

EQUITY WORKING GROUP

JULY MEETING NOTES

Location: 421 W Riverside Ave, Suite #500
Date: July 27th, 2026
Time: 4:15 – 5:15 pm
SRTC Staff: Michael Redlinger
SRHD Staff: Samantha Hennessy, Callie Jones, Brittany Bannon
Attendees: Simone R. Kristin L, Susie C, Paul K, Jenni J, Madeline A

Michael welcomed attendees, led a round of introductions for new attendees, and previewed the day's three main agenda items.

The first agenda item, an overview of Spokane County Emergency Management's Disability, Access, and Functional Needs (DAFN) work, was presented by Simone Ramel-McKay. The agency's DAFN Workgroup was reestablished in 2024 to improve emergency preparedness and response for populations that may require additional support before, during, or after emergencies and disasters. She described the group's definition of DAFN populations, which includes older adults, children, people with disabilities, individuals experiencing homelessness, those with limited transportation or financial resources, immigrants and refugees, and individuals with limited English proficiency. Simone outlined the workgroup's purpose, objectives, and growth from nine to nineteen participating organizations, emphasizing a focus on implementing solutions and projects rather than serving solely as a discussion forum. She highlighted how survey data and community engagement efforts conducted by partner organizations helped identify priority issues, including transportation access, education, and emergency response needs. The presentation emphasized the importance of collaboration among government agencies and community organizations to identify needs, pursue funding opportunities, and develop transportation and other support solutions for vulnerable populations during emergencies and disasters. She also noted ongoing efforts to map community needs, coordinate existing transportation resources, and explore long-term funding strategies to support future work. Group discussion touched on the need to identify unmet needs and provide people with education and resources. Simone described ongoing efforts to refine the group's priorities, identify transportation solutions for individuals with access and functional needs, and explore ways for agencies to collaborate more effectively on outreach, surveys, and resource development.

Next, Spokane Regional Health District's (SRHD) Samantha Hennessy and Callie Jones presented findings from a Health District project examining transportation barriers to accessing medical services among rural older adults. After initially exploring broader transportation and healthcare access questions, the project narrowed its focus based on community needs and partnership opportunities, resulting in focus groups and survey outreach conducted in Deer Park and Cheney. The presenters described a community-driven approach that adapted to participant feedback throughout the project and emphasized the importance of transportation access as a key factor influencing healthcare access and outcomes. Analysis of the survey and focus group data identified several recurring themes, including challenges related to transportation knowledge and navigation, physical accessibility, travel distance, convenience, and future mobility needs. The presenters then outlined the development of a transportation

information guide for older adults, which will provide practical information on transportation options, local resources, and mobility planning. Staff noted that the guide is intended to be available in a physical format to better serve individuals with limited internet access and to help community members prepare for future transportation needs as they age. Group discussion focused on opportunities to improve transportation access for rural older adults, including leveraging existing community networks and volunteer transportation resources. Participants also highlighted STA's upcoming on-demand transit services and travel training programs as potential tools for addressing transportation barriers. Discussion further noted the importance of trust and familiarity in transportation services, particularly for rural residents accessing healthcare.

SRHD's Brittany Bannon presented findings from the Spokane Regional Health District's 2025 Quality of Life Survey, a recurring countywide survey conducted since 2015 to monitor community well-being, social capital, social drivers of health, and resident perceptions of public services. She described the survey's methodology, including randomized household sampling, oversampling of underrepresented populations, partnerships with community organizations, multilingual outreach, and statistical weighting to ensure results are representative of Spokane County adults. The survey received nearly 3,000 responses and examined topics including quality of life, social connectedness, health, housing, public safety, economic conditions, discrimination, and transportation. Results indicated that nearly 80% of residents reported a good or better quality of life, although overall quality of life has declined somewhat since 2020. Findings also showed disparities in social capital by neighborhood, age, income, education, and employment status, with stronger social capital associated with positive outcomes such as higher life expectancy. Transportation-related findings showed that most residents were satisfied with public transportation services, while approximately one in five reported experiencing transportation-related stress. Younger adults, people with disabilities, and unemployed residents were more likely to report transportation difficulties. Brittany also sought feedback on strategies to improve survey participation, outreach, and dissemination of findings. Brittany's discussion questions included: What would increase participation in future surveys? Who are trusted messengers and information sources SRHD should partner with? What are some ways they can share findings back with the community?

Michael provided updates on upcoming outreach and engagement opportunities, including participation in Unity in the Community on August 15 and the upcoming public comment period for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which will be discussed in greater detail at the September meeting. Staff also announced the hiring of Bailey Peterson as SRTC's new Communications and Public Relations Coordinator.

To close the meeting, Michael addressed comments from the chat and opened the floor to discussion on Brittany's presentation. Discussion focused on survey methodology, response rates, and opportunities to improve future community engagement. Participants asked about the demographic factors used to weight survey results, trends in nonresponse, and the extent to which survey questions have remained consistent over time. Brittany explained that weighting is based on key demographic characteristics and noted that younger adults and households with children are among the most difficult populations to reach. Participants also discussed challenges related to survey fatigue across agencies and encouraged continued collaboration with community partners and trusted messengers to improve participation, outreach, and dissemination of survey findings in future survey cycles.