RECOMMENDATIONS

• Train police officers and bus drivers on cultural competency; work to eliminate homophobia and transphobia.

• Enhance safety on buses by empowering bus drivers to address harassment.

• Address infrastructure issues, such as lighting on busy roads and bike paths.

• Improve lighting at bus shelters, and increase the number of enclosed bus shelters.

• Address the timeliness of high-traffic urban bus routes to reduce wait times in unsafe environments.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Residents cited fears related to sexual violence, mugging, gender- and sexuality-based hate crimes, and general fears related to the management of large crowds (particularly intoxicated crowds). Residents also specified concerns about poorly lit roads and bike routes (such as Chicago Avenue), the lack of well-lit and/or enclosed bus shelters (especially in North Minneapolis), and the general timeliness of high-traffic urban bus routes.

Participants expressed a lack of confidence in the ability of police officers and bus drivers to address these barriers to active commuting. In fact, participants cited a lack of cultural competence as an additional source of concern, noting incidents of homophobia and transphobia perpetrated by those in authority.
A convening was held for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual, Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming/Two-Spirit Native Americans/People of Color. The convening attracted more than 55 participants who represented a wide variety of age groups, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. The convening/listening session was especially designed to be a safe space for POC (people of color) whose intersectional identities and experiences of racism, homophobia and transphobia elicited responses, thoughts and ideas that are rarely taken into account by policy making bodies, especially those that are designed to address issues related to public safety of all forms within the built environment. The convening was coordinated by Joo Hee Pomplun, from the Health Equity Working Committee and was funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield. The University of Minnesota Program in Health Disparities provided technical support.

MEETING LOCATION: CAFE SOUTHSIDE, 3405 CHICAGO AVENUE SOUTH, MINNEAPOLIS
MEETING DATE: MARCH 25, 2014

NOTES FROM THE MEETING

Pedestrian Safety Concerns

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS
Participants cited concerns related to the lack of enough bus shelters that are well-lit during evening hours, the lack of enclosed bus shelters (particularly North Minneapolis), the need for well-lit roads (especially those with bike paths) and the general timeliness of urban high-traffic bus routes.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Participants expressed an overwhelmingly strong need for better street lighting and well-maintained bus stops, particularly on busy routes like Chicago, Park, Portland, and Franklin Avenues.

Crime Related Concerns

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS
Residents cited fears related to sexual violence (particularly poorly lit routes like Chicago Avenue), fears related to mugging, fears related to gender- and sexuality-based hate crimes, and general fears related to the management of large crowds, such as large intoxicated crowds celebrating Saint Patrick’s Day. While participants cited the above mentioned concerns as mitigators of active living, they expressed very little confidence in the ability of peace/police officers to avert said mitigants. In fact, participants cited the lack of enough cultural competence and homophobia/transphobia perpetrated by area police officers as a source of fear and as a mitigant of physical activity/active living in of itself. Participants also expressed strong concerns related to the repeated profiling of trans-feminine individuals as sex workers from Minneapolis and Saint Paul police officers.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
A recurrent theme throughout the listening session centered on participants’ expressed needs around a more enhanced metro-transit bus experience, particularly related to long-standing issues like on-route homophobic/transphobic harassment and intoxication. Participants expressed a strong need for culturally competent peace/police officers with a strong emphasis on the recruitment of police officers who are not only culturally competent but ones who reflected the racial and ethnic identities of the communities they serve. Participants also cited concerns related to public safety, particularly around bar closing times; participants cited harassment from rowdy and belligerent bar patrons as they waited for buses in the downtown region. Participants cited a need for consistent and open communication between public safety agencies (particularly the police department) and the community organizations that serve queer/trans/POC community led organizations. Residents also cited needs around policies that are designed to reduce gun violence.

Education, Socioeconomic and Other Related Concerns

PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS
Some residents cited the inability of Metro transit bus drivers in maintaining respectful bus environments. Some residents cited homeless youth who attempt to ride buses throughout the night as a form of shelter as a concern that needs to be addressed. Residents also cited rampant intoxication and belligerent behaviors at bus stops. Some residents also cited the complications of small business shop owners in allowing the entrance of their shops and their sidewalks as avenues where drug dealing happens.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Residents expressed larger overriding concerns related to rampant systemic racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism and classism that seem to permeate most organizational hierarchies and our society in general. Residents were particularly interested in capitalizing on their power as a voting block in an effort to better advocate for the needs of their communities. Residents acknowledged a greater need for inter-community organizing.

Assets/Knowledge of Community Resources

When participants were asked about assets/community resources, their answers centered around organizations that are designed to work with and advocate for the needs of sexual identity, racial and gender minorities like Shades of Yellow, Trans youth Support Network and community spaces that were predominately frequented by Transgender/Two Spirit Persons of Color like Cafe SouthSide (34th and Chicago Avenue). Participants also cited their respective families and pre-existing social networks as protective assets.