



A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

From the construction of the transcontinental railroad to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, transportation has always been inseparable from America's struggle for racial and economic justice. At its best, transportation can be a powerful engine of opportunity, connecting people to jobs, education, and resources—whether they live in a big city, a rural community, or anywhere in between. Ensuring equity and accessibility for every member of the traveling public is one of the Department of Transportation's highest priorities.

As we continue to advance this work, it's important to recognize that past federal transportation investments have too often failed to address inequities, or even made them worse. And because a piece of physical infrastructure endures for decades, families and communities today must contend with the results of discriminatory choices that may date back generations. For example, highways routed directly through Black and brown neighborhoods, often in an effort to divide and destroy them, continue to affect the well-being of the residents who remain. In other cases, we see inequities in our failures to invest, as with transit deserts that leave out the communities that most need affordable transportation options, or contracting opportunities for transportation projects that fail to engage and utilize women and people of color.

The Department — and the entire Biden-Harris Administration — are committed to doing the right thing for our shared future, addressing these inequities, and building a better, more equitable transportation system.

On his first day in office, President Biden signed Executive Order 13985, establishing a whole-of-government approach to advancing equity and opportunity. In the year since, this Department has worked hard to implement that order. We've stepped up our efforts to engage with underserved communities, to enforce key provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and to rebuild our Departmental Office of Civil Rights, ensuring that equity is considered as a key factor in every program we administer and every policy we set.

We've also made clear how equity and civil rights compliance belong in our discretionary grant programs, consistent with the law, acting to ensure that federal dollars are available to support projects that will tangibly benefit underserved and overburdened communities. We are strengthening our Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program, to ensure that business opportunities in transportation and infrastructure reach women- and minority-owned small businesses. And we've begun working to implement the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which provides for historic investments in transportation equity.

This Equity Action Plan is a major milestone for the Department of Transportation that represents a shift in how we view and deliver transportation programs. We have a long way to go toward creating a truly equitable transportation system. But the actions outlined in this plan form a strong foundation, and I encourage the public to hold us accountable as we work to meet these goals.

Done right, transportation policy can help level the playing field. It can transform economies, connect people to opportunity, and empower underserved communities to build generational wealth for the future. In partnership with community leaders, state and local governments, and the traveling public, we at the Department of Transportation look forward to continuing this vital work.

Secretary Pete Buttigieg