DATE: 09/25/2020
PROJECT AREA: Special Projects

TITLE: Developing a Framework for Equity Analysis of Transportation Improvement Programs

PROBLEM STATEMENT:
Transportation agencies that manage federally funded programs and projects are responsible for ensuring that their plans, programs, policies, services, and investments benefit everyone in their jurisdictions equitably. Transportation agencies are legally required to comply with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and FTA and FHWA monitor their compliance. However, there is little guidance for performing comprehensive transport equity analysis. Many existing evaluation tools focus on a narrow set of impacts on a particular group of people. Transport equity analysis is often ad hoc, based on the stakeholders’ concerns and values involved in a planning process. In this regard, this project aims to develop a comprehensive framework and a tool for equity analysis of ARDOT's different transportation improvement programs. This framework will improve ARDOT's ability to meet its mission to "Provide safe and efficient transportation solutions to support Arkansas' economy and enhance quality of life for generations to come" by making transportation investments that contribute to the health, prosperity, and quality of life for all persons and communities in Arkansas.

OBJECTIVES:
The objectives of this project are to: 1) develop a framework that identifies and describes how equity in transportation projects can be analyzed through an integrated participatory and quantitative approach, 2) develop a tool where the proposed framework is made operational for a project level equity assessment. The tasks are: a) review of literature, research in progress, and current practices related to methods of equity analysis in transportation plans and programs, b) identify equity indicators through literature review and stakeholders’ engagement, c) identify population of analysis, d) development of a framework for project level equity analysis, and e) application of the developed tools with four case study projects.

FORM OF RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT:
The research will be implemented as an equity analysis tool that will provide step by step methods for project-level equity analyses. Each step will provide detailed methods and examples to help ARDOT develop and implement equity analyses that best meet the unique context of a community. The developed framework will help ARDOT meet the requirements set forth in Title VI and emphasized by two federal government executive orders by ensuring equitable access to their services and decision-making processes, and equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens generated by transportation investments.