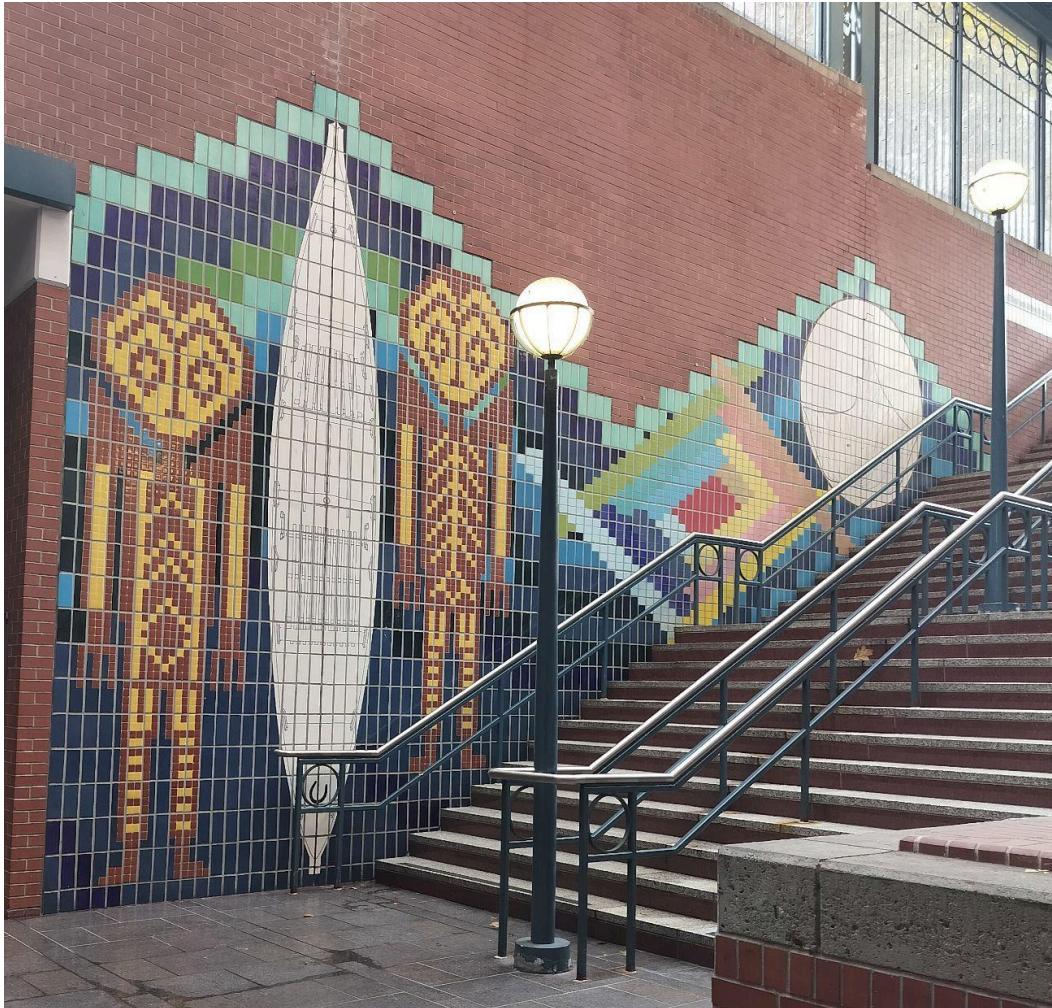


Native and Indigenous Community Input Report - Seattle Transportation Plan



Ceramic tile mural at the Pioneer Square Station, Sounding Wall by Laura Sindell 1990.

Report produced by
sləp̓iləbəx^w (Rising Tides) - Indigenous Planning Group:
Pah-tu Pitt (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs member) and Demarus Tevuk
(Inupiaq, Nome Eskimo Community)
With support from the Seattle Department of Transportation and Seattle Indian
Services Commission

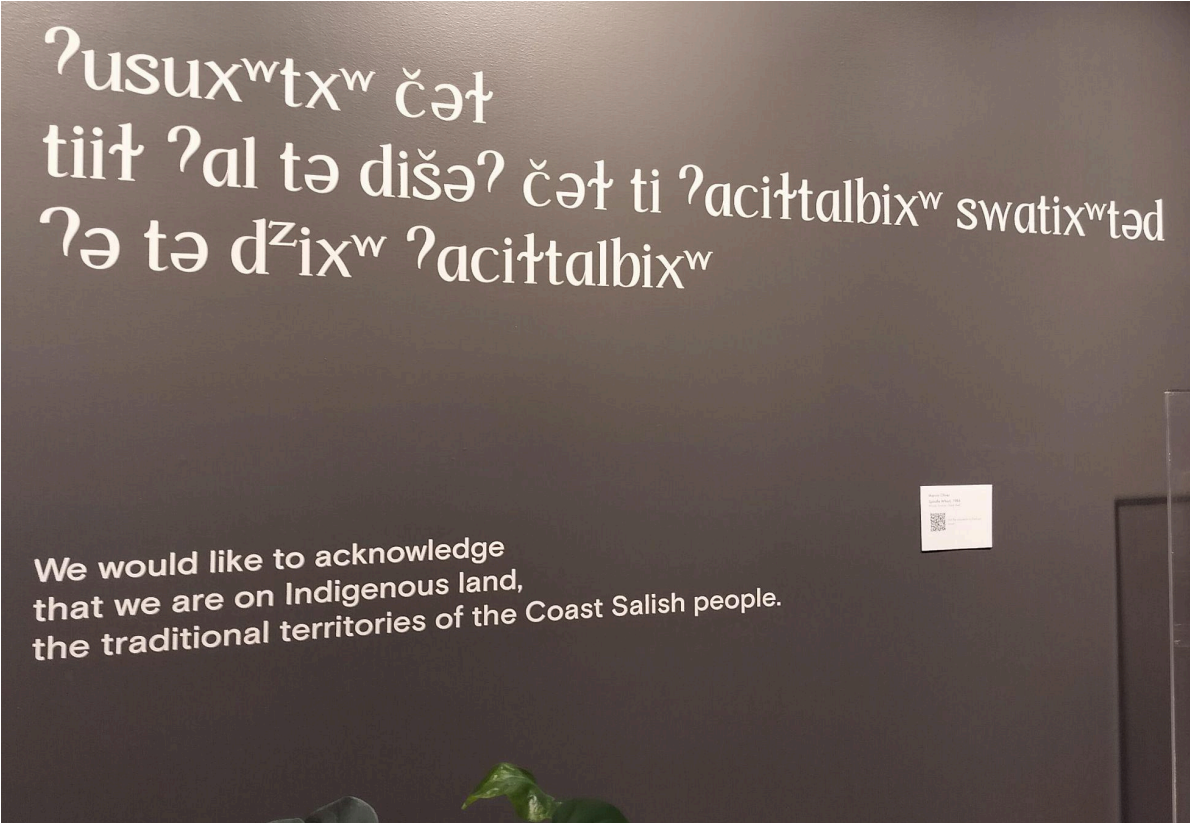
Land Acknowledgement

Suquamish | Muckleshoot | Snoqualmie | Duwamish | Tulalip

"Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished."

Chief Seattle 1854

We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is within the ancestral territory of the suq̓wabs̓ "People of Clear Salt Water" (Suquamish People). Expert fisherman, canoe builders and basket weavers, the suq̓wabs̓ live in harmony with the lands and waterways along Washington's Central Salish Sea as they have for thousands of years. Here, the suq̓wabs̓ live and protect the land and waters of their ancestors for future generations as promised by the Point Elliott Treaty of 1855.



Land acknowledgment in the art gallery at the King Street Station.

"I would like to express our gratitude and acknowledgement of the Federally Recognized Muckleshoot People, as we gather on their traditional lands. We recognize Muckleshoot's continued presence as a strong sovereign nation and their invaluable contributions to our state history, economy, and culture."

Executive Summary

On October 4, 2023, American Indian and Alaska Native community members who live and work in Seattle participated in a listening session facilitated by sləp̓iləbəx^w (Rising Tides) to provide their input to the draft Seattle Transportation Plan (STP). The STP is a comprehensive plan of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and it includes a set of goals looking forward 20 years into the future.

The transportation industry historically serves capital interests and is designed to transport commodities and focuses on employee commuting routes. The industry typically uses top-down decisions based on cost-benefit analysis where projects are justified through ridership usage or fares to maximize goods and service workers moved through the system. A focus on work commutes and a reliance on maximizing ridership has created a transportation system that is inequitable where minority community groups are disinvested and move through a cycle of displacement when mass transit is finally provided to their communities. The infrastructure of freeways, roads and train rails split communities and ecosystems apart and every modern transportation method includes an environmental cost.

Native and Indigenous community members shared their criticisms of the existing Seattle transportation system and included frustrations with the urban planning of neighborhoods that do not provide for basic needs like grocery stores and pharmacies. Community members offered a future vision of transportation that is equitable, accessible, affordable, safe, and connects everyone to take care of their needs and access services.

Our community members view transportation as a service that has a goal of improving quality of life, which includes bringing people together for community events. Our report contains many recommendations and solutions:

- Utilize Indigenous community-based planning methodologies
- Plan neighborhoods that are walkable and holistically care for our needs
- Include Tribal members early in planning discussions
- Improve service to cultural community centers
- Co-create solutions to transportation issues with community groups
- Invest in historically disinvested communities with solutions that are identified by the community
- Improve communication and engagement with the urban Native and Indigenous community

Introduction

A common theme in North American history is the erasure of significant Indigenous contributions to the work of building the Canadian and American nations. The transportation sector is no different and the fact that Indigenous people created and maintained a continent-wide pre-contact trade system is often ignored and rarely mentioned. Every year, families with the right to conduct trade, earned through generations of respectful transactions, traveled from South America to communities across North America. North American tribes also traded and shared food, goods, and knowledge with each other across Turtle Island. Many traditional trade and gathering routes were built upon by European settlers to become roads, highways, freeways, and railroads.

In western Washington, transport by canoe, canoe landing sites, and villages near waterways were first utilized by traders and then displaced or destroyed by larger commerce forces to become shipping ports. *dʒidʒələlič* (Little Crossing-Over Place) is the Lushootseed name for a bay where canoes would parallel their approach to the bay's sand spit, completely turn around, and enter into what is now downtown Seattle. The bay was completely filled in with soil washed away during the environmental engineering era of retrograding surrounding hills and straightening the Duwamish River. Flattening the [landscape](#) included a fundamentalist Christian notion that it would purify the lands and revitalize their usefulness for settler activities.

The City of Seattle and the Seattle Department of Transportation, with consultation from the Suquamish and Muckleshoot Tribal Councils, designated portions of Alaskan Way and Elliot Way with the honorary name [Dzidzilalich](#). The honorary name is an effort to address the ubiquitous erasure of Indigenous cultures, but it does not utilize the Lushootseed font and it capitalizes the first letter of the word, which goes against a design rule to never capitalize Lushootseed words. Traditional knowledge of *dʒidʒələlič* and the Lushootseed language were provided to *sləp̩ləbəx^w* (Rising Tides) - Indigenous Planning Group members by Lushootseed language experts *qəłtəblu* - [Tami Hohn](#) and *q^watələmu* - [Nancy Jo Bob](#).

Many Indigenous cultures view knowledge as a gift from the land and the land tells Native peoples where to create trails, launch and land canoes, build villages, and hold gatherings. Native and Indigenous community members shared their traditional knowledges, a reflection of and a gift from their ancestral homelands, with our team during a community listening session and interviews.

The intention of this report is to first, provide a service to the local American Indian and Alaska Native community and to honor the traditional knowledge systems that

have guided Native and Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. Serving the Indigenous community and centering on the community's needs and voice is a guiding value of sləp̓iləbəx̌w (Rising Tides). sləp̓iləbəx̌w is an Indigenous Planning Group, a coalition of Native and Indigenous architects, planners, artists, researchers, and community members. A secondary intention is to provide the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and the City of Seattle (the City) with a culturally accurate report on how to respectfully engage with urban Native and Indigenous community members. The Seattle Indian Services Commission and SDOT provided staff support for planning and attending the listening session. Our report's recommendations are provided with a hope that the City will implement policy, program, and infrastructure changes, while also describing the Native and Indigenous approach to community planning.

Originally, this report was a community engagement project to inform the Seattle Transportation Plan (STP), which is a comprehensive plan of SDOT. The STP will align with the transportation element of the City's comprehensive plan. Comprehensive plans are required to be updated every 10 years, the plans typically look forward 20 years, and they reflect city-wide community values and goals. Unfortunately, the timing of the final project means that the local American Indian and Alaska Native community member's input has a low chance of being fully included in the STP or in the City's next comprehensive plan called the One Seattle Plan. Other community groups were engaged in the summer of 2022 with a goal to include their input in the draft STP.

Industry Context

Our conversations were an opportunity for the local Native and Indigenous community to explore and discuss issues and recommendations related to transportation. Our report must discuss the Western, mainstream, or settler approaches to transportation infrastructure, acknowledge the harm caused by the transportation system, and offer solutions for an equitable future.

In European or Western cultures, the goal of knowledge systems is to determine methods to control the landscape. Traditional knowledge holders' goals for listening to the land are rarely honored or understood. If a transportation department seeks input from local tribal members, they must include tribal members early in the planning stages and not wait until a site feasibility study is underway. Tribal members may have concerns about the site conditions, location, health, or its cultural significance.

Mainstream transportation's ultimate goal is to simply move goods and workforce employees, viewing people as a commodity good of the services they provide. Transportation has a long history of serving capitalism and cost-benefit analyses are used to determine investments in major infrastructure projects. The driving force in modern transportation is to move as many goods and people, as workforce employees, as possible, as quickly and as cost-effectively as possible.

Modern transportation uses top-down approaches to decision-making and the past and present use of the 'right' of eminent domain causes significant harm to both community members and the land. Roads, railroads, highways, and docks have all displaced homes and split ecosystems apart. The transportation sector has only recently begun to use equity in planning as a guiding value. Traditional knowledge begins its research with equity as an intentional goal or outcome of the research and planning process.

Local Context

Seattle's geography, with a narrow land mass between the Puget Sound, the Salish Sea, and Lake Washington, directs local and state transportation departments to be very efficient in their land-use decisions. The local urban Native and Indigenous community should also be very strategic in their decisions for building and investing in community spaces and infrastructure.

A glaring example of the lack of equity in the planning process of transportation projects is the Link Light Rail managed by Sound Transit. During the line's construction, South Seattle community members voiced their concerns in television interviews and pointed out that expensive elevated rails and tunnels were used through affluent neighborhoods and street-level rails were used in disinvested or historically redlined neighborhoods. Further, some neighborhoods are lacking stations, the Line 1 kills on average one person per year (mostly in South Seattle), and Sound Transit continues to not offer basic station amenities, like seating, shelter, bathrooms, or water fountains.

The Link Light Rail stations continue to displace local residents, particularly in South Seattle neighborhoods, and cause gentrification as developers build townhomes and apartments near the new stations. The city's Office of Planning and Community Development, during an introductory webinar on the launch of their Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) Community Advisory Group (CAG), acknowledged the cycle of mass transit infrastructure causing displacement. Light rail provides a missing service to communities, developers build new housing that is less affordable, and communities are pushed away to neighborhoods that are not

serviced by mass transit. Increased policing often accompanies gentrification and the justice system exasperates displacement through fines and incarceration.

Soil and concrete excavated during construction of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way portions of the Link Light Rail were recycled to build a pedestrian and bicycle trail under the Seattle City Light transmission line right-of-way corridor in South Seattle. The trail was named the Chief Sealth Trail and was opened in 2007. Rainier Valley also has one main road and Rainier Ave has a long history of fatal collisions, with one lane dedicated to buses and many in transit expressing disappointment.

Because of the cost-benefit analysis needed to justify the construction of mass transit, smaller and historically underserved communities like the local American Indian and Alaska Native communities will continue to see their community spaces disinvested by the transportation department. Relative's comments during the 2022 Native Neighborhood Community Study shared that they loved and valued the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center and Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center facilities, but they are very difficult to access by bus or light rail.¹

Another local example of historical inequity in the transportation system is the 2001 lawsuit *U.S. v. Washington*, where 21 tribes and the United States, determined that Washington State had a duty under tribal treaties to protect and ensure the health of salmon. Culverts built under roads and highways were impeding fish passage to their spawning grounds and the state was ordered to replace inadequate culverts to improve salmon health. Salmon are central to Coast Salish and Plateau cultures and the state transportation department has a very real impact on the local Indigenous community's way of life.

Improving culverts for fish passage has been slow and there is uncertainty if the contracting process for culvert replacement is meaningfully involving the communities most impacted. For instance, many Tribes have Tribal Employment Rights Offices (TERO) that are involved with developing a workforce and opportunities in contracting or subcontracting and it is unclear if TEROs are being utilized for culvert replacement projects. Additionally, 6PPD-q is a chemical material in tires that is identified as a key pollutant in pre-spawn mortality for salmon and steelhead, and the pollutant is more heavily concentrated in urban areas.

¹ The [Native Neighborhood Community Study](#) chose to name survey and focus group participants as relatives instead of respondents.

Urban Native and Indigenous Community

History and context are vital in Native and Indigenous cultures, since Indigenous science is a holistic knowledge system that focuses on the health of a whole system. The Suquamish, Muckleshoot, Snoqualmie, Tulalip, and Duwamish are Coast Salish Tribes that have maintained relationships with the land that Seattle now occupies since time immemorial.

Chief siʔaʔ was a Suquamish and Duwamish Chief, a brilliant strategist and orator who encouraged early settlers to trade with his community and the city of Seattle was named out of his alliances and friendships. Although incorporated in 1869, City Ordinance No 5 was passed by the board of trustees in 1865 and it mandated that “Indians” could not be inside city limits after dusk, unless they were provided with boarding and permission from their employers.

Local Indigenous people had a long history of visiting, trading, and working in the Seattle area and families would travel for hundreds of miles to pick hops and other crops in the Duwamish Valley. Seattle continued to attract a diverse population of American Indian and Alaska Natives, with the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896-1899 creating a boom of local jobs as ships loaded with supplies in Seattle before heading north to Alaska and Canada.

In 1953, US Congress passed the Indian Termination Act (ITA) which dissolved about 100 tribes, removing federally recognized tribal status, a legal identity, from thousands of tribal members. The Indian Termination Act was a federal assimilation policy that benefited capital interests as tribes were targeted for their land and resources. The following Indian Relocation Act (IRA) of 1956 relocated not only recently disenrolled tribal members, but federally recognized tribal members to city and urban centers. The IRA’s goal was also to assimilate tribal people, with promises of job training and housing. Many of the more than 10,000 people forced into relocation were given nothing more than a one-way bus fare and cities were ill-prepared to provide housing and job training.

Separated from their extended families and homelands, often experiencing significant culture shock, and without adequate support, elders of the IRA era were at a high risk to experience homelessness. Local Native-led nonprofits continue to point to the ITA and IRA as the source of the high per capita rate of homelessness for the local American Indian and Alaska Native population. Reservation-based economies were also designed by non-Native “Indian agents” to extract resources with limited opportunities for building community wealth. Low earning potential on reservations combined with ecological devastation like dams or oil industry resulted in a continuous diaspora to urban settings.

American Indian and Alaska Native community members each have their own preference for labels for their identity and an individual's preference for naming their heritage may change over time. Our report will use terms based on their context, for instance, there are Native people living in urban areas that are living far from their Indigenous homelands and the term Indigenous refers to people who have an ancestral tie to the lands being discussed.

Demographics for the local Native and Indigenous population vary widely. Until recently, the US Census would only report data for people who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) alone, and this distinction leaves out 61% of Native Americans who identify as [mixed race](#). In Seattle those who identify as AIAN alone are about 0.5% of the population and in King County, the AIAN alone population is 1.0%. The Urban Indian Health Institute reports that within the [Seattle service area](#), the AIAN alone population is 0.7%, or 14,276 individuals, and that the AIAN alone or in combination (which is a more accurate representation) population is 2.2%, or 45,661 individuals.

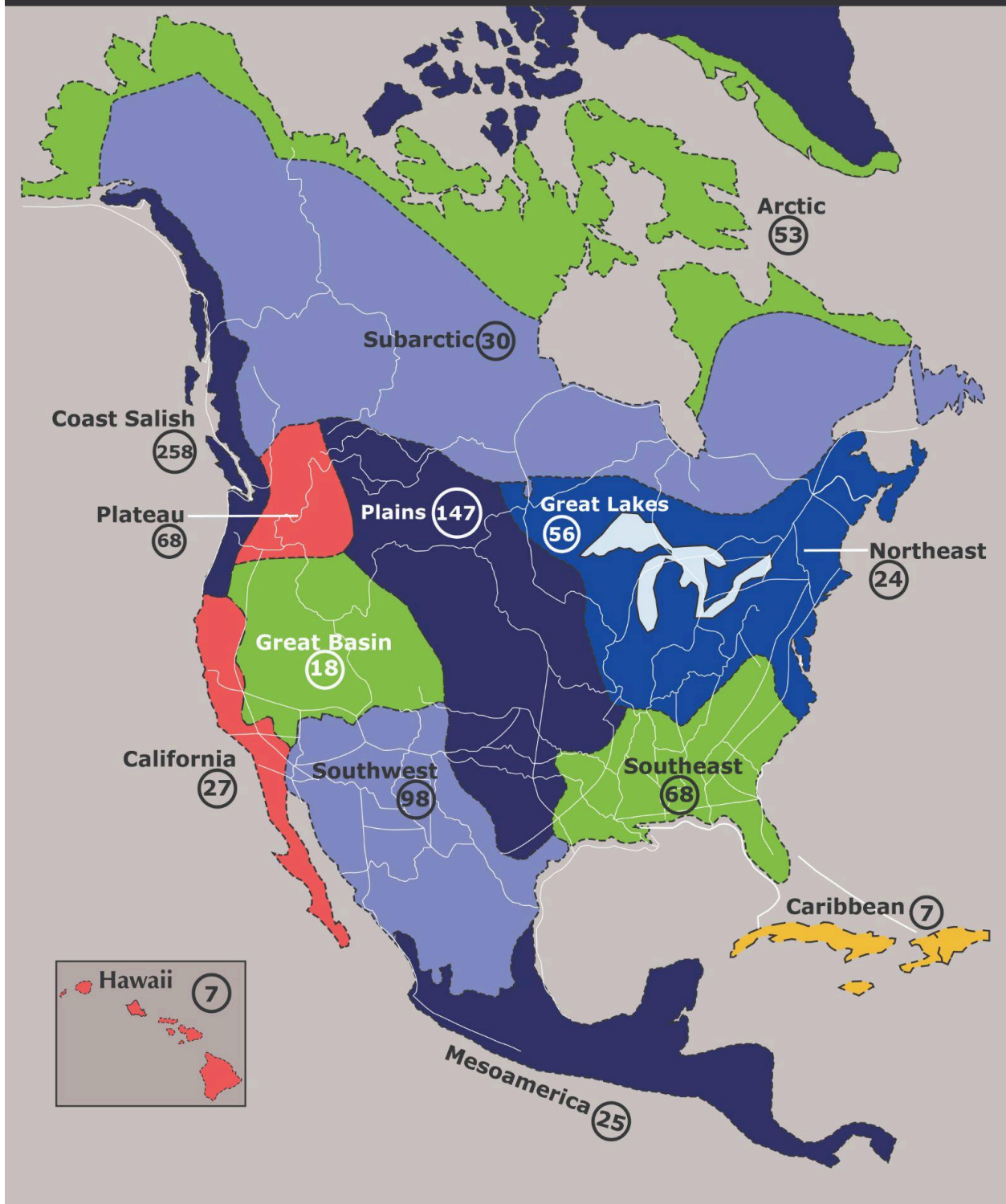
Nationwide, the 2020 US Census reported an [86.5%](#) increase in the American Indian and Alaska Native population, raising the Native American population to 2.9% of the total population. The reasons for the increase in self-identification as Native American are broad and may include a growth in understanding the value of data for Native communities, which can increase funding of federal programs and services, and a better trust in the census system.²

Demographic data is an extremely valuable tool for advocating for project and program funding and sadly, most City of Seattle resources continue to use the lower 0.5% AIAN alone data point when discussing the local Native population. sləp̩iləbəx^w also continues to question the accuracy of current demographic data because distrust of Western data collection methods continues to be an issue for Indigenous people. Another issue with data collection is the fact that the local Native and Indigenous communities are often ignored, leaving large data gaps and hindering the ability of research projects to accurately describe changes such as displacement in the community.

In 2022, sləp̩iləbəx^w conducted a Native Neighborhood Community Study (NNCS) for Native and Indigenous people who live, work, visit, or have a relationship with Seattle. The NNCS collected 768 survey responses and asked community members to list their tribal affiliations or tribal heritage along with a description of their ancestral homelands. Survey relatives were not required to be enrolled in a

² For more, see [Detailed Data for Hundreds of American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes](#), US Census.

ANCESTRAL HOMELANDS OF TURTLE ISLAND



Ancestral Homelands of Turtle Island Map. © Denise Emerson 2022, reused with permission.

federally recognized tribe and 21.1% of relatives identified as having two or more tribal affiliations. Typically, data collection forms only allow Indigenous people to report one tribal affiliation.

The Ancestral Homelands of Turtle Island Map shows the counts of individuals who have a relationship of heritage to eco-cultural regions across North America, Hawaii, and the Caribbean. The map shows the diversity of the Native and Indigenous community who have a relationship with Seattle (98% of survey relatives live in Washington State) and also includes traditional trade routes marked in white. Please note the eco-cultural regions may not accurately convey how Native people identify themselves or their homelands and that more work is needed to improve the map's eco-regional labels.

A major issue to address is the reliance on using enrollment status in a federally or state recognized tribe for eligibility for funding or programming. Along with the Indian Termination Act there are several other causes of a Native or Indigenous person holding heritage while also not being enrolled. Requiring enrollment status leaves behind a large portion of the American Indian and Alaska Native population and the federal policy of disenrollment does not remove the legacy impacts of colonization, assimilation, and institutional racism. Some tribal governments or federal agencies continue to use blood quantum as a determinant of eligibility, however this practice is in alignment with forced assimilation, with the aim of the American federal government to relinquish its trust responsibility and erode Tribal governance.

Typically, reports on American Indian and Alaska Native communities focus on socio-economic deficits in health, education, homeownership, and financial assets. These scientific or white paper deficit narratives highlight the symptoms of institutional disinvestment in Native and Indigenous communities and while they are a great tool for advocating for funding and support, a focus on deficiencies is not an accurate reflection of Native and Indigenous communities. This type of negative framing often portrays services or advocacy saviors, while maintaining settler-colonialism, erasure, and avoiding accountability.

City, county, and state governments should instead ask themselves what knowledge and experience deficiencies their staff hold regarding understanding Indigenous culture and issues. Government policies have a huge impact on Native and Indigenous community members and government staff must take on an added responsibility to [learn more](#) if their goal is to focus on equity in transportation planning and operations.

Achieving equity in transportation means seeking diverse representation during community engagement, being responsive to communities' input and concerns, and increasing Native representation across the transportation sector. We must work to recognize that city, county, and state governments are, when compared with Indigenous government systems, relatively new governments that benefit from a harmful legacy of building wealth for their European settler constituents. Equity in transportation means genuinely building relationships with the local Native and Indigenous community, including Tribes, villages, and First Nations.

Indigenous Research Methodology

Indigenous research uses a methodology that focuses on the community first and the goal of Indigenous research methodology is to be a force of transformative good for the community we engage. Native and Indigenous community members must be involved in every step of the process, from evaluation to review, and researchers utilizing [Indigenous research methodology](#) must understand and follow traditional Indigenous values. Research on Native and Indigenous communities is best conducted by members of the community as their cultural worldviews and values will allow Indigenous researchers to better analyze and interpret their community member's responses. It is important to support Indigenous research methodology, rather than appropriate and view Indigenous leadership and participation as not necessary to the process.

Indigenous knowledge centers on relationality - the connections between subjects or data points, and the outcome of Indigenous research is action, what path will be taken with the knowledge gained during the study. When Indigenous knowledge holders are asked questions, we respond by speaking about history and context, the issue at hand, past harms that should be addressed, and solutions. Indigenous science looks at the health of an intact system and our report ends with a set of recommendations that are beneficial to both the urban Native and Indigenous communities and the Seattle Department of Transportation.

In an effort to be objective, clinical, and remove biases, Western knowledge avoids cultural values and Western scientists struggle to identify the differences between values, goals, and principles. Humanity and culture cannot be removed from the scientist though, and cultural worldviews are embedded in Western knowledge, for example the view of nature as full of competition with a scarcity of food and resources is ubiquitous in biology textbooks and is heard as the repeated narrative in nature documentaries. What is ultimately heartbreaking is that this clinical objectivity is presented as a universal fact, which normalizes European culture and worldviews, and is taught to children of all cultural backgrounds in our public

education system. Clinical objectivity has become a tool of power hoarding and forced assimilation globally by declaring itself to be the only way to conduct scientific inquiry.

Indigenous knowledge systems rely on values and protocol (ethical codes) to guide decision making and intention-setting is included in the evaluation process. With a focus on actions, the implications of what can or will be done with research is asked before a question is fully formed. Combined with a clear understanding of the consequences of humanity's actions in nature, and a strong sense of responsibility for one's actions, the Indigenous objective is to work collaboratively with and not in control of nature.

A central guiding value in many American Indian and Alaska Native cultures is to hold radical compassion for all community members, plant and animal relatives, the land and waterways, and ancestors. Ensuring that the needs of all people are met, while centering on our most vulnerable relatives, without sacrificing or harming the needs of future generations, is the definition of sustainability in many Indigenous cultures. A traditional reciprocal economy that strives to take care of each other has shared resources and nature's gifts of food and shelter across Turtle Island since time immemorial.

Native & Indigenous Listening Session on Transportation

On May 26, 2022, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) reached out to two sləp̓iləbəx^w (Rising Tides) - Indigenous Planning Group members, Pah-tu Pitt (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs member) and Demarus Tevuk (Inupiaq, Nome Eskimo Community). The original plan was to conduct a summertime talking circle or listening session with the Seattle urban Native and Indigenous community, gathering input for updating the Seattle Transportation Plan (STP). On June 6, 2023 the contract to proceed to work on a listening session was initiated. Instead of providing information to inform the draft STP, the relatives who attended the listening session reviewed draft documents gathered during other outreach activities that were conducted by Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) staff and non-governmental organizations during the summer of 2022.

The [Seattle Transportation Plan](#) (STP) looks forward to the next 20 years of transportation infrastructure. The STP will align with the transportation element, which is like a chapter, of the City of Seattle's comprehensive plan. Comprehensive plans are mandated by the state's Growth Management Act and are required to be updated every 10 years and they typically look forward 20 years with local input

that outlines goals, values, and policies. The city's last comprehensive plan was adopted in 2016 and was titled [Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan](#), it did not include a land acknowledgment and first mentions Native Americans on page 65 under a section about historic preservation, placing Native people in a past-tense narrative. The updated comprehensive plan will be titled the [One Seattle Plan](#) and does not include the typical future year date in its title.

Listening session facilitators and researchers Pah-tu Pitt and Demarus Tevuk carefully selected a group of Native and Indigenous community members to attend a meeting held on Oct 4, 2023 at the Seattle Central Library. Seven community members attended the listening session and represented a range of ages and backgrounds. SDOT staff were also invited to attend to observe the researcher's session facilitation methods and better understand the analysis portion of Indigenous research methodology.

sləp̩ləbəx^w advises that barriers for community members to attending listening sessions are addressed and removed as much as possible. Volunteering to provide input on local government and planning projects is a privilege and stipends, childcare, family friendly activities, transportation, and meals are meaningful ways to take care of listening session members, as well as the commitment to repair harm and follow the leadership of participants.

Visual aids were used to help guide the listening session conversation. SDOT provided a set of [draft maps and infographics](#) that will be included in the Seattle Transportation Plan (STP). sləp̩ləbəx^w shared a map from the Native Neighborhood Community Study report that shows the residency of relatives who shared their current zip codes, 41.7% of survey relatives live within or near Seattle city limits.

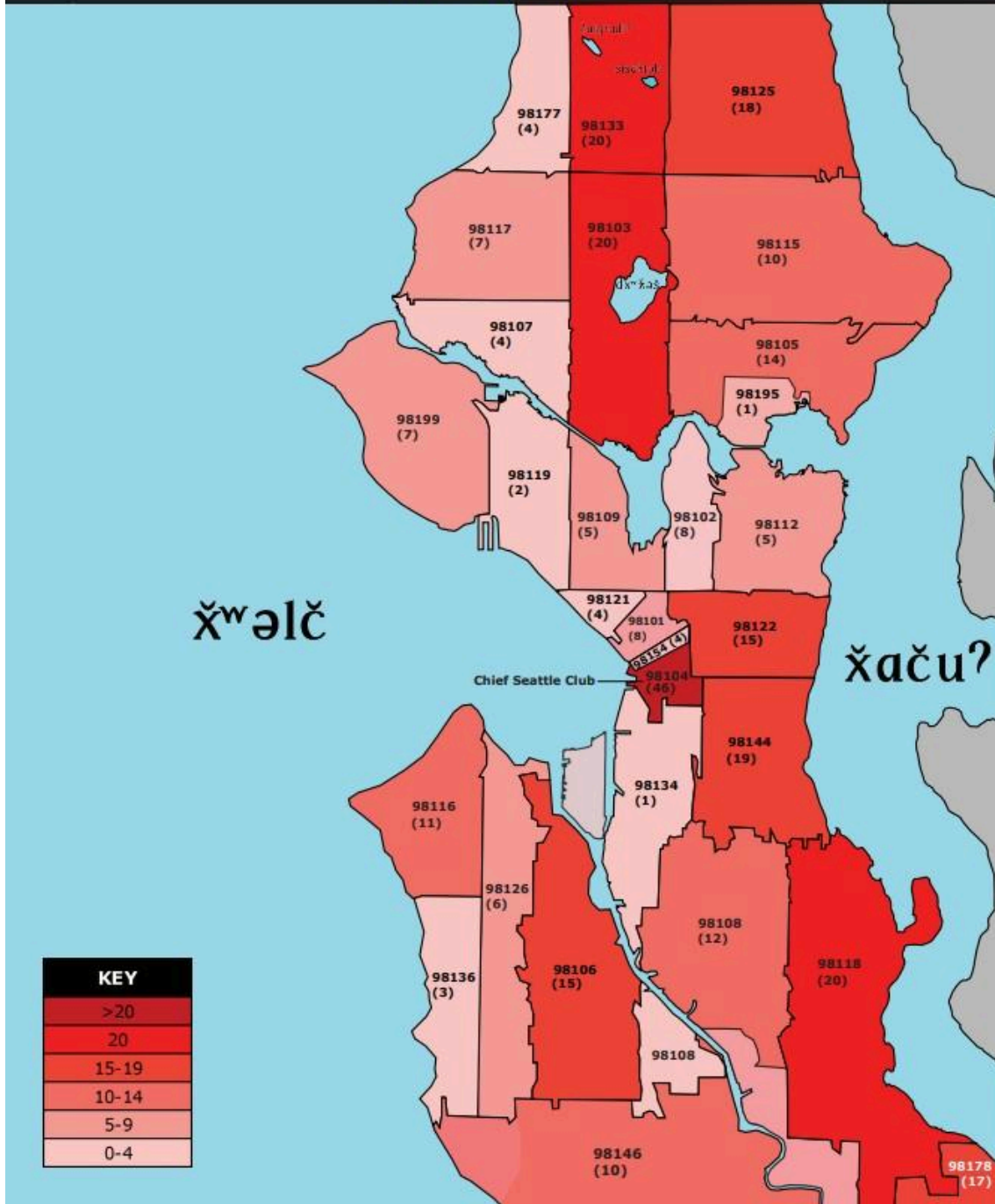
Visual aids reviewed:

- Seattle Relatives Residency by Zip Code Map - a map showing the distribution of Native Neighborhood survey relatives in Seattle City Limits.
- Frequent Transit Network Targets - map show bus routes with service every 15 minutes or less.
- Transit Capital Investment Corridors - map showing investment need for bus and Light Rail lines.
- Community and Mobility Hubs Under Study And Future Study Priority - map showing the priority level for bus, regional, and Light Rail hubs.
- Goals and Key Moves - an infographic that shows the 6 key goals of the Seattle Transportation Plan:
 - Safety: Lead with Safety
 - Equity: Transportation Justice is Central
 - Sustainability: Climate Action

- Mobility: Connect People and Goods
- Livability: Streets for People, Places We Love
- Maintenance & Modernization: Streets that Work, Today and In the Future

The session began with an introduction to the intention of the talking circle and visual aids were displayed on the walls and on two sets of tables. Community members were asked to form two breakout groups to accompany each facilitator. Questions to guide the session discussion were broad and asked if our relatives see themselves reflected in the transportation system, what does equity in transportation mean to them, and what would they change in the system. One individual interview was also given to a community member and their responses are included in the following section.

SEATTLE RELATIVES RESIDENCY BY ZIP CODE MAP



Seattle Relatives Residency by Zip Code Map © Denise Emerson 2022, reused with permission.

Listening Session Themes

A few overarching themes emerged from the listening session for the local Native and Indigenous community members who attended. Themes discussed here are Indigenous Traditional Transportation, Themes of Values, and Critiques of Modern Transportation. The Themes of Values are related to the draft six Goals and Key Moves of the Seattle Transportation Plan and they are a reflection of Native and Indigenous cultural values. The Critiques of Modern Transportation describes issues present in today's major transportation methods and approaches. The final overarching themes are Recommendations for policy changes and planning approaches which are included throughout each theme and are potentially highlighted and repeated again within their own section. Our recommendations show the Seattle Department of Transportation the Indigenous vision for short and long term changes to the transportation system.

Indigenous Traditional Transportation

The listening session began by discussing the ways that traditional transportation is sustainable, equitable, and overall better for the environment and for people. Traditional transportation is people, current, wind, and animal-powered; and dogs are used for pulling sleds, packing, and keeping the group safe. Associated with the Great Plains is a sledge to carry goods and elderly or injured people, called a travois, that was first pulled by dogs and then by horses. On rivers and lakes canoes are pulled (paddled or moved via poles) and ocean-going canoes include sails for favorable winds.

In the Pacific Northwest, canoes carved from large cedar trees carried First Foods and other items for trade, exchange via gambling, and to share during Potlatches where wealth is shared to the community. The American and Canadian federal governments outlawed religious ceremonies and Potlatches and destroyed longhouses and canoes, which were also made illegal. Assimilation policies and boarding schools disrupted and nearly destroyed the intergenerational transfer of knowledges to build, maintain, and travel by canoes. Massive local deforestation and climate change contribute to challenges to source a tree for building a canoe by traditional dug-out methods and many carvers adapted canoe-building by using strips of wood built around a wooden frame.

The nearly annual Tribal Canoe Journeys revitalized traditional gatherings when Emmett Oliver (Quinault) created a challenge for American and Canadian Coastal Tribes to [Paddle to Seattle](#), and 17 tribes landed their canoes at Golden Gardens in 1989. Frank Brown (Heiltsuk) announced a challenge for canoe families to paddle to Bella Bella on Vancouver Island in 1993, and the tradition for a Tribe to host a

canoe journey was created. Tribal Canoe Journeys has provided opportunities for the cultural revitalization of many facets of Coast Salish cultures such as language, food, art, regalia, song, and dance. Traditional event planning, policies, and [protocols](#) have also been reclaimed and revitalized; there are rules of behavior for guests and a responsibility to be welcoming for the host tribe.

As a gathering that is open to the public and is welcoming to Native people of all Tribal heritages, Canoe Journeys has also helped revitalize Indigenous cultures for many peoples. Notably, canoes and traditional watercraft have traveled from Hawaii, Alaska, and New Zealand and Tribal Canoe Journeys usually includes at least one canoe family that has pulled or sailed from a long distance. Thousands of people participate during each Tribal Canoe Journeys and the return of the canoe as a form of transportation and a way to bring people together is a powerful example of how transportation can be beautiful and culturally significant.

Themes of Values

Safety: Physical and Emotional Safety

Community members discussed both physical and emotional safety and community members feel a range of emotions including fear, concern, and heartache when they see drug use on buses, Light Rail, or at bus stop shelters. The emotional safety of mass transit riders should be addressed by SDOT with the same attention as physical injury or the loss of life during an accident. Traveling alone at night was also a concern, particularly for youth, elders, and women.

- A listening session elder expressed radical compassion and advocated to take care of people struggling with drug addictions.
- People using drugs need acceptance, safe spaces, support for their basic needs, earning opportunities, and opportunities to get sober.
- The centuries-long crises of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) are directly connected to transportation infrastructure. People are often seeking services in urban areas or may be from a multi-generational family that has lived within an urban economy that has not benefited Native people. The connection of transportation to MMIW and MMIR is rarely discussed in reports and articles. Often, MMIW and MMIR workers drive and walk on streets and highways while looking for loved ones.

Community Care: Transportation is a Service

Transportation is viewed as a service provided to the community and equitable access is built into traditional transportation systems. Listening sessions showed that there is a significant relationship between the homelessness crisis and public transportation and we must care for our most vulnerable community members first.

The pandemic and local economic pressures are causing stress and heartache and exacerbating preexisting inequity in the economic and transportation systems.

- Taking care of community members includes taking care of the needs of nature, particularly the needs of salmon, forests, and waterways.
- Planning should include community-centered design to ensure that all needs of people are met and that transportation is easily accessible via walking or with mobility aids and strollers.
- Building trust and knowing transit drivers, with a focus on taking care of errands rather than simply getting to work, would be more effective and provide a better service than the current system.
- Better routes for transportation are needed, including connecting different regions within the system, integrating service systems, and providing missing connections to culturally important places and reservations.
- Community members spoke of a radical revisioning of the current objectives of transportation and dreamed of a system that was innovative, healthy, sustainable, equitable, and accessible.

Equity: Sovereignty, Justice & Self-Determination

Equitable investment in historically ignored communities must be addressed with care and past mass transit projects did not include actively listening and responding to the community. Equitable investment solutions should be co-created with underserved communities and could include alternatives like shuttles, rideshare, or entire transportation systems that cater to disinvested communities. Barriers to the cost of public transportation, especially for our community's most vulnerable populations, should be reduced or removed.

- Transportation is a cost of living expense and this cost should be included in low-income support programs.
- Nearly all forms of transportation (bus, water taxi, ebike, scooter, Light Rail, or personal vehicle) presents a cost burden, especially to median and low-income individuals or families.
- Equity also includes addressing the erasure of Indigenous culture that is currently present in the transportation system.
- Mass transit projects like Link Light Rail cause gentrification and displacement of historically underserved communities.
- Native and Indigenous communities have a right to self-determination. While Tribal sovereignty for the 29 Tribes of Washington is better recognized, there are other Indigenous Nations with ties to Washington. Alaska Natives, First Nations, Tribes whose traditional homelands are in Washington and many more Nations also have a right to self-determination. Self-determination does not stop at reservation or village borders as Tribal governance has an interest in their peoples.

Environment

Environmental concerns about the transportation system were brought up often. Electric vehicles cause harm to Indigenous communities through hydroelectric dams that harm salmon and solar farms are being built in First Foods locations because they are viewed as "unused" by farms, timber, and cities. Electric vehicles and solar panels also cause harm to Indigenous communities outside of North America through unethical mining practices.

- Other large scale renewable energy projects continue to be placed in culturally significant sites for Tribes already harmed by hydro power. Mining for solar panels is also occurring in places culturally significant to Tribal nations with further implications throughout the world.
- A functioning and healthy ecosystem provides First Foods, such as salmon, is essential to biodiverse ecosystems that promotes climate resiliency. Climate change and pollution are central concerns and the fact that traditional transportation is green, sustainable, equitable, and people-powered was brought up often.
- The environmental and socio-economic benefits of a shorter work week and reduced commute times should be discussed. Long work weeks and commutes are often an imposed disparity within capitalism as many community members spend more time working and traveling. For instance, many neighborhoods are disinvested and require additional travel time to meet basic needs.

Culturally Relevant Communication

Community members discussed a variety of ways that SDOT could include representations of Coast Salish, American Indian, and Alaska Native art, language, and culture in the Seattle transportation system. Due to the long history of policies that ignore and erase Indigenous culture, and the resulting lack of expertise and experience in accurately showcasing Indigenous cultures, SDOT should co-create policies and procedures with local Indigenous and Native culture experts and community members. New policies are needed to identify priority projects, determine artist selection procedures, determine budgets, and create a vetting process to include feedback from the greater Native and Indigenous community.

- Art at bus and Link Light Rail stations, wayfinding signage in Lushootseed, bus wraps designed by Native and Indigenous artists, and naming routes after Indigenous cultures are ways that SDOT could highlight Native and Indigenous cultures.
- SDOT has room to improve their outreach with the local urban American Indian and Alaska Native communities.
- Although diverse and connected to many homelands across Turtle Island, the local Native and Indigenous community members said they would feel

represented if local Coast Salish cultures were featured in SDOT activities and infrastructure.

- Native and Indigenous community members are interested in being more involved and included in policy creation and planning activities, such as siting infrastructure locations.
- Participants mentioned that Tribes should be included and given resources to be involved with regional transportation planning.



Little Earth community mural in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Critiques of Modern Transportation

Community members discussed frustrations and criticisms of today's transportation system and also offered suggestions for improvements and changes, discussed in the next section.

The heartbreaking and centuries-long crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) is connected to all elements of the transportation system. Many people that go missing and murdered are targeted for walking or traveling alone, either on their way to transit or moving between transportation points.

Our relatives living unsheltered, are also living within transit infrastructure and city practices of sweeping creates uncertainty and makes locating family members and missing people more difficult. For justice and racial equity, our families and

communities need to be prioritized with adequate and better support to find our relatives and connect to culturally relevant services.

Personal Vehicles

While cars were critiqued, there was also an acknowledgment that personal vehicles like cars, trucks, and vans are needed to drive to reservations to visit friends and family and to participate in cultural activities. It was also apparent that many choose cars because there is not adequate mass transit in all neighborhoods. Living among community, or within the same neighborhood, would allow for more carpooling or shared transportation options. Frequent experiences around housing instability and displacement increase the necessity for personal vehicles. Proposed climate solutions often ignore the realities of inequities within the transportation system. Systems should be designed with extremes anticipated and center health and wellbeing, such as accessing food and medicine without increasing exposure or risks.

Parking at cultural events such as the annual Seafair Indian Days Powwow at Daybreak Star and at the Tribal Canoe Journey landing (typically held at Alki Beach) is also important, especially for the elderly, disabled, and for families with young children. The shuttle service that is provided by host Tribes during canoe journeys on reservations was discussed as an example of an innovative solution to parking spaces that are located far from event or gathering venues.

Construction of multifamily apartment buildings was discussed with a frustration of the pressure that construction sites cause on already limited street parking spaces, and the feeling that new buildings do not offer enough parking spaces, creating long-term pressure for existing residents. There was a feeling that the City has an anti-car policy and that mass transit infrastructure is not ready to provide the service needed to match the discouragement against cars that the city is hoping for.

Pollution caused by gas-powered cars and the connection with climate change was discussed and the fact that it is not healthy to sit for a long time was also mentioned. A radical proposal was given by a listening session member about potentially going back to horse transportation in addition to new technologies that may be adaptive.

Policing of personal vehicles, pedestrians, or other modalities seems to protect a status quo, rather than create a culture of safety, where fines, traffic stops, and police interactions have greater implications for BIPOC (black, Indigenous and people of color) community members. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unclear what Local Access Only means for closed neighborhood streets, and appears to be another way that current residents are consolidating wealth, rather than providing

an atmosphere of diversity, equity, or inclusion. Local Access Only is a modern day rendition of exclusion as it is ambiguous, creates an opportunity for profiling, and often increases the domain of affluent residents.

Link Light Rail

One positive of light rail that was mentioned often is that the pollution and emissions are much lower since Link Light Rail purchases electric energy from wind-power. Unfortunately, wind-power and hydroelectric dams are not 100% environmentally friendly, and each system has their own set of unique issues. But, as mentioned in our discussion of the local context, past planning was not done equitably and potentially ignored concerns by BIPOC community members.

Most of the collisions that have caused death and serious injury have happened in [South Seattle](#), where the light rail line runs at street level and pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles are traveling on the same level as the light rail train. Sound Transit also disinvested in safety efforts like pedestrian crossing gates along the Rainier Valley, costing an average of one life per year since the Link Light Rail opened.

The Link Light Rail system stations are generally out of sync with community-based planning and design and most stations lack art, comfort features like restrooms, shelters, and places to sit. Seattle has a long history of the local population refusing to invest in mass transit and this decades-long delay has meant that construction costs for infrastructure are much higher than they could have been. The COVID-19 pandemic reduced ridership which means even less funding for transit planning. A lack of funding should not be exchanged for a lack of safety and equity in planning for future expansions.

As light rail attracted high-density housing developments, more people live near train stations, and gentrification from light rail infrastructure continues to adversely affect local residents, particularly at the stations in the Rainier Valley. New construction is typically more expensive and offers less square footage; Seattle has seen a trend of smaller and more costly apartments that are not welcoming to large families.

Listening session members pointed out that future expansion plans will not service Native and Indigenous cultural centers like the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center and the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center. A continued reliance on cost-benefit analysis to drive decision making in planning means that historically disinvested communities will continue to experience a lack of service at their community center and facilities.

Buses

The listening session began with a passionate discussion on the rampant drug use inside buses and at bus shelters. Riders mentioned the need for emotional and cultural safety along with physical safety. Community members spoke about their frustration with Rapid Ride changing services and that many regular bus stops are no longer served. Rapid Ride bus lines have caused gentrification and it is now too costly to live along or near a Rapid Ride line or station. The size of rapid ride buses causes safety concerns and may monopolize lanes without the actual service benefit, or support from current or historic communities.

The cost of bus rides was brought up and one family highlighted a frustration with paying twice for two different bus rides, a common issue for riders without an Orca card. One community member shared that they feel that Native and Indigenous people should be able to ride mass transit for free. Riders also noted a concern for the safety of bus drivers and highlighted that emissions during rush hour are a health issue. Listening session members fondly reflected on when neighborhoods were served to a greater degree.

Community members spoke about how bus transit typically does not service American Indian and Alaska Native cultural events and highlighted the fact that Husky games and large sports arena games are provided with additional and unique bus and transportation services.

Trains

Railroad trains were originally built to transport large amounts of cargo and were a preferred method of long-distance travel before airplanes. Trains have a deep historical connection to the concept of [Manifest Destiny](#), an American imperialist idea that White settlers will succeed in moving west and was a concept before treaties were even negotiated in the Pacific Northwest. Railroads used eminent domain in their planning, cutting through homes and ecological communities. Railroads were typically funded by capital projects connected to resource extraction, in the Northwest the resource was old-growth forests, and railroad lines continue to be owned and operated by companies located out-of-state with associated historical laws that often preference their interests.

Trains are powered by diesel, a fossil fuel, and trains carrying uncovered coal can cause forest fires, especially during hot and dry summers, and deposit dust. Long-distance travel by train is typically not much cheaper than by plane. Trains are also loud and dangerous, and recently a pedestrian died by the King Street Station.

Ferries

When asked if the local transportation system reflects Native cultures, listening session members shared that Washington State Ferries are named after local Tribes and then reflected that this was the only example they could recall of the transportation system highlighting Indigenous people. The Mukilteo ferry increased visibility for its significance in treaty signing through working with local Tribes and artists and this effort could be replicated or scaled up.

The early Indigenous and settler economy both relied upon canoes to conduct trade and transport food and furs, and boats escalated the scale of economic trade at a detriment to Indigenous participation. It doesn't appear that the City views canoes as a modern means of transportation but this view could be changed if various city departments supported the annual [Tribal Canoe Journeys](#), a cultural gathering that attracts thousands of participants and attendees.

Ferry employee demographics seem to lack racial diversity, which may be related to a barrier to entry for training and hiring for BIPOC community members. Many of the Washington State Ferry boats are too old to be in commission, are thereby costly to maintain and to run, and need to be replaced. The state ferry system has a plan to purchase electric powered boats but they must be produced within Washington State and the pandemic has caused production delays. An old fleet of ferries and employee walkouts or strikes have been causing significant delays in service for the last few years.

The Washington State Ferry system seems to prioritize affluent communities, and is another reflection of the use of cost-benefit analysis dictating transportation infrastructure locations. Walk-on ferries also don't serve communities equitably, since they are historically related to a commuter system, and routes could be improved. Shuttles to areas underserved by transit along the water taxi should also see an improved service schedule.

Road and Rail Infrastructures

Roads, highways, and railroads cut human and biological communities apart and they dissect communities in multiple directions. Road and rail infrastructure, when planned and implemented poorly, can cause death to humans and animals as they attempt to cross. Highways, with their large sizes, particularly destroy and dissect ecosystems that are now covered in concrete. Chemicals within car tires are associated with pre-spawn mortality of salmonids and the transportation system contributes to storm water runoff. With the beauty of the Salish Sea, there is less consciousness about the ecosystems harmed by industry, transportation, and urbanization.

The building of roads, highways, and railroads have all disturbed the final resting places of Indigenous peoples. As Ken Workman, Duwamish, says “My ancestors are in the trees.”

Planning

Our report has repeatedly pointed out the lack of equity in planning to provide transportation service for underserved communities. Past reliance on top-down decisions based on cost-benefit analysis where ridership justifies investment in infrastructure has created an unjust system. The decision to place Line 1 at grade without safety measures throughout Rainier Valley is a glaring example of devaluing lives that live and work in South Seattle.

Listening session members talked about a lack of investment in infrastructure for walking, especially in places with a lower population density where a reliance on walking becomes necessary due to a general lack of services. Safe walking infrastructure is missing for crossing many types of transit infrastructures. Walking safety is a huge concern on reservations where there are not enough sidewalks. Somewhat ironically, local city governments and park systems are able to invest in paved paths for leisure walking and rolling.

Community members discussed how planning should also include more emphasis on weather extremes, stormwater management, and culturally relevant landscaping. Planning efforts should be community based and include regional Tribes, Nations, and villages.

Electric Vehicles

The general public views electric vehicles (EV) as better for the environment, but Native and Indigenous community members speak about the different ways that electric vehicles and electric power sources harm the environment and harm traditional lands.

The production of electric vehicles is not emissions-free and mineral mining for EV batteries is killing Indigenous people and Indigenous environmental advocates in South America. As one community member shared, the transportation industry “contributes to the oppression of Indigenous people globally”.

Hydroelectric dams have a long history of killing salmon, they are a barrier to allowing salmon to swim upriver for spawning, and dam infrastructure is associated with warming river temperatures which also kills salmon. Solar and wind farms are being built on traditional First Foods land and culturally significant places. When wind, solar, and hydroelectric power are not available, electricity is powered by coal

and fossil fuels. There are challenges of operations of the systems together, especially with peak use.

Seattle City light resisted support for salmon with regards to the Skagit River and owns aging dams elsewhere. Seattle City Light uplifted western science as a supposed authority when Tribal leaders were calling to support salmon. Dams caused salmon to spawn in places that are in contradiction to the science they were purporting.

Recommendations

Our recommendations include suggestions for updating policies and transportation services across a range of topics from specific to general solutions. The recommendations have been pulled from the listening session, interviews, and listening session planning meetings with facilitators and sləp̓iləbəx^w group members. The order of these recommendations does not reflect their importance or value since Indigenous knowledge is holistic, focuses on interconnected relationships, and does not evaluate needs and ideas based on hierarchy or ranking.

Take Care of the Most Vulnerable First

An overarching theme that was discussed early and often is the relationship between transportation and community members who are experiencing homelessness, low-incomes, and economic and housing instability. Listening session members advocated for taking care of the needs of our most vulnerable community members as a solution that would provide emotional safety and physical security in the local transportation system. Transit hubs should be located near or in service to community centers to bring together more elements associated with services.

Build Capacity to Honor Tribal Sovereignty

The local urban Native and Indigenous community understands and advocates for honoring treaty rights and Tribal sovereignty but an understanding or familiarity with federal American Indian policy and law is not a requirement for SDOT staff or even for high school graduates. A recent culture shift has called for equity for Indigenous people but policies and procedures for upholding Tribal sovereignty and for respectfully engaging with local and regional Tribal Nations are lacking. [Te Aranga Māori Design Principles](#) is an interesting model that SDOT could explore. In Aotorea, there are more culturally relevant education opportunities in acknowledgement that government actions targeted Indigenous cultures.

Listening session relatives shared that they are frustrated with being asked to teach non-Native people about Native and Indigenous issues. SDOT staff must do the work to first [educate themselves](#) and then build relationships with local Native and

Indigenous Tribal people. Listening session members remarked that not one treaty has been upheld and that Indigenous peoples have been paying the price for the wealth of the local economy.

We recommend that SDOT and other transportation planners include Tribal members early in the planning process, before a site, route, or plan has been selected as site feasibility studies are expensive and difficult to change once they are initiated. Centering, listening to, and supporting both federally recognized Tribes and Native and Indigenous community members is important as legal status does not make someone Indigenous. Self-determination of Native and Indigenous communities should be supported regardless of recognition status.

Co-create Solutions for Underserved Communities

To fulfill the updated Seattle Transportation Plan value of Equity and Transportation Justice, SDOT should prioritize working with and listening to underserved and ignored communities. SDOT should avoid the classical method of top-down decision making, typically made by staff who have no connection to the communities impacted by results from cost-benefit analysis. New approaches to decision making should be co-designed by community members and new procedures should be reviewed and vetted often to ensure that decisions are actually equitable and just. Previous attempts to democratize decision making processes are likely based on Western or European approaches and can overlook the needs and leadership of local Tribes and Native and Indigenous peoples. It should also be noted that environmental or progressive efforts should not continue to harm BIPOC people or labor under the banner of “for the greater good.”

A commitment to building relationships including deeper visioning would likely extend ideas into other areas. The connection of transportation to ecosystems was noted, likely paired with more opportunities for Indigenous land practices associated with restoration, foods, and ecosystem wellbeing.

Improve Engagement and Communication with Indigenous Communities

A discussion on transportation, particularly for Indigenous community members, must be carefully approached because of the pain caused by settler colonial policy goals to sever Indigenous relationships to ancestral homelands. Listening session facilitators, as Native and Indigenous community members themselves, ensured a baseline level of psychological safety in the meeting space and discussion topics. Psychological safety leads to community members who are empowered to authentically be themselves and speak freely on issues, historical context, and solutions.

Improving communications with the urban Indigenous community is related to self-determination, where Indigenous people can advocate for necessary changes. Removing barriers to participation in community engagement events is a vital policy SDOT should pursue. SDOT should continue to explore ways to honor the time commitments and emotional labor of community members, particularly of Indigenous people. Co-creating an engagement plan with local Native and Indigenous communities would result in a set of best-management practices for future SDOT staff to follow. Earning opportunities within SDOT should prioritize communities most impacted by unjust transportation actions and take steps to not repeat the past.

Improve Service to Cultural Events

Community members highlighted the inequality of the local bus systems as they are able to provide unique and additional services for college or professional sports events. SDOT staff should respectfully engage with community event planners to provide improved bus or shuttle services to cultural events such as the annual United Indians of All Tribes Foundation Seafair Indian Days Powwow held at Daybreak Star, which attracts thousands of visitors. Other local cultural Native and Indigenous events include powwows, Salmon Homecoming, art markets, and Tribal Canoe Journeys.

Improve Access to Native and Indigenous Cultural Centers

Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center and Duwamish Longhouse Cultural Center are two cultural centers that are underserved by the current mass transit system. Future plans for Link Light Rail expansions do not include stops near these cultural centers. SDOT should work with facility management to determine solutions to improve bus and light rail access to these community centers.

Currently, the 33 Metro bus has the closest stop to Daybreak Star and riders must walk 0.5 miles to the building. Bus 33 is not a frequent bus and runs every 30 minutes; a community member shared that they were attending an event at Daybreak Star and a bus was canceled, forcing them to wait an hour for the next service. Bus service for the Duwamish Longhouse is even worse and forces riders to walk 1.2 miles to the cultural center. During the West Seattle bridge closure, this road was inundated with traffic, but without transportation services.

Support Tribal Canoe Journeys

The near annual Tribal Canoe Journeys is an event that is open to the public to attend, gathers hundreds of canoe families, attracting thousands of visitors, and revitalizes many cultural elements such as travel by canoe, welcoming ceremonies, food, gifts, song, and dance. Each year is hosted by a Tribe or Tribal Nation and Tribes also host canoes as they camp to rest and travel together to the host Tribe.

SDOT should explore ways to support this important event and Alki Beach is often used as a landing site and it was noted that parking is difficult in the residential areas near the park.

Reflect Indigenous Art and Culture

SDOT could improve its representation of Native and Indigenous people, art, and culture and fight a long history of Indigenous erasure in the city landscape. SDOT should work with local Native and Indigenous leaders to create a protocol for art and culture projects. Listening session members shared that seeing Coast Salish art and the Lushootseed language helps Native community members feel seen and represented, even if their heritage may not be of a Coast Salish Tribe. Art and culture projects that reflect the diversity of American Indian and Alaska Native cultures are also important and welcomed.

There are many ideas for Native and Indigenous art and cultural features including murals, statues, welcome poles, wayfinding signage, route names (of roads, highways, buses, Orca Cards, and Link Light Rail), and maps.

Free Transportation for Indigenous People

Local Indigenous Tribes have carried the ecological, economical, and emotional burdens of the harm caused by settler colonialism. Free rides on buses and light rail would be a small step toward compensation for salmon, timber, water, land, air, and hearts destroyed by capitalism and assimilation policies. Participants noted the lack of transportation leads to potentially long walks with increased safety and health risks. Listening session members often spoke of a concern for taking care of the needs of urban Native and Indigenous elders.

Support Indigenous-led Community Planning and Design

Native and Indigenous community members spoke often about a vision of a transportation system that was designed with their needs in mind. People spoke about wishing for transportation services that made it easier to go grocery shopping, visit the doctor, go to parks, and attend events. In many neighborhoods, the most basic infrastructure is often missing, such as grocery stores and pharmacies, let alone inclusive and cultural designs. Community members also want a transportation system that reflects their cultural values and drivers and operators should provide culturally-attuned service for community members to feel safe, welcomed, and understood. Philanthropic or business support for Native peoples has significant room for improvement, for example Native-led non-profits receive about 0.4% of philanthropic funding while needing to serve 2.9% of the population.

Indigenous planning centers on taking care of the needs of all community members, is forward-thinking, and is the gold standard for sustainable design. Native and Indigenous cultures have lived sustainably in their homelands since time immemorial and Indigenous cultural values are sustainable and guide decision making.

The urban Native and Indigenous community envisions a city that has safe, walkable neighborhoods with nearby grocery stores, clinics and pharmacies, schools, and parks. Walkability should also include the use of strollers and mobility devices like scooters and wheelchairs. Indigenous peoples also have a longstanding relationship with skateboarding and other innovative options to transit. Native-designed Neighborhoods would increase opportunities for shared transit and community wellbeing. Participants noted the need for creative solutions, rather than accept the absence of transportation. Our historical, contemporary, and futures should be reflected within the transportation system to stop erasure and begin to address the legacy of US genocidal policies.

Conclusion

Community engagement projects led by sləp̓iləbəx^w offer an opportunity for urban American Indian and Alaska Native community members to explore issues and topics from their unique Indigenous perspectives. A sləp̓iləbəx^w value is to ask our community members to share their vision for Native and Indigenous approaches to community planning. Community members expressed enjoying the short listening session experience, but felt like it should have been longer term with more participation and relationship building with each other and SDOT.

From Native perspectives, the transportation industry is a difficult subject to discuss, as transportation infrastructure is a visible reminder of significant changes to Coast Salish homelands. A long-standing history of unjust planning and implementation methods also makes discussions difficult. Participants punctuated how amazing Indigenous people are in spite of the often harmful systems and efforts that were designed without our wellbeing in mind. Empowering community members to share their experiences and expertise is vital to the engagement process.

Our community expressed a deep understanding of transportation and local transit issues and historical and policy contexts, with the desire to create a plan of action to take care of current and future generations. Community members remarked that local Tribes and Indigenous peoples survived hundreds of years of injustice and continue to hold paths to equity and justice. Community members expressed the

need to find solutions to large-scale issues such as climate change, homelessness, and the continued impact of capitalism on the livability of the region.

Traditionally, transportation is itself a force for relationship building because it connects communities and provides a service to take care of our needs. Instead of segregating landscapes and upholding economies through utilitarian design, **transportation could be a system that is full of beauty and purpose.** Achieving equity in transportation will only come from collaborative power-sharing partnerships with communities, where underserved communities can determine solutions to their own needs and wishes.

Western knowledge holders typically view sustainability as a new concept, but Indigenous knowledge holders define sustainability as ancient and enduring, as each Indigenous community protects a sustainable culture within their homelands and weaves sustainability into every aspect of their cultures. For SDOT to attain sustainability in their transportation plan, they should carefully and intentionally determine the best-management practices for working with local and regional Tribes and Indigenous community leaders.