

Race, Equity & Inclusion Working Group

Meeting Date: January 14, 2022

Agenda Item No. 3

Subject: Endorse SACOG Racial Equity Statement of Change and Commitment

To: Race, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group

From: James Corless, Executive Director

Issue: The Race, Equity and Inclusion (REI) Working Group will consider recommending a revised draft racial equity statement of change and commitment to the SACOG Board for adoption.

Recommendation: That the REI working group recommend the SACOG board adopt the attached Racial Equity Statement of Change and Commitment.

Background/Analysis:

Many public and private organizations issued racial equity statements in the wake of social and racial justice protests in 2020. Some of these were statements of solidarity with protesters, some were statements of change and commitment, some were both. The SACOG board did not adopt a statement of commitment for a variety of reasons, but one important reason was the need to be thoughtful about what a statement would mean. The sentiment expressed by the board's 2020 Race, Equity, Inclusion working group was that the full board needed to have a shared understanding of how racial equity is related to SACOG's work, and that any statement needed to be followed with thoughtful, impactful action. The REI working group of 2020 therefore focused on near-term opportunities to explore the role of racial equity in SACOG's work. The working group gave input and endorsement to establish a community-based equity planning grant program in SACOG's biannual funding round, which was under development in 2020. The working group also engaged a racial equity consultant to conduct a racial equity audit of SACOG.

At the end of 2020, in response to a racial equity audit of SACOG, the SACOG board committed to exploring how SACOG, as a metropolitan planning organization and council of governments, could advance racial equity in its work. As an outcome of the audit review, the board formed and charged the 2021 Race, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group to serve as a forum to discuss and make recommendations to the Policy and Innovation Committee of the SACOG board on issues related to race, equity and inclusion. The 2021 working group was intentionally formed with public members who have expertise in the field of racial

equity and public policy to bring their perspective to the working group's discussions and recommendations.

A primary action of this 2021 working group is development of a racial equity statement of change and commitment. This statement will be the foundation for SACOG's racial equity work in the years ahead. Adoption of the statement will kick off development of a racial equity action plan, which this working group will have a strong hand in guiding and shaping over the coming months.

Discussion/Analysis:

The REI working group reviewed a draft statement at its November 19, 2021, meeting. The working group accepted most of the statement, but wanted revision on two issues:

- (1) Working group members wanted the statement to clearly articulate those racial and ethnic groups that have been historically disenfranchised and excluded in the SACOG region in particular. The working group directed staff to revise this portion of the statement and bring it back to the working group for consideration.
- (2) Working group members had questions about how income/economic and other inequities intersect with this racial equity statement. These questions were answered in the meeting, and staff also revised the statement as follows: added language at the beginning of the statement to acknowledge and commit to tackling inequities in all forms, added language to the commitment section to clearly connect racial equity actions to improved health and economic outcomes for all racial groups.

The original version of this statement was informed by SACOG staff research into racial equity statements of other public agencies like SACOG or its members, or in SACOG's spheres of work. With this research, staff from across SACOG's teams were invited to give input into the development of the statement. They were asked to think about their area of work in the agency and the kind of direction they would be looking for out of a racial equity statement of commitment and change. Then staff were asked to review the sample racial equity statements and identify key elements that resonated for them—phrases, actions, facts, statements, and/or structure. Staff particularly studied the racial equity statement adopted by the California Transportation Commission, which is responsible for programming and allocating funds to public agencies across California, for the construction of highway, passenger rail, transit and active transportation improvements.

With this set of input, staff iteratively drafted a statement. The key elements of this statement are:

- Acknowledgement of government's and SACOG's role in creating and perpetuating racial disparities in health, wealth, education, transportation, housing, and other aspects of life, and are evident today.
- A vision and commitment by SACOG to work to rectify those racial disparities for the benefit of everyone in the region.
- A list of specific actions SACOG will take to follow through on its commitment.

This recommendation is presented to the working group with deep commitment from SACOG staff. Staff seeks the working group's endorsement of this statement.

Should the REI Working Group endorse this racial equity statement of commitment, it will move forward to the Policy and Innovation Committee of the SACOG board for recommendation to the full board for adoption. If approved by the SACOG Board, it will set the framework for development of a SACOG racial equity action plan.

Attachment A: Revised Draft Racial Equity Statement – changes marked up

Attachment B: Revised Draft Racial Equity Statement – changes accepted

REVISED DRAFT
January 2022

(Revisions shown in ~~strikeout~~ and underline)

Sacramento Area Council of Governments Racial Equity Statement of Change and Commitment

~~SACOG commits~~The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) acknowledges that residents living in the greater six-county Sacramento region face significant inequities, resulting in disparities and divides that exist by race and ethnicity, by income, and by urban and rural areas. SACOG is committed to tackling inequities and disparities in all forms. This statement marks a commitment to advancing racial equity in order to build a thriving economy and healthy environment for all residents of the Sacramento region, especiallyparticularly for Black, Indigenous, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and other communities; ~~indigenous communities, and all people of color,~~ that have been historically disenfranchised and excluded. SACOG envisions a Sacramento region where investments are made in historically marginalized communities so that race is no longer a predictor of life outcomes, and outcomes for all groups are improved.

As the greater Sacramento region has grown, its residents have not shared equally in the benefits of that growth. Federal, state, and local policies played a significant role in racial disparities in health, wealth, education, transportation, housing, and other aspects of life that continue today. “Redlining” lending practices denied home ownership and prevented the creation of generational wealth for people of color. Racially restrictive housing covenants and exclusionary zoning intentionally, artificially, and persistently segregated Black communities in particular, ~~but also indigenous and other communities of color.~~ Redevelopment targeted these communities in the name of progress and economic development, but often served to displace and further disadvantage them. Similarly, transportation policies and programs—such as the construction of our region’s freeways and interstate highways—divided and displaced once-thriving communities of color. The cumulative effect of these policies and programs adds up to a legacy of structural racism, the impacts of which are still visible in communities throughout our region today.

As a government entity, SACOG has perpetuated and sustained these long-standing policies and programs that have resulted in significant racial disparities in transportation, housing, and land use in the region. SACOG has an obligation to tackle these inequities through our work to ensure that safe, healthy, accessible, and inclusive opportunities are available to all residents of the six-county region.

To work toward a just and equitable region that addresses the historic wrongs and where health and economic outcomes for all groups are improved, SACOG commits to:

- LISTEN and LEARN: Work to build and strengthen relationships with organizations representing historically marginalized communities in both urban and rural areas, to integrate their perspectives and priorities, and to give voice to these communities.
- PLAN: Develop a racial equity action plan for SACOG’s programs and operations, that includes measurable activities, and regularly review the plan to ensure the integration of policies, procedures and programs to advance racial equity.
- SUPPORT: Provide continuous support to our member and partner agencies to integrate the agency’s racial equity action into local plans, build and strengthen relationships with

community-based organizations, non-profits, advocacy organizations, and other equity experts and practitioners.

- **ACT:** Continue to build the capacity of the SACOG staff and board to fully implement SACOG's racial equity action plan, and carefully consider how our decision-making processes address historic inequities in transportation and housing.
- **MEASURE:** Establish, regularly monitor, and report publicly on 1) regional equity indicators associated with housing, transportation, and economic opportunity; 2) organizational equity indicators of employee and stakeholder (community members, public agencies, non-governmental partners) experience of existing policies, practices, and procedures; and 3) indicators of authentic project sponsor engagement in the planning and design of regionally significant projects.

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Attachment A

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