

# LINK21

CONNECT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

## EQUITY BASELINE REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# Equity Baseline Report Executive Summary

## Introduction

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) and Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) are advancing the Link21 Program (Link21) to provide improved BART and Regional Rail connectivity. Link21 will transform the passenger rail network in Northern California into a faster, more integrated system that provides a safe, efficient, equitable, and affordable means of travel for all types of trips.

The purpose of this Equity Baseline Report is to better understand the current state of inequities across the Northern California Megaregion (Megaregion) to inform the planning, design, and evaluation of projects that may advance as part of Link21. The Megaregion and its four subregions are shown in **Figure 1**.

Link21 began by acknowledging that infrastructure projects have negatively affected people of color, low-income, and systemically disadvantaged communities in the past. These past harms have resulted in decreased mobility options for certain demographic groups, including barriers to rail access that result in different travel behaviors. Link21 has committed to doing things differently by clearly understanding the current state of inequities in the Megaregion in order to design projects that begin to address these issues.

This report summarizes the Megaregion’s demographics, the current distribution of burdens identified by the Link21 Team, and current travel behaviors of communities in the Megaregion and its four subregions. In addition, the report highlights the disparities between the general population as a whole and priority populations (PPs), a term used by Link21 to signify some of the most historically marginalized communities in the Megaregion.

### Link21 is committed to:



advancing a more equitable distribution of Link21’s benefits and burdens



addressing the needs of those who were previously harmed by infrastructure projects

***Equity is the state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair. It is a state in which an individual’s background does not predetermine or predict their opportunity.***

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- San Francisco Bay Area: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties
- Sacramento Area: El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba Counties
- Northern San Joaquin Valley: Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus Counties
- Monterey Bay Area: Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties
- Megaregion
- County Boundary

**Link21 Megaregion**

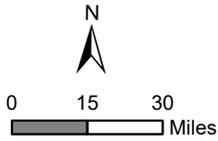
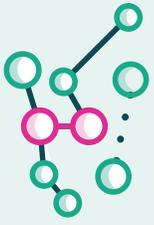


Figure 1. Northern California Megaregion and Four Subregions



Link21 defines priority populations as the geographic areas where people are most impacted by negative economic, mobility, community, health, and safety outcomes. These outcomes are often correlated with race, ethnicity, gender, income level, and other historically marginalized identities in the Megaregion.

# Findings

Below are the major findings that highlight who is taking transit, what barriers they face when considering transit, key equity challenges as they relate to Link21, benefited and burdened communities, and considerations for more equitable outcomes in the Megaregion through Link21.

## Transit Ridership and Demographics

Data from the 2017 National Household Travel Survey which sampled 26,000 households in California and collected socioeconomic and travel behavior data from over 55,000 individuals, confirms that white and higher-income transit riders tend to use rail, while people of color and lower-income transit riders tend to rely on bus. Rail infrastructure has historically required

a significantly higher public subsidy than bus infrastructure, and generally provides a more efficient level of service.

**Figure 2** shows rail and bus trips by income. Transit trips in the Megaregion tend to be by bus for users from lower-income households (lower than \$75,000 per year) and tend to be by rail for users from higher-income households (\$75,000 per year and up). Approximately 74% of transit trips taken by individuals from lower-income households were by bus, compared to 39% for their higher-income counterparts. Moreover, there is a substantial difference in the level of rail use among income brackets in the Megaregion.

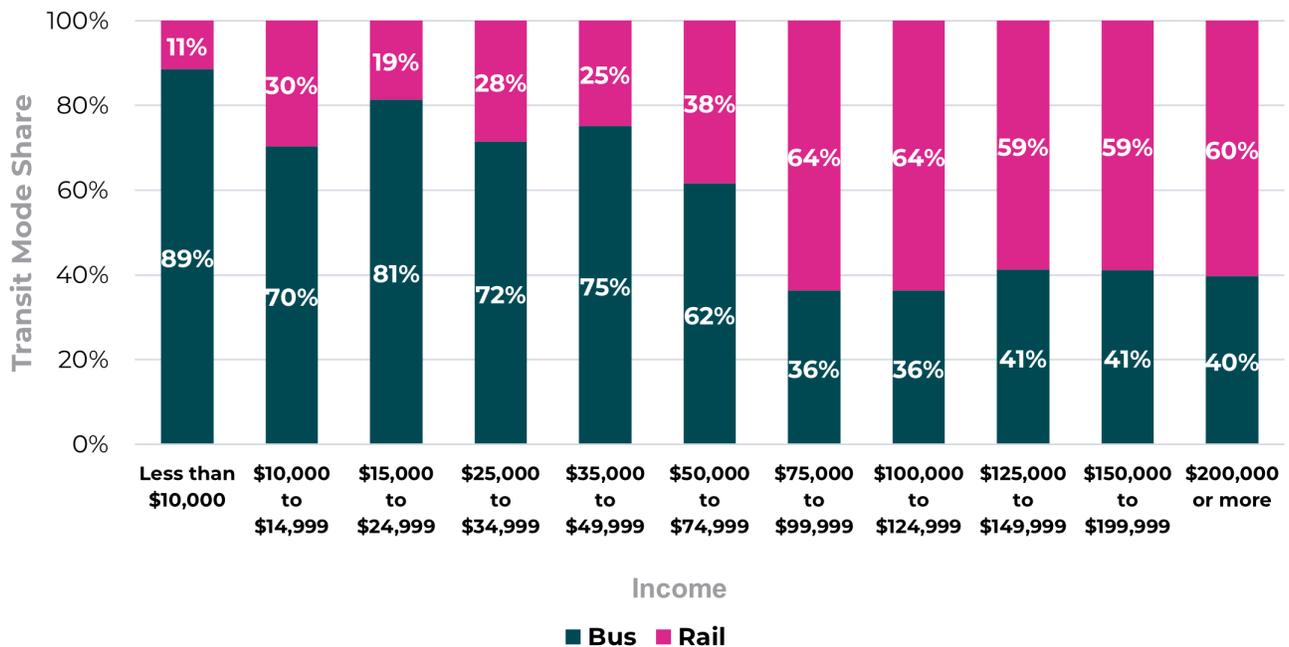


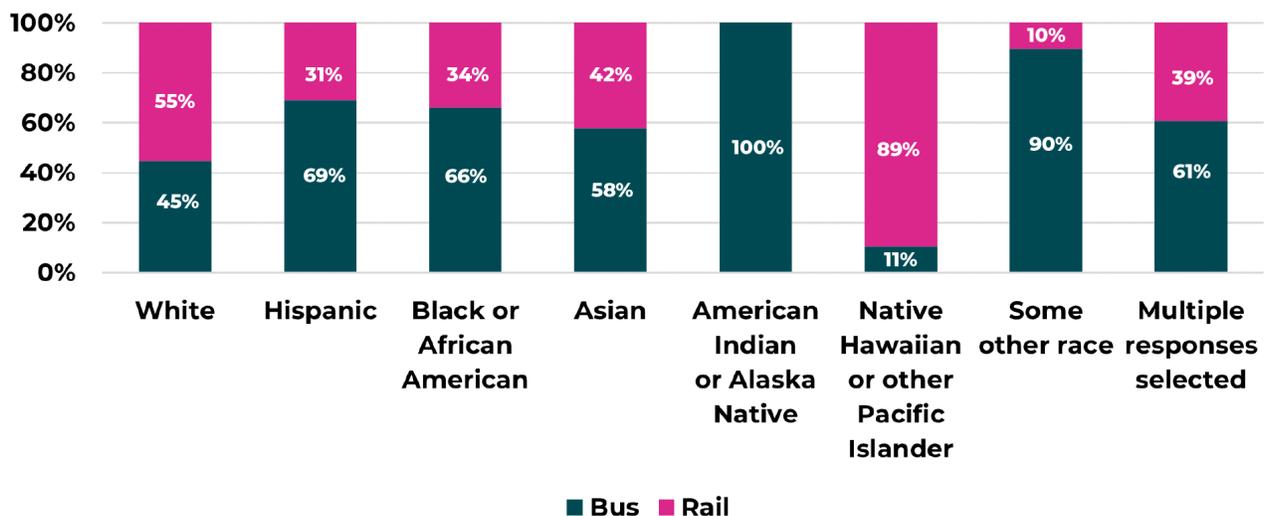
Figure 2. Megaregion Transit Mode Share by Income Level (n = 1.7M trips)



**Figure 3** shows rail and bus trips by race and ethnicity. Approximately 45% of transit trips taken by white riders are made by bus, while 55% of transit trips are made on rail. In contrast, the proportion of transit trips made by bus is 69% for Hispanic riders, 66% for Black/African American riders, and 58% for Asian riders. While the divide is not as pronounced as it is between income groups, there is a notably uneven distribution in rail usage across race and ethnicity groups.

## Equity Poll and Barriers to Rail

In order to better understand why these disparities exist, Link21 administered an equity poll. Conducted between August 19 and September 27, 2021, with a total of 1,505 respondents (79% people of color and 76% making less than \$75,000 annually), the equity poll illuminated key barriers to people taking rail. **Figure 4** identifies the results of the poll, showing that the greatest concerns of respondents are the time it takes to reach their destinations, safety on public transportation, and lack of accessible destinations.



**Figure 3. Megaregion Transit Mode Share by Race & Ethnicity (n = 1.7M trips)**

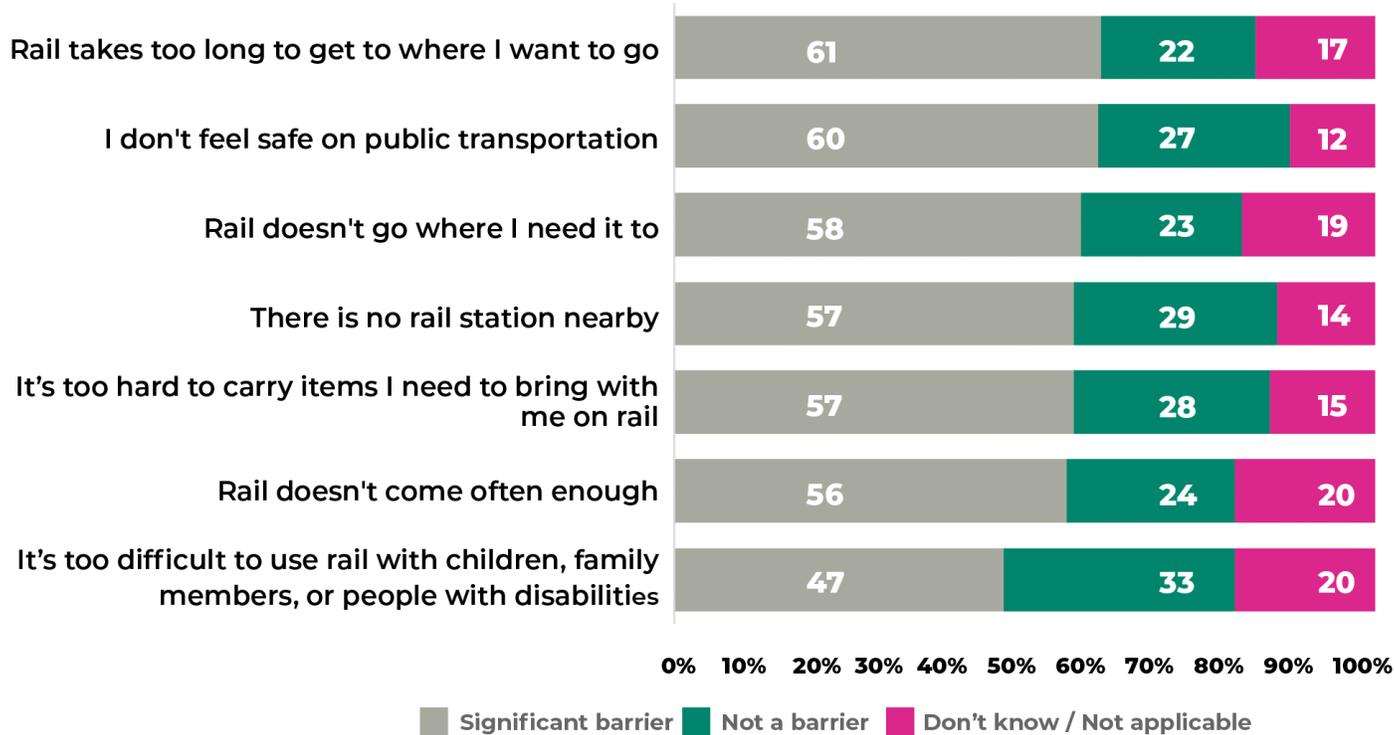


Figure 4. Link21 Equity Poll Results: Barriers to Rail

# Key Link21 Equity Challenges For The Megaregion And Subregions

More key economic, mobility, and access-related disparities exist for PPs when compared to the general population, which inform the problems Link21 should seek to solve. Some key observations for the Megaregion include:



**Economic:** PPs are more likely to have lower median household income, higher unemployment rates, live in renter-occupied households with larger family sizes, and work multiple jobs.

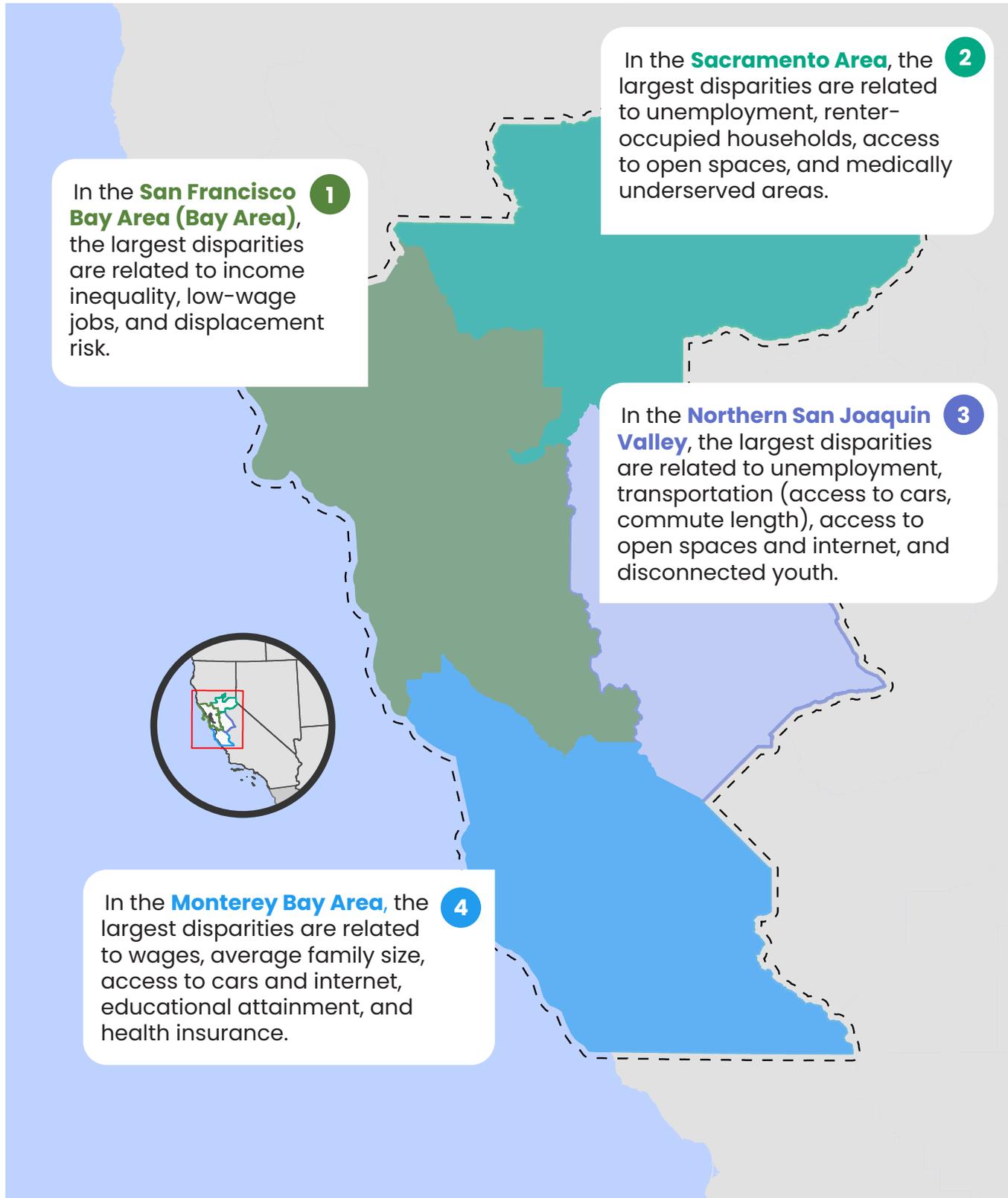


**Mobility:** PPs are more likely to live in households with no car or with fewer vehicles than workers and have longer commutes.



**Access:** PPs are more likely to include residents with a disability, medically underserved areas, and areas without internet access.

In order to plan and design local elements of Link21, it is important to understand inequities in each subregion. The map below describes the major disparities between PPs and the general population within each subregion. These findings should help Link21 staff consider distinct solutions within and between subregions:



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## Benefited and Burdened Communities

Link21 should benefit many communities across the Megaregion with improved transit service; however, construction and operation will likely result in burdens or negative impacts on some communities. While it is difficult to know what these benefits and burdens will be at this early stage in Link21's development, some assumptions can be made about which communities may experience greater benefits or burdens, which should inform the design of a more equitable program.



### Potential Benefits

- Better and more reliable transit service
- More connections
- Improved safety
- Better access to jobs
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions

### Potential Burdens

- Impacts during construction
- Impacts during operation



### Assumptions related to potential benefits and burdens include:

- While the Bay Area is the subregion that will likely receive the greatest benefits from Link21, Bay Area PPs could receive many more Link21 construction and operations related burdens.
- With less anticipated Link21-related construction and operations in the Monterey Bay Area subregion, this subregion is projected to have limited burdens as a result of Link21.
- Given the number of PPs in areas that could be potentially burdened by Link21 construction or operations, balanced with the transit benefits, portions of the Northern San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento Area subregions could receive both benefits and burdens related to Link21.

# Implications for Link21

Considering both the program’s stated goals and objectives and the Megaregion’s current inequities, Link21 should consider the following:



**Transform the passenger experience** by prioritizing affordability, service frequency, safety, and accessibility. Seek to address the fact that fewer people of color ride rail than ride buses across the Megaregion by partnering with these riders to better understand their rail transit needs and prioritizing solutions to meet them. Using data from the equity poll and other resources, understand that cost, time, personal/public safety, convenience, location, and access are key factors — and current barriers — to using rail for people of color and lower-income populations.



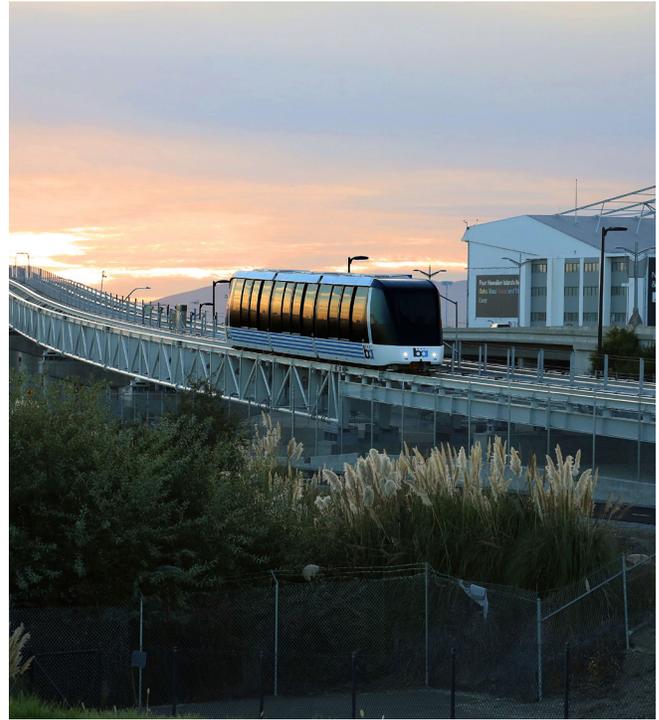
**Promote equity and livability** by improving safety, health, and air quality, particularly for communities that could be potentially burdened by Link21 such as the PP areas in the Bay Area subregion; downtown Sacramento and West Sacramento in the Sacramento Area; and in the Northern San Joaquin Valley. Consider amenities such as affordable and equitable internet access at transit stations and inside rail cars to address the broadband and technology disparities and improve transportation technology access.



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**Support economic opportunity** by better connecting communities that have historically been marginalized to jobs, health care, social services, childcare, grocery stores, parks, and other essential places and supporting transit-oriented affordable development and affordable larger-family housing, with attention to economic, mobility, and access disparities in the Megaregion.



**Advance environmental stewardship** and protection by providing high-quality transit access, especially for no-car households, households with a vehicle mismatch, or in areas with more megacommuters in the Megaregion, reducing the potential need to drive. Seek to reduce short-term environmental impacts of construction activities, particularly in neighborhoods with poor air quality.



*The analysis included in this Equity Baseline Report, including the definition of priority populations, is evolving as the Program advances. As Link21 concepts are further developed, the study area will be refined and the communities that may benefit from or be burdened by Link21 may change.*