Racial Equity in Mobility Innovation: Case Study
As America comes to terms with its racist history, the City of Austin and Ford Mobility consider how mobility innovation can impact racial equity.

Starting with a brief history of mobility in Austin and an understanding of how racist policies shaped the city, the City of Austin’s Transportation Department and Equity Office, in collaboration with Ford Mobility’s City Solutions team, explore the lessons learned from their 2019 City:One Challenge program and its focus on “increasing access to healthy living and addressing racial equity with Austin’s Eastern Crescent.”
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Authors:
Hannah Barron – City of Austin Transportation Department
Christina Willingham – City of Austin Transportation Department
Kellee Coleman – City of Austin Equity Office
Joyce James – Joyce James Equity Consulting
Jack Gray – Ford Mobility, City Solutions

Advisors:
Jason JonMichael – City of Austin Transportation Department
Clarinda Barnett-Harrison – Ford Mobility, City Solutions
Katie Herbek – Ford Mobility, City Solutions
Aniela Kuzon – Ford Mobility, City Solutions

Contact:
cityone@ford.com
Introduction to Racial Equity in Mobility Innovation

As cities across the nation strive to create equitable communities, they must closely examine the racist foundation and structures on which their cities have likely been built. To that end, designing for equitable outcomes requires acknowledging our racist history; self-examination of our racial biases; and identifying institutionalized racism - followed by race-conscious, community-based action and intervention.

To realize an equitable future, agents-of-change need to recognize the complexity of equity work and intentionally build accountable relationships with those communities directly impacted by racist policies and practices.

As part of the journey to work towards equitable outcomes, the City of Austin engaged in the 2019 City:One Challenge (“Challenge”), hosted in collaboration with Ford Mobility. This program was launched to increase access to healthy living in Austin through a lens of racial equity. It was through the Austin Challenge that Ford Mobility, and Austin Transportation Department (“ATD”) staff, gained a better understanding of why it’s critical to consider racial equity in mobility innovation.

The Challenge was also an opportunity for ATD and Ford Mobility to explore the impact of racial equity and its complex influence on mobility and health outcomes with the City of Austin Equity Office and Austin Public Health.

This paper explores the complexities of racial equity work through experiences, learnings and insights of the 2019 Austin City:One Challenge.

This paper, and the programs that emerged after the Challenge, would not have been as impactful without the guidance and support of Christina Willingham from the City of Austin Transportation Department, Kellee Coleman from the City of Austin Equity Office, Jack Gray from Ford Mobility’s City Solutions, and Joyce James, a nationally recognized expert on addressing racial inequity, social justice, and system transformations.

Defining “Racial Equity”

We acknowledge there are many forms of inequity plaguing American cities today (e.g., for people with disabilities; for women; for the elderly; for the LGBTQ+ community), the City of Austin has focused on racial equity because of the way race has shaped the city and our society as a whole.

Formally, the City of Austin recognizes that racial equity is “the condition when race no longer predicts a person’s quality of life or outcomes in our community” with the understanding that currently, race is the most reliable indicator for a community’s quality of life outcomes1.

The City of Austin and Ford Mobility believe that taking corrective action through inclusionary practices is the only way to create a culture of equity - a culture where the historical systems and institutions that have contributed to racial inequity are no longer able to promote exclusionary practices and policies.

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1: The City of Austin Equity Office
A Brief history of racial discrimination in Austin, Texas and America

To understand racial inequity today, we must understand the role racism played in shaping American society in the past. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI issued the Doctrine of Discovery, empowering explorers like Christopher Columbus to “discover” and claim ownership of land and people, initiating and justifying a pattern of land acquisition and slavery that still resonates today.

It is essential to understand the long history that has brought us to reside on the land and acknowledge our place within that history.

Before the Declaration of Independence, the United States had an established history of racial policies, white supremacy, Native American genocide, and African enslavement. According to the United Nations, “more than 18 million people were forcefully removed from Africa to the Americas (including the Caribbean) and Europe”2. One of the first acts passed by the American Congress was the Nationality Act of 1790 also known as the Nationalization Act, which defined eligibility of citizenship only to free white males3, setting the foundation for persistent racial inequity in the very roots of America.

The state of Texas plays a unique role in the formation and perpetuation of American institutional racism4. It was in Texas where many Native and Indigenous peoples were hunted, detained, converted and colonized in successive waves5; followed by the assimilation of many Coahuiltecan and Lipan Apache with no treaties or recognition. On June 19, 1865, Texas was also one of the last states to learn of, and disseminate the news of, enslaved African peoples’ freedom following Abraham Lincoln’s signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and the closure of the American Civil War (note: this is commonly referred to as “Juneteenth”)6. Despite their newfound “freedoms,” people of color would continue to be murdered, lynched and harassed for decades to come.

Given this context, Austin’s history, like many other American cities, is laced with colonialism, systematic and systemic racism affecting community members in the present day.

Land Recognition

We wish to recognize and respect Native and Indigenous Peoples as the original stewards of the land, and the enduring relationship that exists between Native and Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory we reside on, and a way of honoring the Native and Indigenous Peoples who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to note, land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context. Colonialism is a current and ongoing process, and the City of Austin is mindful that we are participating in it by living on colonized land.

For Austin that means acknowledging with respect, that the land it resides on is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Tonkawa, the Apache, the Ysleta del sur Pueblo, the Lipan Apache Tribe, the Texas Band of Yaque Indians, the Coahuiltecan and all other tribes not explicitly stated.

Additionally, they pay respects to the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, the Kickapoo Tribe of Texas, Carrizo & Comecrgudo, Tigu Pueblo, Caddo, Comanche, Kiowa, Wichita, Chickasaw, Waco nations and all the Native and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas. It’s also important to note that not all Native and Indigenous peoples listed claim Texas as ancestral lands, as many were forcibly relocated to Texas from their ancestral homelands7.

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2: Slavery Remembrance Day // 3: The University of Texas at Austin Department of History 2019 Nationality Act of 1790 // 4: History of Texas, Bullock Museum // 5: Dallas News – What happened to Native American tribes in TX // 6: Juneteenth – Freedom Realized & Delayed // 7: Austin Land Acknowledgement drafted by Austin Office of Sustainability; Native American Indigenous Collective at UT; Great Promise for American Indians; Austin History Center; Austin Public Library; Society of Native Nations; Comanche Nation & Dallas Outreach; and Indigenous Cultures Institute
According to the 2018 Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, past “decisions related to transportation and land use policy and infrastructure have resulted in the exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination of communities of color.” One of Austin’s most influential racist land-use decisions was the 1928 Master Plan, adopted by an all-White, all-male Austin City Council.

This plan forced the segregation of Black residents to East Austin: any Black person who tried to settle outside of the designated “Negro District” was denied basic services like utilities, use of public space, and access to public schools.

Although this policy was written explicitly against Black people, other communities of color were impacted similarly. The Mexican community and Chinese community also suffered from a version of forced segregation. It is important to note that these decisions are not unique to Austin - they can be found in the foundation of many American cities.

Another lasting policy of discrimination against people of color is the Federal Highway Administration Act of 1956 that influenced the construction of the Austin MoPac Expressway (Loop 1) in the 1970s.

Like many inner-city highways built under the Federal Highway Administration Act of 1956, the Mopac Expressway was constructed through a historically black neighborhood, Clarksville, displacing nearly a third of the neighborhood’s homes.

This displacement forced many Clarksville residents to leave their childhood homes, thus stripping away both community and culture.

The forced displacement of black and brown communities from highway construction was made worse by housing segregation policies from the Federal Housing Administration. Commonly known as redlining, maps were developed to depict four levels of residential security. In Austin, the color red was given to areas, primarily in East Austin, where many low incomes and non-white Austinites lived. These red areas were deemed hazardous for mortgages and other financial services.

These discriminatory policies, enacted over 50 years ago, still impact health, housing, education and mobility today.

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8: For more information about the ways in which the 1956 Federal Highway Administration Act systematically destroyed black and brown communities - like Detroit’s Black Bottom and Paradise Valley - please visit this Vox article
9: Data map created by Ford Mobility’s Global Data Insights & Analytics team – if you have specific questions about the map, or the data sources referenced, please email cityone@ford.com
10: Austin Demographic Patterns & Redlining
To further illustrate Austin’s systemic disparities, the map below pinpoints healthy living data gathered during the 2019 Austin City:One Challenge, highlighting the drastic disparities of access to healthy living services and infrastructure (e.g., doctor’s offices, dentists, grocery stores, food banks) between east and west Austin.

While powerful on its own, the map further reinforces the correlation between the lack of access to health infrastructure and a shortened life-expectancy: East Austin residents, on average, live 4 years less than their West Austin peers\(^1\).

\(1^{11}\): Texas Health Maps

In recognition of these trends, Austin City Council committed to actionable change and passed a resolution to address racial inequity in 2015. Council directed the City Manager to evaluate the impact of existing city policies and practices and focus on advancing equity in all aspects of City operations. The Equity Office works with internal and external stakeholders to improve the quality of life for all Austinites.

The Equity Office is striving to achieve racial equity through a framework of normalizing, organizing, and operationalizing anti-racist public policy by dismantling racist institutional structures.

Actions taken by the Equity Office help City departments understand how their work may drive or address inequity. Their work has played a pivotal role in properly shaping the Austin City:One Challenge to support East Austin residents, and has helped Ford Mobility and City staff navigate the intersection of equity work within mobility innovation.
When the Austin Challenge launched in May 2019, the Black Lives Matter Movement was well underway, but had not gained the international recognition it is currently receiving following the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Since then, cities across the nation have been pressured to look at the complex issues around police violence and the idea of safety for black communities; the deep racial disparities exposed by the global pandemic caused by COVID-19; and most recently, the undermining of voter rights in several predominantly Black populated urban centers.

With 2020 as our backdrop, it has become clear that addressing racial inequity is an urgent need for every city with an inequitable foundation. The consistent emotional pain, toxic stress and loss of life that people of color experience is measurable through recent data related to health outcomes (e.g., prevalence of chronic disease).\(^\text{12}\)

Within this context, it is vital that cities and individuals acknowledge their role in the history and preservation of racial inequity, committing to dismantling systemic structures that reinforce disparity.

As signaled in 2014 by the Institute for Urban Policy and Research Analysis, “Austin was the only major city in the United States to experience a double-digit population growth rate while simultaneously seeing a decline in African-Americans. Moreover, African Americans were the only racial group in the city that did not see positive growth during that decade.”\(^\text{13}\) As black populations continue to leave Austin’s dense urban areas, many are moving further outside of the city to areas that lack access to critical resources like grocery stores, transit, and medical facilities — the combination of which are typical characteristics of gentrifying communities.

When the Austin Challenge team began meeting with local community stakeholders in May 2019, it became clear that taking a community-led approach to addressing healthcare and mobility in Austin’s Eastern Crescent with a racial equity lens would be a top priority. The Eastern Crescent, a moon shaped area that hugs the downtown business district and is land-locked by a network of highways (e.g., I-35), has been historically marginalized. This area of town lacks significant infrastructure needed to easily access healthy options for food, healthcare and recreation. In addition to a history of marginalization, the Eastern Crescent is now experiencing another transformation: wealthy, white residents are moving in, buying land, and changing the community culture.\(^\text{14}\) With these changes has come a shift in attention from the City, health systems, education infrastructure, signaling the same systems and institutions’ underlying racism.

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Black Mamas ATX acting as community panelists for the Austin Challenge
The City:One Challenge’s role in Austin’s equity journey

In the years following the 2015 establishment of the City of Austin Equity Office, the Austin Transportation Department embarked on its own journey to identify mobility experiences and solutions that would help address systemic racism and institutional inequity throughout Austin. At the same time, Ford Mobility was establishing the City Solutions team and the City:One Challenge; an innovation initiative that matches entrepreneurs with local communities to quickly develop and deploy new mobility solutions. In the City:One Challenge’s second year of operation, Ford Mobility and ATD began exploring a Challenge focused on increasing access to “healthy living” and the role of race in Austin’s Eastern Crescent.

Both ATD and Ford Mobility saw the City:One Challenge as an opportunity to put community-centered design at the heart of the mobility innovation process and build on the momentum established by the growing movements around environmental and design justice. The Challenge was designed to create a safe space for residents who experienced systemic racism and barriers in mobility to participate in the innovation process. Lastly, it was a unique opportunity for a public-private collaboration to elevate equitable mobility solutions.

With every City:One Challenge Ford Mobility hosts, the high-level goals are always the same: address mobility’s influence on equity, accessibility, sustainability and safety by meaningfully engaging local communities in the innovation process, resulting in the deployment of mobility pilots that are desirable to the community and city; viable and sustainable over time; and technically feasible.

Said differently, the City:One Challenge is designed to build lasting relationships with community members, who are subject matter experts through their lived experience, to co-design equitable mobility solutions.

While each Challenge strives for these overall goals, each Challenge host city has the opportunity to further hone the Challenge goals to their city’s specific needs (i.e., access to job corridors; safety for women and families in transit; reducing congestion and emissions). In Austin, the specific focus of the Challenge, as mentioned above, was “increasing access to healthy living” through the lens of racial equity.
Austin City:One Challenge experience and insights

City:One Challenge Overview
The City:One Challenge is broken into five phases over 18+ months: 1) Explore; 2) Propose; 3) Refine; 4) Select; and 5) Pilot. In this process, the Ford Mobility team works with the Challenge Hosts, typically a public transportation department or transit agency, to elevate the voices of community members and local residents in the mobility innovation process; all while engaging thousands of entrepreneurs to identify the mobility solutions that will fit the community and city best.

In this process, the Challenge blends grassroots community engagement with data science, design research and business strategy, all to ensure that the solutions are desirable to the community and city.

In addition, solutions must be viable and sustainable over time from a business perspective and technically feasible as noted above. At the end of the Austin Challenge process, two winners received $75,000 in funding to quickly pilot their solution in East Austin.

Over the last three years, City:One Challenges have taken place in Detroit, Pittsburgh, Miami-Dade County, Grand Rapids, Austin, Indianapolis, and Mexico City. During this time, the Challenge program has launched 12 pilots with nearly $1,000,000 in funding, including: PikMyKid, a comprehensive school safety, traffic and pick-up/drop-off solution; MX3, an e-bike taxi solution for families, disabled persons and cargo; and AbleLink, a transit wayfinding solution for people with cognitive impairments.
Austin Community Collaboration

With a focus on increasing access to healthy living and addressing racial equity, the Ford Mobility, ATD and Equity Office teams formed a diverse Steering Committee that would guide the Challenge towards its goals – this committee included: the Austin Transit Empowerment Fund, Austin Technology Incubator at the University of Texas, Capital City Innovation, Austin Tech Alliance, Central Health, Saint David’s Health, CommUnity Care, Austin Public Health, Austin Veteran’s Office, and the City of Austin Housing Authority (HACA). In addition to this Steering Committee, the Austin Challenge benefitted from grassroots community support from our local Community-Experience Design Lead, Michael Henderson, as well as the Austin Justice Coalition, Mama Sana Vibrant Women, Black Mamas ATX, Joyce James Equity Consulting and Meals on Wheels Central Texas.

Austin Challenge By-the-Numbers

With the support of the community organizations listed above – and the many individual participants who attended events, participated in interviews and provided feedback to proposals – the Austin Challenge was able to:

- Host 8,289 Austin Challenge Page Visitors
- Solicit 150 Pilot idea Submissions
- Engage 150+ Number of Community Workshop Participants
- Provide $150K in Pilot Funding
- Test 65,646 Number of “Healthy Living” Routes
- With 170 Online Comments & Posts
Austin Challenge Insights

Through the support and engagement from the East Austin community the Challenge was able to identify the following mobility barriers, patterns and opportunities:

• **Without the use of a personal vehicle, simple errands become time consuming and difficult**, especially for those with specific health and mobility needs (e.g., Ford Mobility data scientists estimate 71% of transit trips for expectant mothers moving from home-gynecologist-pharmacy in East Austin takes longer than 1 hour 15).

• One of the most significant barriers to accessing health and social services is a distrust and fear of the agency offering those services. **Specifically, people of color fear being taken advantage of, misunderstood, ostracized, disrespected or treated with indignity.** A general finding was that many people did not feel comfortable accepting public services (e.g., healthcare, bus passes) for fear of having their legal status or the status of family members threatened.

• **The availability of at home delivery services fell short of meeting needs for those with disabilities, the elderly, or others who are vulnerable to social isolation.** Several people expressed the importance of interacting with others through their own independent actions. Other barriers to delivery services include affordability; the inability to process payments for those receiving support through SNAP 16 and WIC 17; and those without traditional personal banking assets (i.e., “unbanked” populations) 18.

• **Incomplete sidewalk infrastructure and high car-traffic** makes it extremely difficult for East Austin residents to walk or bicycle to any healthy living infrastructure, even those resources that might be less than a half-mile away.

• **It is critical to establish support systems that help people stay healthy (physically and emotionally) through difficult times, especially when a family member has a health event or loses their primary mode of transportation.**

• **East Austin residents would greatly benefit from greater transparency into what healthy food and health-service options are available to them,** including: estimated costs, time restrictions and personal information requirements.

“**We pay nearly $100 for a round-trip accessible taxi for our doctors’ appointments at the [CommUnity Care] clinic.**”
- 1:1 Interview Participant

“My family only has one car. We are grateful that we have that car. It's nearing the end of its life and we are saving to buy another one when its time comes. We live in a neighborhood where many people don’t have cars.”
- Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, 2019 19

“Because of my transportation issues, I need to make sure I have a whole day cut out for my health appointments”
- 1:1 Interview Participant

“For hourly workers, time spent getting care is time they aren’t getting paid”
- CommUnity Care Interview

For a detailed copy of the 2019 Austin City:One Challenge “Explore Report,” please email cityone@ford.com

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15: Mobility simulation conducted by Ford Mobility’s Global Data Insights & Analytics team // 16: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program // 17: Women, Infants & Children’s health program // 18: Home delivery service availability has likely increased due to COVID-19 impacts // 19: Austin Strategic Mobility Plan
Racial equity in mobility innovation: lessons learned

The Ford Mobility and Austin Transportation Department teams believe the 2019 Austin City:One Challenge was an overall success: community members and local residents were meaningfully engaged to identify the systemic barriers and opportunities related to racial equity and increasing access to healthy living in Austin’s Eastern Crescent - leading to the successful solicitation of 150+ proposals - ending with the funding and deployment of Good Apple and Tappy Guide pilots. However, no success is without its learnings and recognition that a different approach could have been taken to achieve even better results. In the following section, those learnings and observations are detailed as a guide for those who might be embarking on their own “racial equity in mobility innovation” process.

Keys to Success:

1. Intentionally focusing on racial equity from the start:
Prior to 2020, it was far too easy to add “racial equity” to a list of project objectives to hopefully address, without putting in the specific, concerted effort to achieve it. In this, the Austin City:One Challenge was different. On the very first day of the project, Austin Transportation Department and Equity Office leaders – the Challenge hosts – made the focus explicitly clear, “Although we are looking at increasing access to healthy living, we need to focus on race and systemic racism. We need to be honest, open and transparent about it and its influence on mobility. We need to directly address it in this Challenge.” That explicit, intentional focus provided the foundation upon which everything else was built – it was the goal that could not be disregarded or compromised. If the Challenge did not address it, the Challenge would have failed.

2. Recognizing Austin’s challenges, context & history:
Although the City of Austin has certainly benefited from a growing reputation as one of America’s great innovation hubs in the 21st century, that reputation did not deter the team from recognizing the challenges, context and history of the City, much of which has been underpinned by a history of systemic and institutional racism (e.g., a 2015 University of Toronto’s Martin Prosperity Institute study listed Austin as the most economically segregated cities in the country 20). In explicitly recognizing this dichotomy, the Challenge team was able to better connect with community members and more clearly communicate the tensions, barriers, and distrust associated with addressing racial equity and healthy living access. As previously noted, Austin’s 1928 Master Plan still reverberates through institutional barriers to health, safety, and mobility – it was critical for the Challenge team to recognize that.

3. Normalizing discussion & solutioning for race, racism & systemic inequity:
Because the Austin Challenge explicitly identified race, institutional racism and systemic inequity as a focus, participants and stakeholders needed liberating, safe spaces to be transparent and forthcoming with their perspectives on race’s influence on mobility. This was particularly important for Challenge Finalists as they refined their solutions for East Austin’s specific needs and context. For example, Challenge Finalists were asked the following question during a racial equity training led by equity consultant Joyce James: "why is it important to undo institutional and structural racism in the East Austin community through the City:One Challenge?" This prompt, and the accompanying six hours of discussion, encouraged finalists to examine old attitudes, assumptions, and stereotypes of which they may not have been consciously aware. This self-examination, and safe space for open discussion, was a new experience for most entrepreneurs in the room, leading them to recognize and freely discuss entirely new mobility opportunities, barriers and solutions.
Racial Equity in Mobility Innovation | December 2020

Keys to Success: (continued)

4 Relying on - and respecting - community voices:
Although the City:One Challenge model fundamentally depends on the voices, perspectives and opinions of community members and local residents, the impact of those perspectives cannot be overstated for the Austin Challenge. The efficacy of building community perspective and context is credited to the residents who sat on discussion panels, individually interviewed in their homes, participated in solution-ideation discussions, and provided online feedback to the Challenge finalists. It should also be noted that the Challenge team treated the residents as subject matter experts, and paid them as such, signaling that their lived experience was just as worthy of being heard as any other scholar or professional. As a result, the Austin Challenge was able to guide all stakeholders – the City, Ford Mobility, Challenge Steering Committee, and more – to the pain points, barriers and opportunities that mattered most. Without insights from people like Ruiz21 - a recent Mexican immigrant, lawyer, visually impaired, loving father - the Challenge team would have never known the pure joy of hearing children’s voices as they run through a grocery store, the emotional impact those sounds could have on a person experiencing social isolation, and the importance of a mobility system that could easily get Ruiz to-and-from that experience.

5 Prioritizing equity while judging solution proposals:
Although every City:One Challenge has many variables upon which solution proposals are judged, a differentiating factor for the Austin Challenge was prioritizing racial equity as a key metric. The judging panel was fortunate to have many compelling proposals, sourced from Austin, the United States, and around the world, but those that had the most success were those that prioritized equity. These solutions, such as Good Apple and Tappy Guide, took a hard look at their proposals and found ways to fundamentally incorporate racial equity into their business models, customer experiences, and team operations (e.g., deploying services to specific census blocks with low transit access or hiring from historically black colleges). It should be noted that not every proposal, nor every finalist, was able to fundamentally consider equity in their solution, but those that did, found success.

Difficult Moments & Lessons Learned:

6 Building a common equity skill-set:
Although the Challenge focused on racial equity from the first day of the project, and the Ford Mobility and ATD teams had some experience working in racial equity, it would have been ideal to level-set on equity-based principles for the Challenge before it was officially launched. If there had been a common set of equity-based principles and training, the Challenge team and key stakeholders would have developed a common understanding and nomenclature, as well as practices that would enable more seamless navigation of sensitive moments throughout the Challenge.

21: Changed his name to protect his personal identity
Difficult Moments & Lessons Learned: (continued)

**Being transparent with the Austin Challenge’s own limitations:**
Throughout the Austin Challenge experience, there were moments when community members and mobility stakeholders highlighted opportunities and barriers that were beyond the immediate scope of the Challenge (e.g., housing and land-use policy). In these moments, it was important to ensure these residents and stakeholders that they were heard and respected, while simultaneously communicating that the Challenge was not necessarily going to be able to solve those issues immediately. At the end of the process, the Challenge was only able to distribute $150,000 to the winners – certainly a lot of money, but not enough to immediately, fundamentally shift systemic barriers and institutional inequities (e.g., the Challenge is unable to lay 100 miles of new sidewalk). These moments can be strenuous, and can sow doubt in the direction of the project (i.e., “are we solving for the right thing?”), which is why the Challenge team was grateful to always come back to the strong foundation of the Challenge focus area: increasing access to healthy living while addressing racial equity in Austin’s Eastern Crescent. Staying grounded to this foundation ensured that the Challenge stayed true to the direction the team knew to be impactful, no matter the scale.

**Balancing equity with desirability, viability, sustainability & feasibility:**
As the Challenge Steering Committee guided the direction of the Challenge through the five phases of work, there were moments when prioritizing equity would come into conflict with prioritizing the business viability of solutions. It was critical in these moments to recognize the different priorities, experiences, and perspectives of Steering Committee members, and hold space to explore the tensions. In the active process of acknowledging and reflecting on the importance of transparently discussing the benefits to equity and viability, the Steering Committee was able to find common ground. If the Challenge team had not given proper consideration to the strategic tensions as they arose, the prioritization of equity would have likely failed. Because equity-based work is relatively new for many teams, it is even more important to progress carefully, thoughtfully, and to continue to build transparency, communication and trust throughout the process.

**Recognizing that not everyone will see race as a determining factor:**
As the Black Lives Matter Movement has highlighted in 2020, not every American has an understanding of how race is a determining factor for the outcomes of individuals and their communities. However, it was incumbent upon the Challenge team to develop engagement tactics that were inclusive of the entire East Austin community, even those with varying levels of awareness around racial inequity. This created inevitable tension amongst the team and other Challenge participants, but was critical to the Challenge serving as an opportunity to aid in learning, shift perspectives and foster community healing.
Benefits to public-private collaboration to address racial equity:

10 Ability to test early and inexpensively with pilot projects:
Collaboration with the private sector allowed the City of Austin to test solutions much faster and cheaper than they would have otherwise. By working with Ford Mobility and the Challenge Finalists, ATD was able to immediately bring small-scale mobility pilots to market in a way that would test racial equity hypotheses and solutions, all while distributing the financial, social and political risks among the Challenge stakeholders.

11 Changing the trust-equation with communities:
As noted in the Challenge insights, many East Austin residents distrust the City of Austin and other large organizations after generations of institutional racism and systemic inequity. By collaborating with Ford Mobility, the City was able to bring in a neutral party to facilitate honest conversations and create safe spaces for residents to share perspectives and insights with City staff. In doing so, the trust-equation shifted just enough for creativity, honesty and transparency to shine.

12 Leveraging different areas of expertise:
Each member of the Challenge team was able to bring something different to the experience: without the support of the Austin Equity Office and Joyce James, the Ford Mobility Challenge team would not have had a thorough understanding of race, and its impact on health, education, housing, and other social outcomes in East Austin; and without the Ford Mobility team, the City of Austin would not have had the data science and community insights to highlight unique opportunities for mobility interventions. The collaborative nature of City:One Challenge allowed each group to leverage and share their own strengths, while being honest and transparent about their gaps in knowledge, allowing for the collective team to thrive.

13 Preparing for times of crisis:
As COVID-19 began to ravage black and brown communities in Austin during Spring 2019, ATD was able to quickly reallocate resources to deploy the Austin Challenge Winner, Good Apple, to deliver over 720,000lbs of food boxes to their community members in need. Thanks to the Challenge’s collaborative process, and Ford Mobility’s support, ATD was able to confidently establish an emergency response program in a matter of days - knowing that Good Apple had the community focus and equitable solution required for the emergency.

Conclusion and principles for equitable systems change

Although the systemic inequities driven by race and institutional racism in Austin, or any other American city, will not be eradicated by a 10-month City:One Challenge, we are tremendously proud of the momentum established by the Challenge and other equity efforts in mobility. Without collaborative mobility innovation between the public and private sector and the willingness to work with communities who are most impacted, we will not be able to make improvements, shift perceptions, challenge assumptions, and eradicate stereotypes.

It is the belief of the City of Austin, Ford Mobility, Joyce James and many others that the freedom of movement is fundamental to human progress, and it is more critical than ever to address the equity barriers that impede upon that progress.

Principles for equitable systems change:

Awareness

- Recognize that racism and racial inequity is not simply due to a few “bad apples” - racial injustice can thrive without individual acts of overt racism.
- Assume those who are perpetuating inequitable systems and institutions are doing so unintentionally without recognizing their own implicit biases and racial assumptions.
- Know the history of your community, organization or institution to better identify and understand the structures and patterns of racial inequity, discrimination and injustice.

Action

- Change the narrative of self-improvement - it should not solely rest upon the oppressed, but also upon white allies and the systems and institutions themselves.
- Require individual and organizational accountability for creating an actively anti-racist culture built on vulnerability, trust and a willingness to learn.
- Collect and disaggregate race-based data to highlight the ways in which institutional inequity persists, while also tracking the effectiveness of racial interventions.
- Lead with community voices, and their allies, to elevate the specific needs and lived experiences of those who have experienced systemic and institutional inequity.
Additional resources

To learn more about the City of Austin, Ford Mobility, or racial equity in mobility innovation, please visit these resources:

**The City of Austin - History, Context & Equity Resources:**
- The City of Austin Transportation Department
- The City of Austin Equity Office
- The City of Austin Equity Office - “Equity Action Team” Resources
- Joyce James Racial Equity Consulting
- The Uprooted [Gentrification] Project
- Ron Chisom & The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond
- Laurier Students’ Public Interest Research Group - Know the Land
- The University of Texas, Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis: Those Who Left Austin
- Smithsonian’s 158 Resources to Understand Systemic Racism in America

**Ford Mobility - City:One Challenge:**
- City Talks Podcast: Racial Equity Through Transportation with the City of Austin
- Ford Mobility, City:One Challenge
- City:One Challenge 2019 Overview
- Ford City of Tomorrow