

Charlotte Strategic Mobility Plan Equity Based Focus Groups Summary Report

Amplify Consulting worked with the Charlotte Department of Transportation Active Transportation Coordinator, Scott Curry and with a number of community partners to help reach key populations and gather feedback for the Charlotte Strategic Mobility Plan. We aimed to engage with Charlotte residents who travel using various modes of transportation, as well as a diverse representation of gender and ethnicity with intent to recruit participants of African American, Hispanic, Asian and Indigenous ethnic background as well as immigrants, non-English speakers, single-parent households, older adults, members of the differently-abled community, and people experiencing homelessness. Equity focus groups focused on recruiting participants who are historically underrepresented in transportation planning.

Project Goals

- Gain additional insights of people's lived experiences
- Enhance the opportunities for feedback and engagement
- Increase participation from the community
- Build trust with those who are more impacted by inequity

Focus Group Objectives:

- Share experiences and needs for better transportation options
- Discuss transportation and mobility priorities for Charlotte
- Discuss innovative solutions for Charlotte
- Help the City invest in ongoing engagement experiences around the topic of equity

Attendance Numbers

Date	Focus Group	Registrations	Participants
Monday, June 21 at 6:00pm	Focus Group 1	11	6
Tuesday, June 22 at 6:00pm	Focus Group 2	9	6
Wednesday, June 23 at 6:00pm	Focus Group 3	11	6
Thursday, June 24 at 6:00pm*	Focus Group 4	5	0
Tuesday, June 29 10:30am	Focus Group 5	8	5
Wednesday, June 30 at 6:00pm	Focus Group 6 (Spanish)	9	6
Thursday, July 1 at 10:30am	Focus Group 7 (Spanish)	8	2
Thursday, July 1 at 6:00pm	Focus Group 8	8	3
Totals		69	34
*cancelled due to no attendance			

Demographics

Total responses = 32

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Race and Ethnic Identity		
Race	Percentage	Number
Black or African American	50%	16
White	13%	4
Hispanic or Latino	16%	9
Asian	9%	3
Native American or Alaska Native	0%	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	0
Other	0%	0

Gender Identity		
Gender	Percentage	Number
Female	66%	21
Male	31%	10
Non Binary/Third Gender	3%	1

Age		
Age	Percentage	Number
Under 18	13%	4
18-24	6%	2
25-34	6%	2
35-44	28%	9
45-54	25%	8
55-64	13%	4
65-74	6%	2

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75-84	3%	1
85 and older	0%	0

Zip Codes

Most frequent Zip Codes:

28078 (4)

28205 (3)

28216 (3)

Other Zip Codes:

28208 (2)

28209 (2)

28212 (2)

28215 (2)

28217 (2)

28262 (2)

28269 (2)

28270 (2)

28025 (1)

28203 (1)

28204 (1)

28213 (1)

28227 (1)

28278 (1)

Majority of participants (53%) were between the ages 35-54, about 22% were above the age of 55, and 4 participants were under the age of 18. The consultant shared the focus group registration link with Generation Nation, an organization focused on civic engagement for high school students.

Focus Group Discussion Questions

The consultant asked a total of 6 questions about travel experiences, desired transportation improvements, investment priorities, how the pandemic will shape future travel, and ongoing equitable engagement strategies.

1. What are some personal outcomes (positive or negative) of your daily travel experience?

Question 1 consensus: Access to walking, rail and bike lanes are not consistent throughout Charlotte and are experienced heavily in some neighborhoods but for longer

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trips, Charlotte residents mainly drive. Participants also noted an increase in traffic congestion, construction and aggressive driving in their daily travel.

- a. Several participants shared their frustration due to the amount of construction on Charlotte roads making it hard to navigate safely.
- b. 2 participants shared that they need to plan out trips ahead of time when using bikes and electric vehicles.
- c. 1 participant noted that growth is happening faster than the City can adjust to it right now.
- d. 1 participant stated that there are incomplete sidewalks during their morning commute so they had to walk in the tall grass.
- e. Several participants noted the lack of complete dedicated bike lanes along their entire commute. For example, some roads allow cyclists to share with cars while others have dedicated lanes that run out abruptly while some lanes in Uptown Charlotte are protected lanes.
- f. One participant shared that although they live right off the rail trail and can take their bikes and walk for small trips, when they leave areas like South End, there are not as many bike lanes or greenways.

2. What are the most important transportation improvements the City could make to improve how you are able to move around?

Question 2 consensus: There should be an increase in communication and awareness of transportation options and wayfinding resources for people to get around while driving, biking and/or walking. Improvements in connections between light rail, bus and last mile connections could make a difference in Charlotte commutes.

- a. One participant shared that there should be dedicated resources to serve special populations (ex: Limited English Proficient, youth, elderly, motorcyclists, bicyclists)
- b. Several participants shared that there should be more bike lanes and protected bike lanes.
- c. Several participants shared that there should be more seamless bus to light rail connections; last mile connections (FG 3)
- d. One participant share that there should be more access to jobs and entertainment in places ike Matthews and Fort Mill (FG 3)
- e. Several participants shared that increased communication like maps of routes for public transit and signage marking neighborhoods and greenways would help people get around when walking or bicycling.

3. Are you okay with less investment in some areas if it means that more investment goes to areas with the least access to safe & affordable transportation choices?

Question 3 consensus: Several participants shared that investing resources where they

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are most needed is the preferred decision.

- a. One participant shared that “we want to ensure that ALL people have access to transportation that fits their needs, especially in an economical fashion”.
- b. It’s important to ensure that the existing infrastructure for cars is well maintained so that people who rely on cars will not lose access to the transportation that fits their needs.
- c. One participant suggested that projects underway should have priority in terms of investment before new transportation investment decisions are made.
- d. Not every neighborhood in Charlotte has the same access to public transportation, grocery stores and coffee shops in walking or biking distance.
- e. Not everyone is able to move to more walkable neighborhoods so rather than expecting people to make these choices based on their financial situation, these options should be readily available to most of the neighbors.
- f. Yes, overwhelming yes.

4. Are you okay with less investment in infrastructure for cars if it means more investment in infrastructure for walking, biking, and transit?

Question 4 consensus: There should be equity in how the resources are shared. There was not an overwhelming yes or no for this question. The consensus notes a clear trade-off between car infrastructure and the infrastructure for walking, biking, and transit. However, the idea that Charlotte residents would be less reliant on cars if they had more access to other forms of transit emerged throughout the focus groups.

- a. A few participants shared that there should be some equity in how the resources are shared. There should be investment in both infrastructure for cars and other modes of transportation.
- b. One participant shared that Charlotte’s infrastructure is already working well for those in cars. Their concern was that if there is not equality in how the resources are shared, then those who have cars will suffer.
- c. There should be investment in areas where cyclists can move freely.
- d. Several people mentioned that investment in infrastructure for walking, biking, and transit is also environmentally friendly. There would be less vehicle use and emit less harmful gases.
- e. Several participants suggested a hybrid approach; cars can utilize the freeways and the major roads while the inner roads are more prioritized for walking, biking and transit.

5. How should our experience during the pandemic shape future transportation in Charlotte?

Question 5 consensus: During the pandemic, focus group participants found that they used alternative modes of transportation more often for a number of reasons like

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working from home more often, there were less cars on the road and they walked and biked in their neighborhoods more for recreation and exercise.

- a. Several participants noted that during the pandemic, they noticed a need for more bus routes, bicycle and motorcycle lanes, and parking for alternative modes of transportation, and more sidewalks and access to pedestrian crossing signals; especially for those who can not move as quickly when crossing streets or walking near moving traffic.
- b. Several participants suggested that there were less cars on the road and more people doing recreation. They noticed more people outside enjoying life.
- c. One participant suggested the city should have a plan to care for workers if a future pandemic were to happen. There should be support like work from home arrangements and support for parents.

6. How can the City of Charlotte create ongoing engagement experiences around the topic of equity?

Question 6 consensus: Provide more proactive engagement for projects in advance and get new people to the table through traditional marketing and engage with residents using a hybrid method of virtual and in person events.

- a. Several participants stated that they enjoyed the focus group and were appreciative of being able to give their feedback on transportation and mobility.
- b. Additionally, telephone polling would be a great option as many people may not have time to do a full meeting given their work schedules.
- c. Another option could be sending out a digital survey for people to complete on their own time.
- d. Provide more language options, interpretation services, sign language
- e. Involve children more often in community engagement and feedback while providing opportunities for childcare at events.
- f. Use more traditional marketing outlets like radio.

Participant Incentives	Rate (\$100)	Quantity	Total
Incentives sent on 6/28 and 7/2 to 33 total participants. One person participated twice but was only sent one incentive.	\$100	33	\$3,300

Compiled by Christine Edwards, Amplify Consulting
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