Student Research to Advance Mobility Justice

Charles T. Brown Equitable Cities

Sarah Brown Kittelson and Associates / University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill (Class of 2021)

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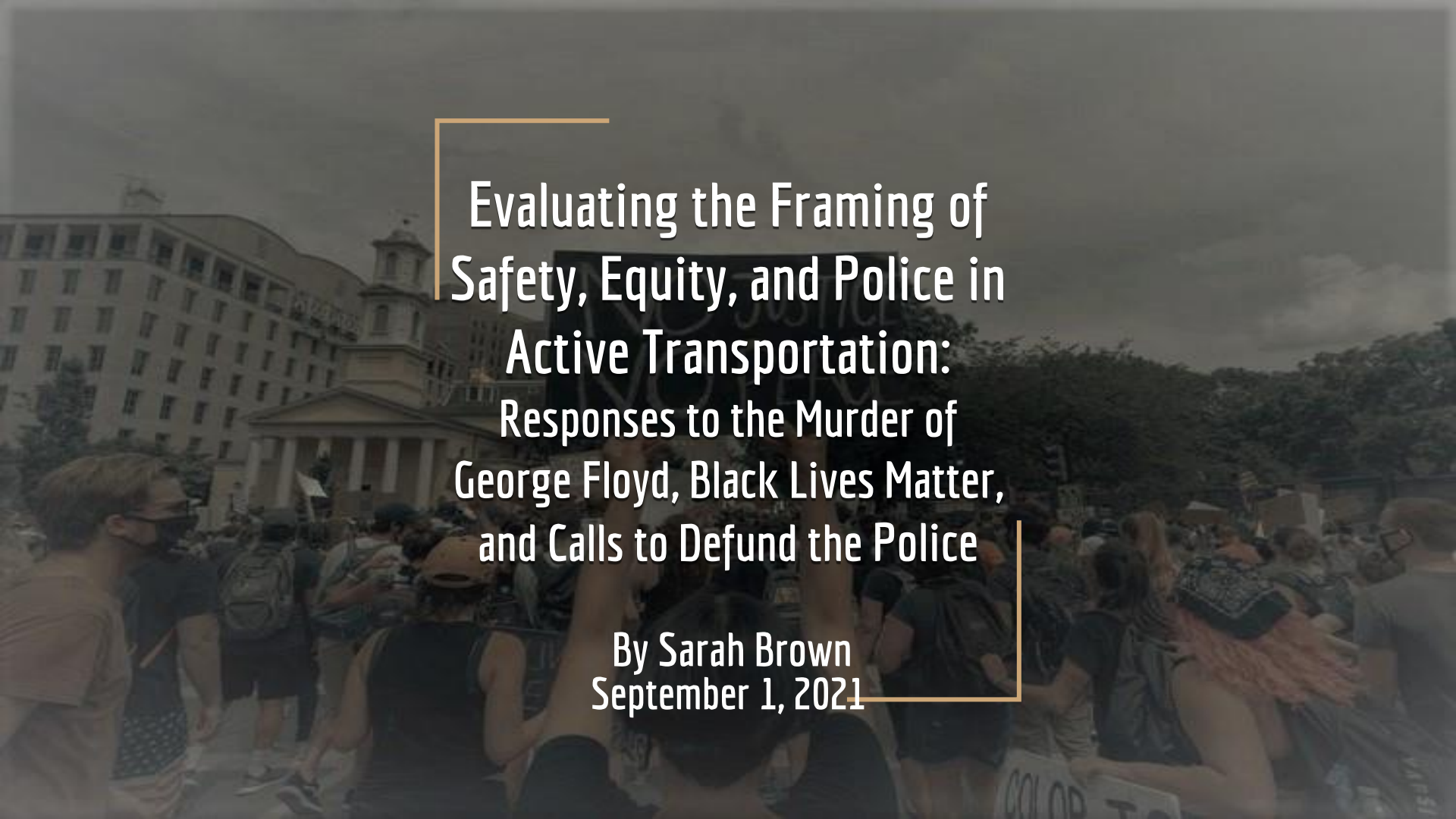⇨ **Review previous episodes and sign up for upcoming sessions**

Today's Panel

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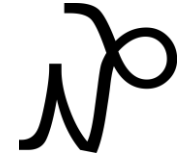**Rutgers University (Class of 2021)**

Evaluating the Framing of Safety, Equity, and Police in Active Transportation:
Responses to the Murder of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter, and Calls to Defund the Police

By Sarah Brown
September 1, 2021

Intro

- I'm a white woman
- Capricorn
- Grew up in Springfield, MA (413)
- Engineer/planner/researcher /advocate

Outline

1. Research questions
2. Background
3. Methodology
4. Results
5. Discussion
6. Key takeaways

Research Question

1. How had the 10 active transportation organizations framed enforcement and policing in mobility initiatives before and after May 25, 2020?
   a. Within this, how had the definitions of safety and equity evolved as a function of conversations around enforcement in active transportation?

Background

George Floyd

- Minneapolis Police Department officer Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd, a 46 year old Black man, on May 25, 2020
- Sparked nationwide and international protests for Black Lives Matter and calls to defund the police

Arrested Mobility

"Arrested mobility is the assertion that **Black people [and other minorities] have been historically and presently denied by legal and illegal authority, the inalienable right to move, to be moved, or to simply exist in public space** *resulting in adverse social, political, economic, and health effects that are widespread, preventable, and intergenerational."*

-Charles T. Brown, Equitable Cities

Methodology

Methodology

- This study used relational content analysis of text put forth by **ten** active transportation thought leaders
- 44 writings (21 before and 23 after)

Thought Leaders

Active Transportation Thought Leaders	
AmericaWalks	Institute of Transportation Engineers
Association of Pedestrian and Bicyclist Professionals	Road to Zero
League of American Bicyclists	Safe Routes Partnership
National Association for City Transportation Officials	Smart Growth America
The Vision Zero Network	Transportation Alternatives

Results

Safety, Equity, and Police-- Before and After

Safety Before	Safety After
Safety performance measures	Safety from police brutality
Safety for all users	Safe Systems and transitioning away from the "Es"

Equity Before	Equity After
Mode equity	Addressing the death of George Floyd or protests
Access and health	Human rights
Prioritization within transportation projects	Commitments to listening and centering BIPOC leaders and communities

Police Before	Police After
Working with police	Safety from police brutality
Disparities in enforcement	Safe Systems and transitioning away from the "Es"
Data driven enforcement	
Alternatives to policing	
Safe Systems and Enforcement	

Before---safety

Safety performance measures

- # of crashes
- # of injuries
- # of fatalities
- # of trips taken
- # and distribution of high-risk roadway factors
- # of near-miss occasions
- # of people physically active

"Vision Zero — the goal of eliminating traffic deaths and severe injuries — is gaining momentum across the U.S.."--The Vision Zero Network

"Performance measures should leverage both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Data collection and analysis methods should recognize that community engagement and qualitative information are valuable"---APBP

"It's also why the League is proud to be a partner and to promote today's launch of the CDC's Active People, Healthy NationSM, a new initiative aimed to help 27 million Americans become more physically active by 2027."---LAB

Safety for all users

"Safety: The safety and comfort of all users of the transportation should be considered in transportation projects while centering the needs of vulnerable road users and acknowledging that the perception of safety should be considered alongside crash data."---APBP

"Proposed Position: Transportation policy supports safe accommodation of all road users."---Road to Zero

Everyone should be able to walk and move in the public realm without fear of harm. This is a right enjoyed by many white Americans but is denied to most people of color."--AmericaWalks

"Vision Zero recognizes that all people have the right to move about their communities safely. Two key questions are how do we ensure that the processes, strategies and outcomes of Vision Zero serve all, particularly vulnerable and traditionally underserved populations? And, how do we analyze for and then mitigate or ameliorate unintended consequences of Vision Zero that may exacerbate other challenges within those communities?"---The Vision Zero Network

After---safety

Safety from police brutality

"The harassment and injustice that people of color, particularly Black people, experience at the hands of law enforcement on transit and in streets and public spaces is unacceptable and wrong. The police violence perpetrated against generally peaceful protesters exercising their First Amendment right of free speech is unacceptable and wrong. NACTO condemns racist violence and abuses of power. We stand in solidarity and commitment with the #BlackLivesMatter movement.---NACTO

"Black people in the U.S. are more likely to be killed in traffic crashes and are also more likely to be stopped by and killed by police during routine traffic stops. We cannot focus on the first half of that reality without also working on the second." --The Vision Zero Network

"Safe streets for everyone means more than bike lanes and sidewalks. It means that everyone is free to move on our streets, in our neighborhoods, and throughout our cities without fear of violence, racial profiling, or police brutality."—LAB

"We recognize explicitly that centuries of systemic and institutionalized racism have resulted in walking and bicycling being much more dangerous for people of color, particularly Black people... in addition to documented disparities in transportation safety, access, mobility, and health burdens, Black people experience violence, intimidation, harassment and racial biases on our streets and in public spaces." –APBP

"Too many Black lives have been lost to police violence....no person in the community needs to fear traffic violence or police harassment on our streets and sidewalks." ---Safe Routes Partnership

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Before---equity

Mode Equity

"APBP advances street designs that make walking and bicycling a viable option for everyone in every place."—APBP

"In every community, inequities and disparities that are made worse by community planning that prioritizes motor vehicle speed and convenience over the ability of people to move around without a car must be addressed."---LAB

"Avoid designing only for people who drive. Question forecasts about automobile trips that assume the only infrastructure we can build is that which prioritizes automobiles."—ITE

"Complete Streets are planned, designed, operated, and maintained to be safe and comfortable for everyone, regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, income, or chosen travel modes."—Smart Growth America

"Transportation choices are necessary. Transportation policy that treats facilities for these [active transportation] users as an optional extra perpetuates the inequalities and ignores major segments of the country's population." ---Smart Growth America

After---equity

Human Rights

"Walking, moving, occupying our cities, neighborhoods, public spaces and streets without death or fear of death is a basic human right. Anything less is unacceptable."--AmericaWalks

*"The police violence perpetrated against generally peaceful protesters exercising their **First Amendment right of free speech** is unacceptable and wrong. NACTO condemns racist violence and abuses of power. We stand in solidarity and commitment with the #BlackLivesMatter movement."---NACTO*

*"**The INVEST Act would...[replace] policy that has remained largely intact since the 1950s—before the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, and Fair Housing Acts** banned common forms of explicit racial discrimination; before the Americans with **Disabilities Act "guaranteed" equal access in** transportation."---Smart Growth America*

*"..but the only thing we need to talk about is the violence against BIPOC in our streets and how to **stop grotesque human rights violations** in our public spaces (and our homes). And further, how we as walkable community leaders and advocates uphold anti-racist principles in every act of our work."—AmericaWalks*

When we shut transit systems in response to protests, we deny countless people, largely of color or lower incomes, a means of mobility and their right to voice their concerns and seek redress from their government. Transportation's complicity in these unjust systems must stop."--NACTO

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Before--police

Disparities in enforcement

"An August 2019 article by CityLab reported that "in the U.S., African Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than white people. For black women, the rate is 1.4 times more likely." Other well-documented and researched articles reveal very similar instances of harassment and discriminatory enforcement of black and brown mobility in the United States, regardless of modality—including car, bicycle, train, bus, airplane, boat, etc. "---Charles Brown, ITE Journal

"Today, with increasing scrutiny on police enforcement practices and an increased concern with historic racial inequity of the criminal justice system, it is all the more crucial that the NYPD turn to data to guide its enforcement practices and resource allocations."—Transportation Alternatives

"Successful Vision Zero initiatives include enforcement strategies, but significant concerns are being raised about how increased use of enforcement would have an outsized impact on low-income communities and communities of color, including further exacerbating fragile police community relations in some cities.... ample research and experience underscores troubling trends of racial biases within traffic enforcement and related growing distrust between communities of color and police."—The Vision Zero Network 33

Data-driven enforcement

"...can constructively shine light on inequities in a transportation system, it may also cause problems by seeming to justify increased enforcement in certain communities, which may be experiencing the greatest tensions with police."–-The Vision Zero Network

"Let us first consider what cities are learning from data, and then turn to what that means for applying data to make meaningful improvements — including infrastructure investments and enforcement efforts. It is important that cities collect and analyze their traffic safety data to identify and address high-injury areas and behaviors. In Vision Zero efforts, many cities overlay injury data with areas of economic hardship. In this step, cities use a socioeconomic lens to further define and prioritize areas for attention and limited resources."—Vision Zero Network

"Today, with increasing scrutiny on police enforcement practices and an increased concern with historic racial inequity of the criminal justice system, it is all the more crucial that the NYPD turn to data to guide its enforcement practices and resource allocations."—Transportation Alternatives

After---police

Ending partnerships with police

"Depending on police for community safety is not a sustainable or equitable solution. It actively puts Black lives at risk and perpetuates white supremacy culture." –Safe Routes Partnership

"While we have shifted our communications and guidance away from promoting police as a critical part of traffic safety initiatives...we now know that that is not enough. Through an examination of what is within our organization's ability to change... we know that approach is no longer sufficient. Being an anti-racist organization is a journey, not a destination, and we are committed to continuing to take clear and decisive steps to undo the systems that prevent Black people, indigenous people, and people of color from moving around the world safely, healthily, joyfully, and in their full expression of self."— Safe Routes Partnership

"For more than 15 years, Safe Routes to School programs have used the five E's....effective immediately, we are dropping Enforcement as one of the 6 E's of Safe Routes to School." --Safe Routes Partnership

"But "Enforcement" does not equal "Safety" for many People of Color, particularly Black Americans. " --LAB

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Discussion

Safety in active transportation has expanded to include safety from police

- Safety in transportation cannot ignore police, or vigilantes, murdering BIPOC communities in any context
- "Transportation safety" should include the premise that no person in the community should fear traffic violence or police harassment on our streets and sidewalks
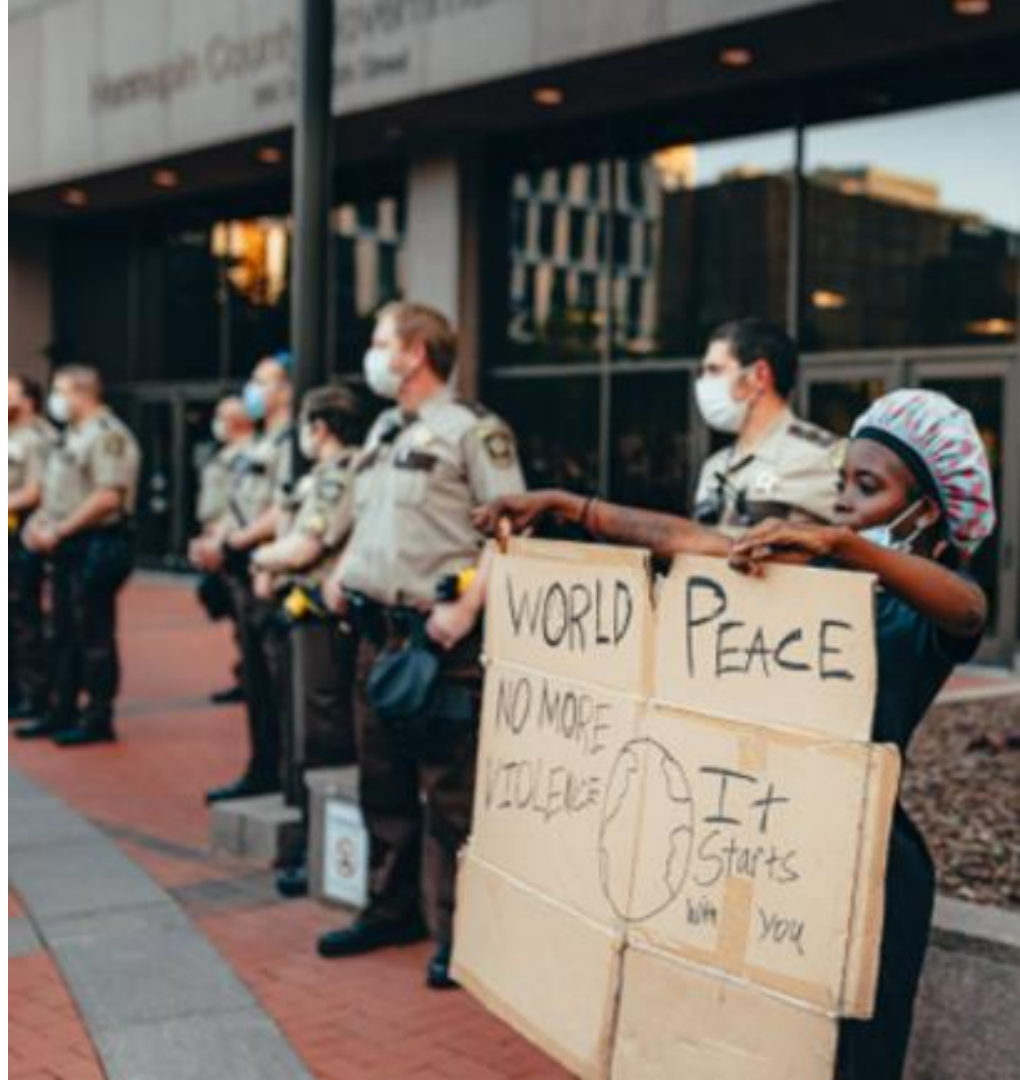
Data Justice

- Without it, **the qualitative and validity of our work is undermined** (D'Ignazio & Klein 2020)
- Collect data on Black lives and experiences (Brown 2021)
- Need to imagine new data sets and disaggregate them all
  - # of interactions with police
  - # of people killed by police
  - # of people assaulted by police
- Rooted in co-liberation
- Unpack "big data" (D'Ignazio & Klein 2020)
- Shift power away from white people
  - Privilege hazards (D'Ignazio & Klein 2020)

Seven Principles of Data Feminism

(D'Ignazio & Klein 2020)

1. Examine power
2. Challenge power
3. Elevate emotion and embodiment
4. Rethink binaries and hierarchies
5. Embrace pluralism
6. Consider context
7. Make labor visible

Transportation rights

- Safe and dignified mobility is a human right
- Fundamentally different than "mode" and "choice"
- Less about modes and more about the freedom of movement in the absence of racism (Thomas 2021)
  - A restoration of that freedom (Brown 2021)
- Can look to other frameworks of justice---not reinventing the wheel
  - Mobility justice
  - Housing justice
  - Reproductive justice
  - Human rights analysis

Concluding Thoughts

Key Takeaways

1. Safety from police
2. Safe and dignified mobility and movement is a human right
3. Need better data before we claim approaches are data driven
4. Need to build accountability structures to centering equity and mobility justice in our work

Resources

My research and my sources
- https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/concern/masters_papers/wp988t88s?locale=en

Arrested Mobility Speaker Series
- National Bike Summit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUKQLobwJQk
- UCLA Arrowhead Symposium https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RhufqOnD8M
- NACDD https://chronicdisease.org/nacdd-sponsors-arrested-mobility-webinar-exploring-effects-of-over-policing-black-mobility-in-the-u-s/
- Cascade Bicycle Club https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlMJtSYbIPo

Other sources
- Data Feminism https://data-feminism.mitpress.mit.edu/
- Untokening Principles of Mobility Justice http://www.untokening.org/updates/2017/11/11/untokening-10-principles-of-mobility-justice
- Thrivance Group--https://thrivancegroup.com/

Thanks!

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ABSTRACT

Traffic collisions are a serious threat to Americans, killing over 36,000 people in 2019 alone (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2020). There is a clear consensus that this public health crisis must be made a top priority of city and state governments. Safety is the chief concern here, but current traffic enforcement does not necessarily increase safety. The use of police to initiate traffic stops fails due to two components - the lack of a positive effect on safety and the explicit and implicit racism that results in severe, harmful outcomes for Black and Latino people.

Academic research has long established that **low-income communities of color disproportionately carry the burden of traffic-related injuries and fatalities** (Neumann et al; 2019)**.** These communities are unfairly neglected in terms of design and enforcement techniques that would lead to **safer transportation networks and greater health and mobility outcomes.** In addition to facing unsafe conditions across all modes, **Black drivers are stopped and searched at a rate five times that of white drivers** due to the long-standing racial biases present in our country (Pierson et al; 2020). Thus, alternatives to police-based traffic enforcement could potentially serve to **distribute traffic enforcement more fairly**, while at the same time **encouraging safe driving behavior** and **avoiding the escalations** that far too frequently occur during police-involved traffic enforcement stops. Although alternatives to police-based traffic enforcement may serve to significantly reduce opportunities for racial bias in enforcement, the implementation of these alternatives is heavily debated. This presentation demonstrates the pressing need for alternatives and potential barriers they may face.

INTRODUCTION

- Traffic collisions are a serious threat to Americans, killing over 36,000 people in 2019 alone
  - There is a clear consensus that this public health crisis must be made a top priority of city and state governments
  - Safety is the chief concern here, but current traffic enforcement does not increase safety
- The use of police to initiate traffic stops fails due to two components
  - The lack of a positive effect on safety and the explicit
  - Implicit racism that results in severe, harmful outcomes for Black and Latino people

DEMONSTRATED NEED FOR ALTERNATIVES: TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT IS RACIALLY BIASED

- Police traffic enforcement results in increased stops, arrests, and fatal encounters between racial minorities and police
  - Minorities are more likely to be killed when stopped by police
- A study of 95 million traffic stop from 2011 to 2018 shows Black Americans are pulled over 40% more often than white drivers, but are much less likely to be stopped after sunset
  - Black and Latino drivers are also more likely to have their vehicle searched during a traffic stop
- Minorities do not commit more crimes, but are pulled over more frequently, demonstrating racial bias amongst police

DEMONSTRATED NEED FOR ALTERNATIVES: TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT DOES NOT IMPROVE SAFETY

- Using Nashville as a case study, researchers found that although traffic stops per capita were significantly higher in Nashville than the national average, collisions in Nashville increased significantly during this

- Traffic stops so rarely result in arrests that police are not bettering public safety by conducting traffic stops excessively (and often with racial biases)

- Speeding and red light running are not reduced using police traffic enforcement, and these are the most dangerous driving behaviors

DEMONSTRATED NEED FOR ALTERNATIVES: VISION ZERO AND EQUITY

- People living in low-income areas are twice as likely to be killed while walking than those in high income areas

- Black children are twice as likely to be killed while walking than white children, and Latino children are 40% more likely

- Only 50% of low-income communities have streets with proper sidewalks compared to 90% of high-income communities

- Any Vision Zero campaign must address these awful realties if it is to be successful

- Portland is a great case study in that almost half of the slots in Portland's 26-person task force that sets the goals for their Vision Zero program are reserved exclusively for representatives from community organizations from all over the city

- The task force determines areas of the city in need of overhauls to begin the process of making streets safer

ALTERNATIVES TO POLICE-BASED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT: AUTOMATED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT

- Case studies from cities such as Chicago, Portland, Seattle, and New York City have demonstrated excellent results for these programs

- In Chicago, the city reviewed its red-light camera program between 2005-2018

    - Right angle (T-bone) collisions dropped 64% and all crashes at camera-equipped intersections dropped 59%

- In Seattle, red light running at intersections with cameras is down 50%

    - While the city did not say that the cameras decreased traffic crashes, they did conclude that the cameras reduced the severity of crashes when they did occur

- In New York City, red light running decreased by over 75% at locations with a camera, right angle crashes (largely a result of running a red light) dropped 71%

    - No increase in rear end collisions, a concern that some critics suggested was more likely to occur when cameras were installed

- On the budgetary side, every one of these cities determined that the program more than paid for itself

ALTERNATIVES TO POLICE-BASED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT: IMPORTANCE OF SPEED LIMITS

- Several studies have reached similar conclusions on speeding, namely that for each 10mph increase in vehicle speed, the chance of pedestrian death increases dramatically

    - The chances of death from colliding with a vehicle traveling over 58mph is 90%

- The City of Seattle reduced the speed limit on streets to 25 mph on hundreds of roads and added more signage informing drivers of the speed limits

    - The city saw 22% reduction in all crashes

    - They also saw the most drastic speed reductions from drivers going over 40mph

- The costs of this program were negligible and lowering speed limits have been successfully recreated in other cities such as Boston on a smaller scale

ALTERNATIVES TO POLICE-BASED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT: UNARMED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT AGENTS

- Among a series of police reforms, Berkeley, CA, recently made the decision to create a separate city department of unarmed officers to conduct parking and traffic law enforcement
  - This program is hotly contested by some in city government as well as the police force
- Similar discussions are being had in other cities

ALTERNATIVES TO POLICE-BASED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

- Participatory Budgeting is a process for allocating discretionary public funds that is decided by community planning and voting
  - The City of New York has used it to allocate over $36 million dollars
- Participatory Budgeting can kill two birds with one stone
  - Focusing money on what the community needs
  - Engaging residents directly regardless of citizenship status or income

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION: PROFESSIONAL OPINIONS ON SAFETY

- Many planners suggest that these alternatives, particularly Automated Traffic Enforcement, are Band-Aid solutions that deflect from the structural injustices cities need to address

- These alternatives go hand in hand with community needs and offer opportunities for residents to raise issues that do address these structural inequalities

- All alternatives to police traffic enforcement can fall victim to the biases that corrupt the current system, but careful and deliberate actions can address these issues before they are implemented

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION: PUBLIC OPINION AND OVERCOMING FEARS OF DEFUNDING THE POLICE

- Examples of defunding the police in productive, safe ways exist, including the CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) program in Oregon, as well as funneling 911 emergency calls regarding mental health away from police and onto other mental health professionals

- Educating residents about these alternatives and getting them involved in the process of traffic safety will help dispel these fears and help residents engage further with their community

- Transparency and communication are vital in informing public opinion, something that many of these alternatives have woven into their core

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION: POLITICAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OBSTACLES

- City councils, state bureaucracy, and law enforcement agencies and unions are often opponents of alternatives to police traffic enforcement

- It is not possible to convert all these skeptics into believers

  - The logical step is to win over those who are open to these alternatives and create a popular movement that compels city residents to force the remaining elected officials to act

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION: LEGAL CHALLENGES

- Alternatives to police traffic enforcement are met with state opposition and court challenges, particularly regarding Automated Traffic Enforcement
  - 24 states and Washington, DC legally allow speed or red-light cameras, but most states have caveats within this
  - Many communities outlaw ATE through local ordinances, and even in states where they are legal it is sometimes decided by county
- Legal challenges have proved the most difficult to fight

THE ROLE OF PLANNERS AND ADVOCATES: PLANNERS

- Planners should conduct more research on alternatives to police traffic enforcement to present more data that ultimately proves the effectiveness of these alternatives, especially red-light cameras and their effects on speeding

- In addition, planners are not exempt from speaking to the community

  - Help attune planners more closely to the needs of the community, informing their professional tasks and helping to build trust between city government, planning agencies, and city residents

THE ROLE OF PLANNERS AND ADVOCATES: ADVOCATES

To dos:

- Launching ad campaigns is vital to spread the facts about these alternatives, dispel harmful narratives, and connect with the people who will be affected by these programs

- Holding community meetings and helping integrate community members into planning from the very beginnings of these programs

- Working with neighborhood organizers and other groups who have relationships with the community to gain support and spread the message to a wider audience

- Reviewing talking points about the nature of these programs (next slide)

Criticisms of Automated Traffic Enforcement	Responses to Criticism
Issues of equity in terms of the geographic placement of cameras, and how fines are leveraged	Steps are being taken by many cities to ensure that cameras are placed equitably throughout the city. In addition, Black, Latino, and other immigrant neighborhoods are much more likely to be the victims of severe injury or death from traffic crashes, so cameras that both remove the presence of police and have a proven reduction on speeding will equitably benefit these communities.
Concerns that fines place a disproportionate burden of traffic ticket costs on low-income communities	On the issue of equity, a sliding scale for fines could be implemented based on residents' ability to pay, as well as alternatives to fines for first time offenders.
Claims that these systems are revenue generating tools for the city	These Automated Traffic Enforcement projects do generate revenue for the city, but the proven reduction in harm and injury crashes have a monumental social benefit for the public health of cities, not to mention the costs saved through reducing the damages from crashes the city must pay.
Concern over the potential growth of rear end collisions due to red light cameras	While the research on rear end collisions is not unanimous, many cities have not seen an increase in rear end crashes since the implementation of red-light cameras. These crashes are also less common and less severe than crashes such as right-angle collisions.
Vision Zero policies and teams not considering or reflecting the diversity of the communities that their policies will affect.	All the case studies presented throughout this guide have taken community engagement into account, both during the planning process and whenever revisions are made to existing programs. Thus, cities can ensure that residents are a part of these decisions and initiate them in the most equitable and effective manner.

CONCLUSION

- The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that police traffic enforcement is flawed based on two principles
  - It is racially biased, resulting in harmful and sometimes fatal altercations with police
  - It is not effective in that police have not reduced speeding, dangerous driving, or made the community safer
- Considering the need for alternatives, a variety are described here including Automated Traffic Enforcement, speed limits, unarmed civilian traffic enforcement, and Participatory Budgeting
  - Many of these programs are cost effective and require community collaboration, which can help address some of the pitfalls in city planning historically.
- Equipping planners and advocates with strategies and talking points to combat opposition to these alternatives and to help them show the public the value of these programs is the most important component of implementing changes that will create safer roads and communities

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Discussion

Thank You!

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