

Race, Equity & Inclusion Working Group

Agenda Item No. 4

Meeting Date: November 19, 2021

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 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 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:

To inform the development of the attached draft statement (Attachment A), staff reviewed and researched racial equity statements of other public agencies similar to SACOG or its members, or in SACOG's spheres of work (Attachment B).

With this research in hand, 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 feedback on the general substance of the statement and whether it meets the standard of a racial equity statement of change and commitment.

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.

DRAFT

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

SACOG commits to advancing racial equity in order to build a thriving economy and healthy environment for all residents of the Sacramento region, especially for Black 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 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

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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.

Racial Equity/Racism as Public Health Crisis Statements & Resolutions

This is a small sampling from public agencies. This is not representative of the state or nation whether considering public, non-profit, or private organizations.

California Transportation Commission

The California Transportation Commission recognizes that throughout California's history, improvements to the State's transportation system have disproportionately benefitted some population groups and burdened others. The Commission condemns all forms of racism and is actively working to promote equitable outcomes through our programs, policies, and practices.

In the mid-Twentieth Century, California undertook a major expansion of transportation infrastructure aided by an influx of federal funding. While infrastructure improvements were being planned, designed, and constructed, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color were disenfranchised, lacked voting protections, and were underrepresented in government decision-making. New highways were frequently constructed through predominately Black, Latino, Asian, and low-income neighborhoods to meet the needs of primarily white suburban commuters, and through tribal lands. Racist policies and decisions also influenced the siting of other types of transportation infrastructure, such as commuter railways, and the delivery of transit services. The results of racial segregation and disinvestment of transportation funds in communities of color are still visible in cities today.

Californians who live in historically underserved communities are more likely to be negatively impacted by increased exposure to air pollution and noise from cars, trucks, ships, trains, and aircraft, and struck or killed by drivers when walking and biking. These vulnerable communities may have limited access to safe and affordable transportation options to connect residents to jobs, education, healthcare, and recreation. In addition, people of color may experience diminished safety and comfort while walking, biking, driving, or using public transportation as a result of racial discrimination in enforcement. The Commission vows to create mobility opportunities for all Californians, especially those from underserved communities, to thrive in all aspects of life. The Commission will:

- Work to build and strengthen relationships with community-based organizations, non-profits, advocacy organizations, and other equity experts and practitioners;
- Empower the Commission's Equity Advisory Roundtable and future related efforts to help inform transportation decision making;
- Strengthen understanding of community transportation needs and challenges through the forthcoming Community Listening Sessions;
- Ensure equity, public health, and robust public engagement via our planning and programming guidelines;
- Provide expanded opportunities for Commissioner and staff training related to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and
- Feature equity topics and elevate diverse perspectives in public meetings of the Commission.

We uphold our dedication to serve and improve the quality of life for all Californians by continuing to prioritize transportation equity issues and ensuring all experience safe, affordable, and efficient transportation.

California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA)

Transportation systems are about people and improving their quality of life. Unfortunately, those improvements historically have disproportionately benefitted certain segments of the population. Far

too often, past transportation decisions quite literally put up barriers, divided communities, and amplified racial inequalities, particularly in our Black and Brown neighborhoods.

The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) strongly condemns systemic racism and discrimination in all forms, including those historically entrenched in transportation. Enhancing the lives of all Californians – particularly people of color and disadvantaged communities – by connecting individuals to jobs, healthcare, education and other opportunities lie at the heart of what we do and why.

To that end, CalSTA firmly embraces racial equity, inclusion and diversity. These values are foundational to achieving our vision of a cleaner, safer, more accessible and more connected future.

“We will be part of the solution. We will promote policies and programs that reflect principles of diversity, equity and inclusion, and will work with stakeholders to identify areas of improvement. Through these and other efforts, transportation systems have the potential to achieve their intended purpose – to provide safe and equitable access to opportunity and truly enhance quality of life.

City of Sacramento

The City of Sacramento affirms racial equity as a core value in which race does not affect life outcomes. We acknowledge historical racial inequities and are committed to transparent, deliberate and actionable solutions that will remedy those inequities and serve all our diverse communities.

League of California Cities

Communities throughout California and across the nation are frustrated, outraged, and grieving over the deaths of George Floyd and countless other men and women, some of whom made headlines and many others who did not. Their senseless deaths have brought to the forefront, yet again, the painful injustices in our society that communities of color have endured for generations.

The League of California Cities Board of Directors shares in our country’s anguish. We stand firmly opposed to any expression of discrimination or racism towards any person and we commit to rooting out systemic racial bias wherever, and whenever, it exists.

Outrage at the brutal treatment of people of color, especially at the hands of law enforcement, is not new. We have been here before. However, the heightened awareness too often has faded, with minimal change that fails to result in meaningful and lasting progress toward a just and equitable system. This time must be different. As local leaders, we have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to evaluate, reimagine, and reform our institutions to ensure our systems are equitable and just.

Reform will not happen overnight, but as city leaders, we must and will listen to the voices of those in our communities who have suffered bias and have been treated unfairly. We must hear their words and turn them into effective action to protect the civil rights of every person.

We also believe that real progress can only stem from proactive community engagement that is inclusive, transparent, sustainable, and builds trust between all residents and the city agencies that serve them.

Working with city and law enforcement leadership, we commit to reevaluating city operations and services through an equity lens and reforming areas where longstanding racial biases and inequities exist. This includes advancing policies that promote the hiring and support of police officers who reflect the diverse communities they have sworn to protect and serve.

Racial bias has been ingrained in our institutions for decades. It is time instead to embed equity and justice into the fabric of those same institutions. As local government leaders, it is our responsibility to drive the change and accountability that we need to see throughout our society.

The time to act is now.

Rancho Cordova, CA

The City of Rancho Cordova stands for justice, and we are united in our opposition to violence and racism.

The horrific death of George Floyd has been a tipping point in our nation's history, and the protests we have seen raging across the United States, of people fighting for justice, calling for an end to racism, can no longer go unheard. Racism has no place in our country and no place in our city.

Here, people exercised their right to protest, as they should. And we stood with them for justice and an end to racism. We will continue to stand with them for as long as it takes to implement positive change and end racism.

Where We've Been

Rancho Cordova is one of the most diverse cities in the nation, and we celebrate and support this diversity in many ways. We host the International Festival (iFest) each year, so people can take a "trip around the world" and experience other cultures. We support organizations like MACH (Mentees at Cordova High), even bringing our students of color on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure to Denver, CO to compete for the All-America City award. We nurture a robust School Resource Officer program, where students and officers make connections and become friends. We partner with Center of Praise Ministries, which donated a building for the new Rancho Cordova Youth Center. The city earmarked \$3 million to renovate the center and to create programs that connect youth with adult mentors and activities. We have a robust community engagement program that is active in many of our communities of color, that celebrates community assets and grows community leaders. And much more.

Challenges Can Create Change

Despite our past good work, this moment challenges us to do better and be better. Recently, there was a police incident right here in our community: a 15-second video of a police officer and a 14-year-old in our community that was disturbing and unacceptable. The city contracts with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office for police services, so the Sheriff's Office is conducting a full investigation into this incident, and the investigation is being overseen by the Inspector General. In addition, the officer has been reassigned, so he is no longer working in Rancho Cordova. We believe this incident is not representative of our RCPD officers, who work tirelessly on behalf of our community. However, we want to ensure that anomalies like this never happen again.

The Pledge

What is important is that we recognize we still have work to do, and that we do that work. Statements and words are meaningless unless there is action and positive change behind them. In fact, we are enacting positive change right now – and there's more on the horizon.

We're Listening

We recognize that our efforts are not as simple as a statement. We pledge that we will continue to listen, to make positive changes, and to evolve until our Black community, which has been rocked by so

many unacceptable incidents, no longer feels the need to remind us that Black lives matter. ***Because the fact is that Black lives matter greatly to us.***

Richmond, CA

In an effort to improve quality of life and provide fair outcomes for all Richmond residents regardless of race, the City must hold itself accountable to acknowledge and correct disparities caused by a history of inequitable policy decisions. The goal is to integrate a racial equity lens into all city services to foster a healthy and inclusive community for all.

Sacramento County (excerpt)

As one of the Nation's most diverse communities, Sacramento County should embrace, nurture and protect the diversity of our community and ensure that all of its citizens have the opportunity to enjoy a life free from institutional, structural, systemic and interpersonal racial prejudice, bigotry, bias, derision, and hate. An emerging body of research demonstrates that racism is a social determinant of the physical, mental and emotional health of people of color. Therefore, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sacramento should acknowledge its responsibility to shape policies, appropriate resources, implement programs, issue directives and otherwise advocate for racial equity for the well-being of those they serve.

San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)

We hold ourselves accountable to the communities we serve. We acknowledge we have much to learn and much to change; and we firmly uphold equity and inclusion for every person in the San Diego region. This includes historically underserved, systemically marginalized groups impacted by actions and inactions at all levels of our government and society.

We have an obligation to eliminate disparities and ensure that safe, healthy, accessible, and inclusive opportunities are available to everyone. In 2021, SANDAG will develop an equity action plan that will inform how we plan, prioritize, fund, and build projects and programs; frame how we work with our communities; define how we recruit and develop our employees; guide our efforts to conduct unbiased research and interpret data; and set expectations for companies and stakeholders that work with us. We are committed to creating a San Diego region where every person who visits, works, and lives can thrive.

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

1. SCAG stands in solidarity with those working toward a fair and just society, and with those calling for systemic change to eliminate all barriers that reduce opportunity and undermine Southern California's shared values and ability to thrive; and SCAG affirms its commitment to meaningfully advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; and SCAG declares its intent to end racial and social disparities internal to the agency, strengthen the way it engages and convenes to protect and expand community voice and power, and work in partnership with others to close the gap of racial injustice and better serve our communities of color, and in so doing, serve all the people of the region.

2. Furthermore, based upon this affirmation, an ad hoc Special Committee on Equity and Social Justice shall be established by the President to further develop SCAG's response to advancing social justice throughout the agency's activities, and advise the Regional Council on policies and practices to advance its resolved intentions. Regular reports shall be provided to the Regional Council on the work of the committee and a final set of recommendations shall be prepared, including any recommendations to

amend SCAG's bylaws within 9 months, for consideration by the Regional Council and General Assembly in May 2021.

Yolo County (excerpt)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of Yolo County affirms that racism creates health inequities that result in disparities in family stability, physical and mental wellness, education, employment, public safety, criminal justice and housing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of Yolo County has committed to a course of action that recognizes and addresses racism and its attendant inequities in a manner that will endeavor to erase the pernicious and destructive damage of racism by ensuring meaningful progress in improving, for the good of all residents, inequalities in physical and mental health, education, employment, public safety, the judicial system and housing.