



The Mobility Fund | 2020 Round 1 Impacts and Lessons

Background. The Mobility Fund, a project of [Global Philanthropy Partnership](#) (GPP), launched a pilot funding opportunity in 2020. This fund supports community-based advocacy around sustainable and equitable mobility with a long-term goal of increasing access to and use of active transportation modes and public transit. The first round of awards went to eight mobility advocacy groups in support of operational and collaborative work during the coronavirus pandemic.

Impacts. The Fund's pilot round funded \$351,500 to advance equitable mobility access and use in communities. Thus far, \$674,933 has been leveraged in additional funds,¹ producing a 192% return on the Mobility Fund's initial investment.

All eight teams reported success in their work. Key outcomes from 2020 award recipients are:

Boston Cyclists Union - Advancing Boston's Sustainable Transportation Plan

- Added a record 6.5 miles of permanent, protected bike lanes in 2020 through advocacy campaigns
- Expanded safety changes to include two arterials in majority-minority neighborhoods through organizing and feedback from local residents
- Deepened partnerships with both local mobility and priority community groups to align and advance shared interest

East Metro Strong - Support Mobility Through Transit + Carshare

- Developed sharable marketing materials² to promote the use of local transit and carshare services together
- Tripled community sign-ups for HourCar, a local nonprofit carshare organization, through the transit plus carshare campaign
- Facilitated a data sharing agreement between the local Metro Transit and HourCar that is expected to increase co-marketing efforts

LINK Houston - Seeking Houston's Shift to Equitable Transportation

- Shifted to virtual community engagement to continue to understand community needs, share data, and equip residents with the tools and knowledge they need to effect change in their neighborhoods
- Continued a years-long advocacy campaign to stop a Texas Department of Transportation highway expansion project routed through priority communities that would displace thousands of people's homes and jobs. In 2020, the federal government launched a Civil Rights Act Title VI investigation and Harris County, TX filed a lawsuit against the expansion project in response to continued advocacy campaigns

Our Streets Minneapolis/Move MN - Minnesota's Climate-Sustainable and Equitable Transportation Pathway

- Initiated a coalition building campaign that centered on co-creation and shared values rather than top-down decision making

¹ At the time of grant completion, grantees reported any funds obtained in addition to the 1:1 Mobility Fund award plus the local funder match that were / are being used for the work.

² Available upon request. Please contact [Liz Holliday](#) for more information.



- Launched a County Streets for People campaign to advance sustainable transportation and reduce vehicle miles travelled
- Hired staff to increase capacity for coalition work

Ride New Orleans - Equitable Transit for COVID and Beyond

- Mobilized community members to ensure that an RTA New Links proposal will double the percentages of communities of color, low-to-moderate income communities, and carless households have access to frequent transit when implemented
- Created a model for a more inclusive planning process by bringing five diverse community partners in at a key time, ensuring that conversations and outputs would be driven by the needs of actual transit reliant residents
- Worked directly with the affected residents and priority group staff to develop persuasive messages to deliver to decision makers. This helped each group better develop and use advocacy skills, preparing individuals to directly impact policy as opposed to relying on professional advocates and planners

San Francisco Bicycle Coalition - Creating Safe Streets in the Tenderloin

- Launched the Tenderloin Community Alternatives to Policing (TLCAP) campaign to engage residents and both educate and solicit feedback in order to develop non-police, community-based alternatives to traditional traffic enforcement
- Won approvals for a 20 mph and No Turn on Red policy which included the recommendations from the TLCAP outreach
- Advocated for the approval of two “quick-build” projects that were constructed in May 2021 and permanently designed streets for increased pedestrian and bicycle safety

Transportation Alternatives - Avoiding Carmageddon in New York City

- Focused on activist training and organizing to ensure the City did not cancel Open Streets in the winter. Due to advocacy efforts, the City committed to make Open Streets permanent which secured 100 miles of car-free, multi-use streets across the City
- Grew the Open Streets Coalition to 148 members
- Released an original report on bike parking which sparked robust public discourse. By February, DOT promised to increase bike rack installation to 10,000 additional racks by the end of 2022
- Advocated for the creation of “self-enforcing streets” that rely on street design and automated enforcement rather than NYPD officers to ensure that systems and infrastructure carry no biases that may lead to police harassment or violence, especially for communities of color. In March, the New York City Council voted to officially move traffic enforcement responsibilities from the NYPD to DOT – a major step forward in bringing equity to traffic enforcement

Transportation Choices Coalition - Coalition Building for a Transit-Oriented Recovery

- Built a strong, active coalition across sectors in the State of Washington through 50 weekly virtual convenings that focused on collaborating and mobilizing with common principles and values
- Adapted for accessibility. Adjusted meeting and notes format to accommodate accessibility and other requests
- Published a COVID Recovery Framework shaped by partners to ensure a transit-oriented recovery across the Puget Sound region, Eastern Washington, and state-wide



Lessons Learned. Grantees were asked to reflect on the grant process and share advice for those who continue this type of work. The following compiles this advice into 3 topics: community engagement, internal capacity building, and partnership building.

Community Engagement Lessons

- Community engagement is always needed. Though we wanted to move quickly and had ambitious goals, we also believed progress should be achieved with residents leading the vision. We had many conversations with partners about the appropriate balance of pushing for rapid changes, and the importance of residents in Black and brown neighborhoods being the decision-makers about the future of their streets. It has backfired in the past when transportation advocates or urban planners get out ahead of residents in asking for changes. We know that if we build trust and listen to residents, we will be more likely to win street improvements than if we push for changes without that resident leadership.
- Weather really impacts the ability to do on the ground canvassing. Outreach should be focused on spring/summer when most people are riding.
- Storytelling is as an important strategy to humanize the people who use our streets and share different perspectives and voices. Collecting and preparing stories to publish actually takes a LOT of work so plan accordingly.
- Remote/digital engagement is possible, but takes work: When we started, we were especially concerned that the COVID-19-dictated digital outreach process would put marginalized communities at a particular disadvantage. While digital outreach as the default is not ideal for any community, we learned that it is possible to engage marginalized communities meaningfully over a digital medium – as evidence by the series of in depth and engaging conversations we had over the Zoom platform. But these conversations didn't just happen – the subgrantees made them happen through their connections and familiarity with their communities and their ability to assist their members with technical limitations. So, this type of outreach is possible, but it takes supportive partners who are familiar with their communities.
- Take time to meet people where they're at. While the virtual survey was helpful, nothing could replace conversations with people on the street.

Internal Capacity Building Lessons

- Hiring stipended outreach workers for shorter periods of time is more successful than longer periods. Since these were temporary, part-time positions, two people hired into 6-month roles left early for full-time work. On the flip side, organizers we hired for 6-week stints could have accomplished more had we kept them on a bit longer. The sweet spot would have been 8-12 weeks, so it doesn't feel rushed, but also so people can be confident that they can commit the time.
- To grow, and serve more people, nonprofit organizations need what any consumer-facing organization needs: for more people to know about it.
- A well-funded, well-designed campaign can bring in substantial numbers of new participants, i.e., investing in advertising works.



- It is important to organize campaigns during a period of overlapping crisis (health, racial, social) that optimize specific strengths, connect with local needs, and empower residents to be advocates.
- Double down on the strengths of your organization. We learned the importance of flexible grassroots mutual aid efforts based on our unique ability to activate the cycling community in the city.
- Utilize data to drive forward impactful advocacy. We expanded our capacity in 2020 by adding a research director to our team. This has allowed us to conduct detailed policy analysis, produce original reports, and create databases for staff and partners to use for advocacy and rapid response communications. Investing in our data and research operations has strengthened our role as a thought leader and enabled us to step up as a community resource for other advocates.
- Traditionally white and well-resourced organizations can't rush people past the healing and urgent community work that needs to happen on-the-ground or through the trust-building process that will lead to the best long-term outcomes. We have to invest in transformational, not transactional relationships.

Partnership Building Lessons

- Developing survey questions that all partner organizations could come to consensus on took a lot longer than expected. And in the end, people still had concerns that the survey was too long and not focused enough. It would be helpful to have training for our organization and partners on scientific survey methods and how to ask the right questions, or to have a resource with that expertise to steer our surveys."
- Small non-profits have limited capacity that can make it hard or impossible to do things they want to do and are offered funding to do. Small Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have trouble increasing capacity to respond to new opportunities.
- Lessons from convening partners:
 - Scheduling that works for everyone can be a challenge. To deal with this, we picked a day and time that worked for us but structure the meeting so individuals can join at any time.
 - Cover the high-level takeaways in the call, focus on hearing from partners, and send details in the follow up notes.
 - To engage folks when there is a lot of info to share, try different facilitation methods - multiple presenters, asking people to speak directly on their initiatives, post-it note exercises, mentimeter polls, and surveys on how to improve the call.
 - Some people are more willing to speak than others, in a way that can take time, space, and opportunity from others. Provide direct feedback to participants as needed in the spirit of relationship building and racial equity.
 - Clarify that many organizations on a call are 501c3s so time cannot be used to discuss political races.
 - Understand that attendees can shift as topics evolve, and that is okay.
- Effectively building a broad-based coalition can influence political will during a major period of political transition. A key to a campaign's success is a robust lineup of listening sessions, voter



polling, meetings with electeds (current and hopeful), intersectional coalition partner engagement, and the creation of multimedia advocacy resources.

- While a lot of people are curious about alternatives to existing transportation challenges, many don't have a lot of ideas about what those alternatives could look like. More work needs to be done in educating the public about what alternatives exist and what needs to be done to be able to create community-based solutions from scratch.
- Eliciting leadership commitments from elected officials and cooperation from City government helps build advocacy work into existing initiatives and implement proposed outcomes sooner.
- Relational work always takes longer than you think it will. The effects of the pandemic further slowed processes because of the inability to meet people in person, field-wide capacity challenges, and community organizations being burnt out and wary of joining a new, multi-year effort.