinants of health inequities, and health status and outcomes. When properly collected and analyzed, quality health data and metrics greatly contribute to reductions in health inequities. The proposed strategies will seek to standardize health data across municipalities and allow for long-term monitoring of health impacts.

Explore funding options for oversampling of BRFSS

One of the most regularly collected sources of primary health information across counties is the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey. It is collected every two years and available at county level geographies. For a fee, local health departments can contract with the Illinois Department of Public Health to oversample at the community level to allow for more refined data by race and geography. Additionally, oversampling allows for expanded information on mental health at the community level. Oversampling this data will allow more specific health data tracking in an effort to highlight and address health inequity among population groups. County, municipal public health departments, and hospitals, with philanthropic support, should contract for such oversampling.

Expand evaluation metrics to highlight benefits to economically disconnected areas

In programming Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds, CMAP calculates a metric to evaluate the potential benefits of air quality improvements to large minority and low-income populations. Along with age, these are significant predictors of sensitivity to air pollution and therefore indicate where health might improve most by making emissions reductions. In the next selection cycle, CMAP is including existing air pollution in the CMAQ analysis and is seeking the most comprehensive air quality data available. This will enable further targeting of investments in a way that benefits sensitive populations as well as regional air quality.

Develop a racial health indicator that is common to the region

Similar to the concept of County Health Rankings, the region should be held accountable to key health measures that are disaggregated by race. This will entail collecting common data sources/metrics that can be disaggregated by race and geography, enabling the monitoring of progress on reducing concentrated disadvantage and health inequity. Currently, most health indicators rely on secondary sources that are available at the county level. A common racial

health indicator, whether a single indicator or index of indicators, will allow for better monitoring within municipalities or counties (Example: Oversampling of BRFSS may yield a key racial health indicator that can be disaggregated by race/geography, with a broader regional goal being to reduce disparities across and within municipalities). County and municipal health departments should collaborate to develop such an indicator.

Monitor Integration of Health and Health Equity in Municipal Policies

Comprehensive policy reviews are needed to ensure health inequities are properly being addressed in municipal decisions. Regular policy assessments by municipalities, local health departments, and local planning departments will track progress of integration and implementation of health and health equity in municipal policies. CMAP should assist municipalities in creating an assessment tool that monitors the degree to which policies and practices integrate health and health equity.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

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