



# Fresno's Active Transportation Plan

Residents achieve win to create greater equity in Fresno's Active Transportation Plan

## SUMMARY

When Southeast Fresno residents began to realize that there were little investments in parks, bike lanes, or walking paths in their community, they decided to take action. In Southeast and Southwest Fresno combined, the acres of park space per 1,000 residents was 1.02, compared to North Fresno with greater than four times that amount. Even more inequities existed when you looked at the number of bike lanes and trails in North vs. South Fresno. In 2016, Fresno's Active Transportation Plan (ATP) was a timely opportunity for Southeast Fresno residents to address inequities in their community and prioritize projects that promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles. As a result of strong community engagement, the Fresno City Council adopted a final plan in March 2017 which included a new equity rubric to meet the needs of underserved areas, like Southeast and Southwest Fresno.

## LEAD AGENCY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Cultiva La Salud, along with their key partner Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (Leadership Counsel), played a leading role in engaging Southeast Fresno residents around the ATP, and was instrumental in holding educational meetings with elected officials to discuss challenges and potential solutions for the Plan.

## DRIVERS

Due to the growing Latino population, long history of poverty, and lack of investment, Southeast Fresno was chosen in 2015 as a target area for Cultiva La Salud's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, a Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded program. Over the past few years, Cultiva worked closely to engage residents and help strengthen their capacity to be leaders in creating healthier communities. Resident-led activities, such as bike rides, bike safety clinics, alley clean up days, walking groups, safe routes to school trainings, and informational policy meetings, served as the initial phases of advancing opportunities for active transportation in Southeast Fresno.



## ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The release of the ATP spurred a lot of community interest, and Cultiva and Leadership Counsel played leading roles in engaging Southeast Fresno residents to participate in the input process. Community workshops, hosted by Cultiva and Leadership Counsel, were organized to educate residents about the plan and ensure that residents could be involved in informing active transportation challenges and improvements. Residents identified clear disparities, and Cultiva and Leadership Counsel presented opportunities for the draft plan to address equity, gaps in existing infrastructure, and policy language that prioritizes neighborhoods of most need.

As part of the engagement process, Cultiva and Leadership Counsel worked collaboratively with city staff and City Council members to inform them on how the plan would impact Latino residents and other residents in South Fresno. Cultiva used a tool called [LiveStories](#), a combination of storytelling and local data, to engage communities, promote data-driven decision making, and

to further highlight the issues around the ATP for Latinos in Fresno. During these talks, Cultiva and Leadership Counsel also introduced the use of an equity rubric to address how projects would be prioritized. Local advocates championed the development of the equity rubric, which was similar to a tool developed in the city of Rancho Cucamonga, and city staff adapted this rubric.

Community input was used to determine key prioritization areas for Fresno's ATP equity rubric helping establish a fair scoring process based on the following criteria: access and equity (30 pts), connectivity (35 pts), and traffic control, mode shift and user comfort (35 pts). During community engagement opportunities, Latino residents also identified leading issues for the community, such as safe routes to schools, and highlighted the importance of prioritizing areas surrounding schools, high density pedestrian and bicycle traffic areas, and the need to invest in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods throughout Fresno. All of these areas are now included in the equity rubric.



# ENGAGE RESIDENTS AND HELP STRENGTHEN THEIR CAPACITY TO BE LEADERS IN CREATING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

## HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND/OR CLIMATE IMPACT AREA

Residents in Southeast Fresno struggle with obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases. Due to the lack of investment in parks, walking paths, bicycle lanes, and other modes of active transportation, residents within Southeast Fresno have limited opportunities to engage in physical activity, which is critically important to their health and well-being. This lack of opportunities for active transportation and the alarming rates of chronic illnesses impact the life expectancy of residents who live in Southeast Fresno. Additionally, reliance and the use of vehicles for transportation increases air pollution and contributes to climate change. The ATP, with the adoption of the equity rubric, allows the city to advance projects in an equitable way, and has the potential to improve the health of all Fresno residents by increasing a network that supports walking and biking, while also mitigating climate change impacts.

## FUNDING SOURCE

As mentioned above, funding is through Cultiva La Salud's Racial Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program. REACH is a national program funded by the CDC that aims to reduce ethnic and cultural disparities in health. CDC awards a variety of agencies nationally with the REACH program allowing them to develop community based programs and interventions.

## RESEARCH AND DATA

Data was gathered by Southeast Fresno residents who participated in community-led events and meetings. During meetings in Southeast Fresno, residents were asked the following key questions: 1) What are the challenges to active transportation in your community? 2) What are the improvements you would like to see to support active transportation – walking, biking, and public transportation? This qualitative data from these meetings was captured by Cultiva and Leadership Counsel and shared back with city staff to help inform ATP updates. Additionally, residents took part in community led events such as Cumbia Rides, group bike rides where Latino residents met routinely to bike in Southeast Fresno and learn about bike safety while listening to traditional Cumbia music, and Pasos a la Salud, walking groups for residents who could not join the ride. On the routes, residents observed streets without bike lanes, narrow roads, loose dogs, poorly maintained roads, and dirt paths for sidewalks. Data gathered from residents at these events indicated the following themes: loose dogs, limited or dilapidated infrastructure, safety, driver behavior, and limited bicycle and pedestrian education. This data obtained during these events proved to be valuable in identifying the barriers and assets to walking and biking, and later used to inform policies such as the ATP.

## CHALLENGES

Fresno's ability to be competitive and fund active transportation projects was a concern. To address this concern, Cultiva and Leadership Counsel helped inform the city on how an equity rubric could be used to identify projects which meet guidelines and requirements and would improve access to active transportation in an equitable way.

## OUTCOMES

In order to help address the concerns of Southeast Fresno residents, Cultiva was successful in identifying an equity rubric used in Rancho Cucamonga and modified for Southeast Fresno. City staff moved forward with a point-based-priority-matrix similar to Rancho Cucamonga, but tailored, through community engage-

ment, to meet the needs of Fresno.

Additionally, Cultiva, Leadership Counsel, and the residents crafted a written response to the city's proposed matrix to ensure that the matrix was more equitable by removing barriers that place communities in South Fresno at a further disadvantage, especially those that fall within the following categories: close proximity to parks, key destinations, existing infrastructure, and right of way acquisition. Advocates worried that these categories within the city's matrix would create barriers for South Fresno due to limited park space, limited key destinations, and limited infrastructure as a result of old neighborhoods and historical planning issues. The equity rubric shared by Cultiva and Leadership Counsel, proposed to identify priority

projects based on future funding. Having a completed ATP and the equity rubric to help prioritize projects, demonstrates that these projects are shovel-ready when funding is available. Additionally, if fully implemented the ATP would triple the network of bike lanes and paths in Fresno making it safer and easier for all residents of Fresno to lead healthier lifestyles.

Overall, Cultiva, along with partners and residents, was successful in advancing community-led change which promotes equitable investments in active transportation across the city of Fresno. Through strong partnerships, effective community engagement, and stakeholder education, Cultiva was able to advance policy which prioritizes neighborhoods that historically have not had the investment needed to make improvements and had limited opportunities for active transportation.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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