

**NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
(NEPA MPO)**

**2021-2024 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAM (TIP)**

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
BENEFITS AND BURDENS SUMMARY**

Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Environmental Justice - Benefits and Burdens Summary for 2021-2024 TIP Update

INTRODUCTION

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA), in conjunction with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization (NEPA MPO) Technical Planning Committee and Policy Board, has developed an Environmental Justice (EJ) policy as part of its Long Range Transportation Plan.

It is the NEPA MPO's objective to:

- Ensure that the level and quality of transportation planning and related activities are conducted without regard to race, color, disability, gender, age, low income, national origin, language or limited-English proficiency;
- Identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects of the MPO's programs and activities on minority populations and low-income populations;
- Promote the full and fair participation of all affected populations in transportation decision-making;
- Prevent the denial, reduction or delay in benefits related to programs and activities that benefit minority populations or low-income populations;
- Ensure meaningful access to programs and activities by persons with Limited-English Proficiency (LEP).

BACKGROUND

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA), as a Local Development District (LDD), encompasses all of Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne Counties. NEPA is also designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization serving as the coordinating agency for transportation planning and programming in Carbon, Monroe, Pike, and Schuylkill counties. Since 1991, the Alliance has had an annual work program with PennDOT. This work program requires that NEPA convene a transportation planning committee on a regular basis. This committee has evolved over the years into Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Planning Committee and Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board.

The NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee is comprised of sixteen (16) voting members that include two (2) representatives from each of the four MPO counties, three (3) transit representatives, a representative from the Urbanized Area, the planning and programming engineer from PennDOT Districts 4-0 and 5-0, a PennDOT Central Office representative, and a representative from NEPA. The NEPA MPO Policy Board is comprised of 5 voting members that include one representative from each of the four MPO counties, appointed by the NEPA Alliance Board of Directors and a transportation professional from PennDOT Central Office. The NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee and NEPA MPO Policy Board are guided by Operational Procedures, which were adopted in October 2013.

The NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee and NEPA MPO Policy Board review the area's TIP, which is the primary funding source for the counties' highway and bridge projects, and transit system improvements. Through the TIP, transportation projects are identified and advanced to provide for the restoration and development of a multi-modal transportation infrastructure, which supports economic development by creating a safer and more efficient travel environment for the movement of people and goods.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE BENEFITS AND BURDENS ANALYSIS

In 2020, the NEPA MPO adopted its second Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). In development of the LRTP, the NEPA MPO conducted an Environmental Justice Benefits and Burdens analysis. A distributive geographic analysis was conducted to identify the locations and concentrations of minority, low-income and other Traditionally Underserved Populations (TUP).

The identification of these populations is essential to establishing effective strategies for engaging them in the transportation planning process. When meaningful opportunities for interaction are established, the transportation planning process can effectively draw upon the perspectives of communities to identify existing transportation needs, localized deficiencies, and the demand for transportation services. Mapping of these populations not only provides a baseline for assessing impacts of the transportation investment program, but also aids in the development of an effective public involvement program.

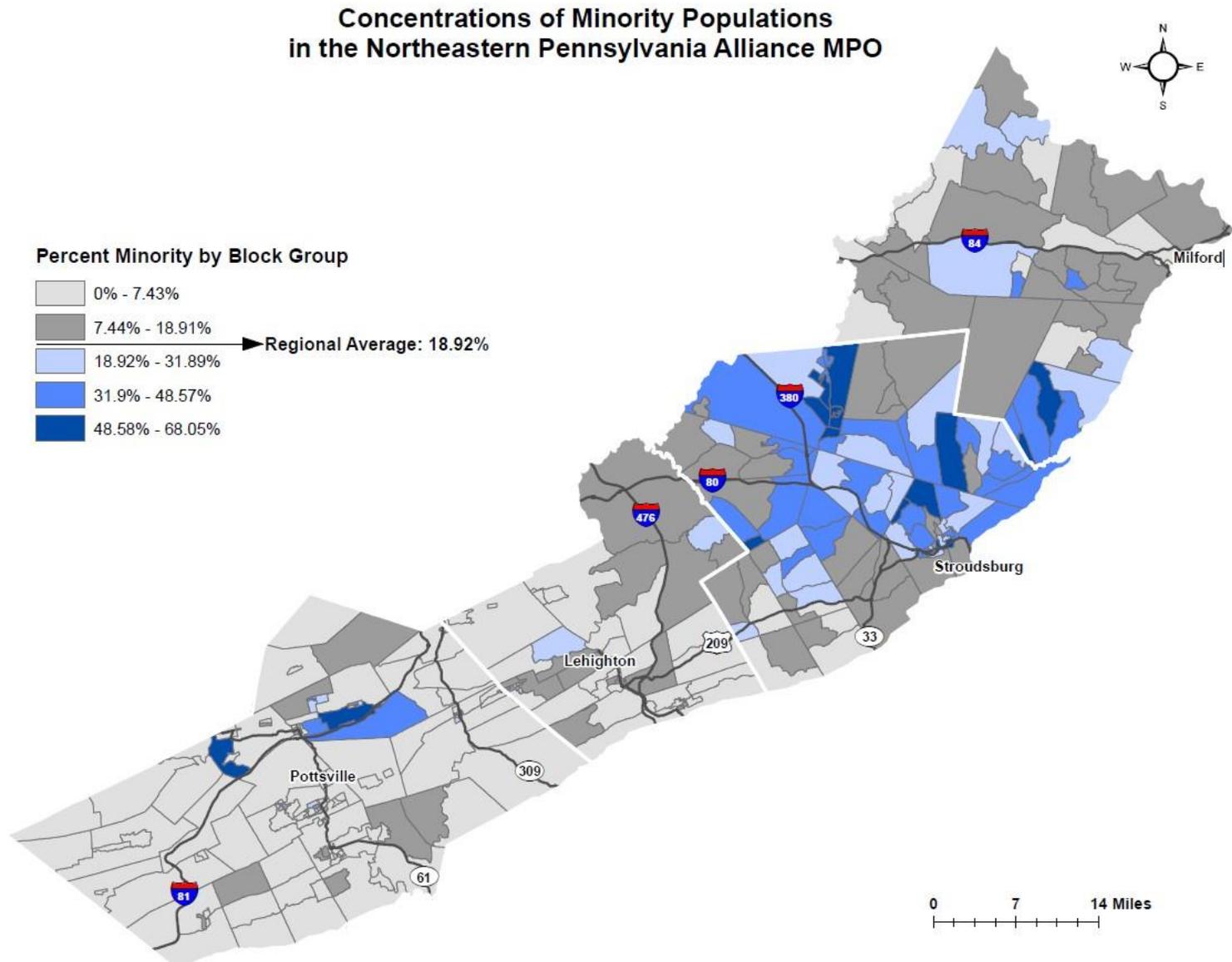
Fundamentally, the principles of Environmental Justice are aimed at preventing the denial of, reduction in or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low income populations. The establishment of transportation funding as a performance measure is consistent with this principle by supporting the evaluation of funding priorities considered for the LRTP, including the 4-year TIP. Mapping and analyzing transportation funding can assist in making the prioritization process more open, transparent and accountable to the public. In developing this funding performance measure, the core issue is whether or not the number and types of projects and the total project investment are equitably distributed throughout the NEPA MPO Region.

IDENTIFYING MINORITY AND LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS

The environmental justice evaluation process begins with developing an understanding of the geographic concentrations of minority and low-income populations. These geographic areas are

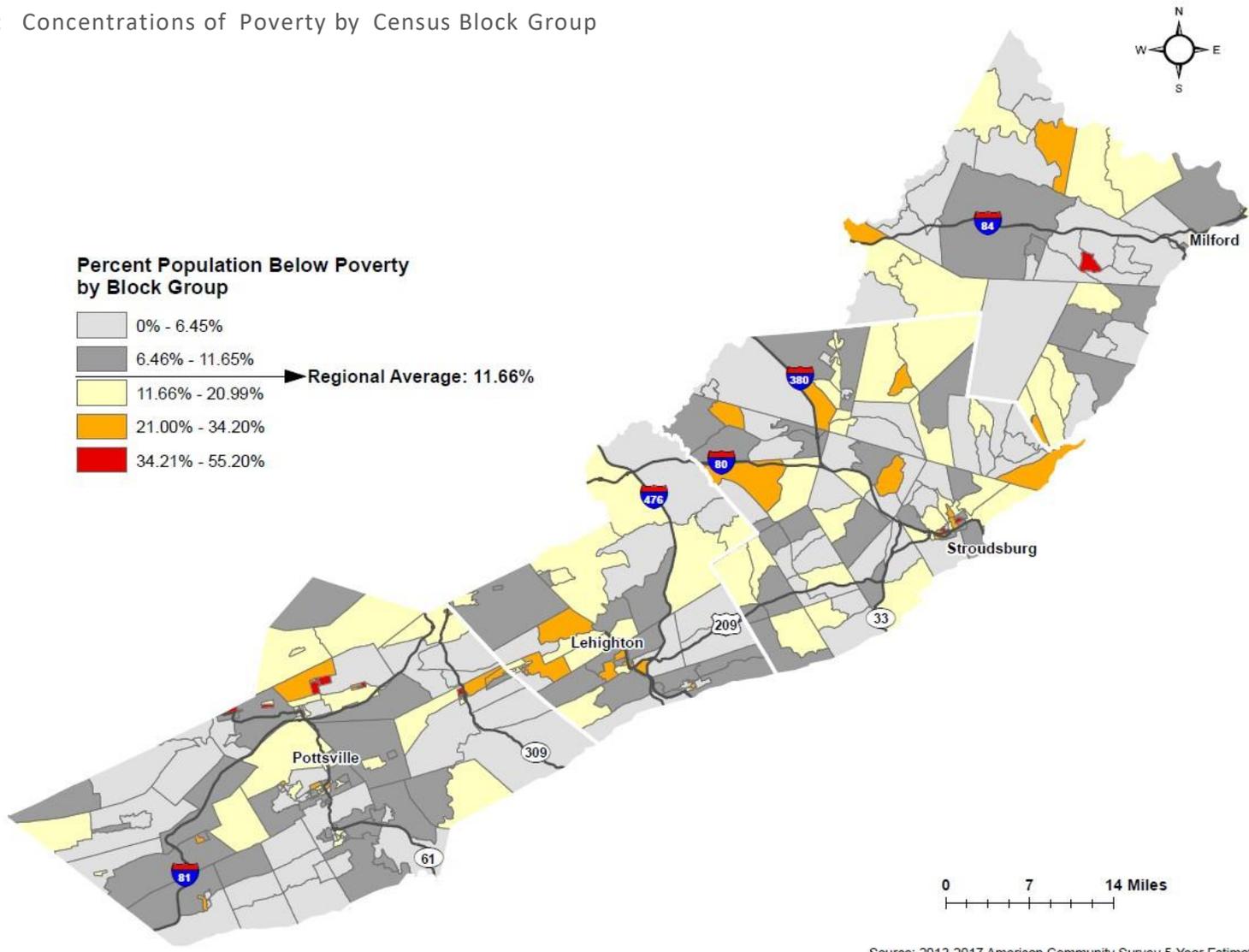
used as the basis for calculating certain measures presented in this document. Figure 1 shows the concentrations of minority populations by census block groups based on 2013-2017 American Community Survey data. Figure 2 shows the concentrations of households below the poverty threshold by census block groups, also based on 2013-2017 American Community Survey data.

Figure 1: Concentrations of Minority Populations by Census Block Groups



Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 2: Concentrations of Poverty by Census Block Group



2021-2024 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

As part of the development of the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program, the NEPA MPO reviewed transportation projects located in areas that were determined to be “high minority” or “high in-poverty.” “High minority” refers to census block groups that have a concentration of minority persons that is greater than or equal to the NEPA MPO regional average of 18.9 percent. “High in-poverty” refers to census block groups that have a concentration of low-income persons that is greater than or equal to the NEPA MPO regional average of 11.7 percent.

Patterns of transportation investment spending in the 2021-2024 TIP were analyzed to consider the disproportionate adverse impacts for minority and low-income populations. The *locatable* projects from the 2021-2024 TIP for the NEPA MPO Region have a total value of **\$118,785,684**.

This TIP is weighted heavily by the Statewide Investment Plan toward spending on bridge improvements and construction, consistent with the current statewide priority to address poor condition bridges. Bridges located in minority and low-income population areas targeted for improvement will likely be a benefit or burden dependent upon the use of the bridge, access to major roadways, bicycle and pedestrian access, possible temporary detour routes and other important factors of consideration. Project priorities in future TIP cycles may change once the problems with poor condition bridges are addressed.

The below table summarizes the dollar value of the locatable projects according to the project type and the geographic proximity to high minority and in-poverty populations. There was a total investment of approximately \$14.7 million (12.4 percent of the TIP) in high minority areas and \$32.1 million (27.0 percent of the TIP) in high in-poverty areas and \$4.5 million (3.8 percent of the TIP) in both high minority and high in-poverty areas. The total for projects with no location information is \$90,474,913.

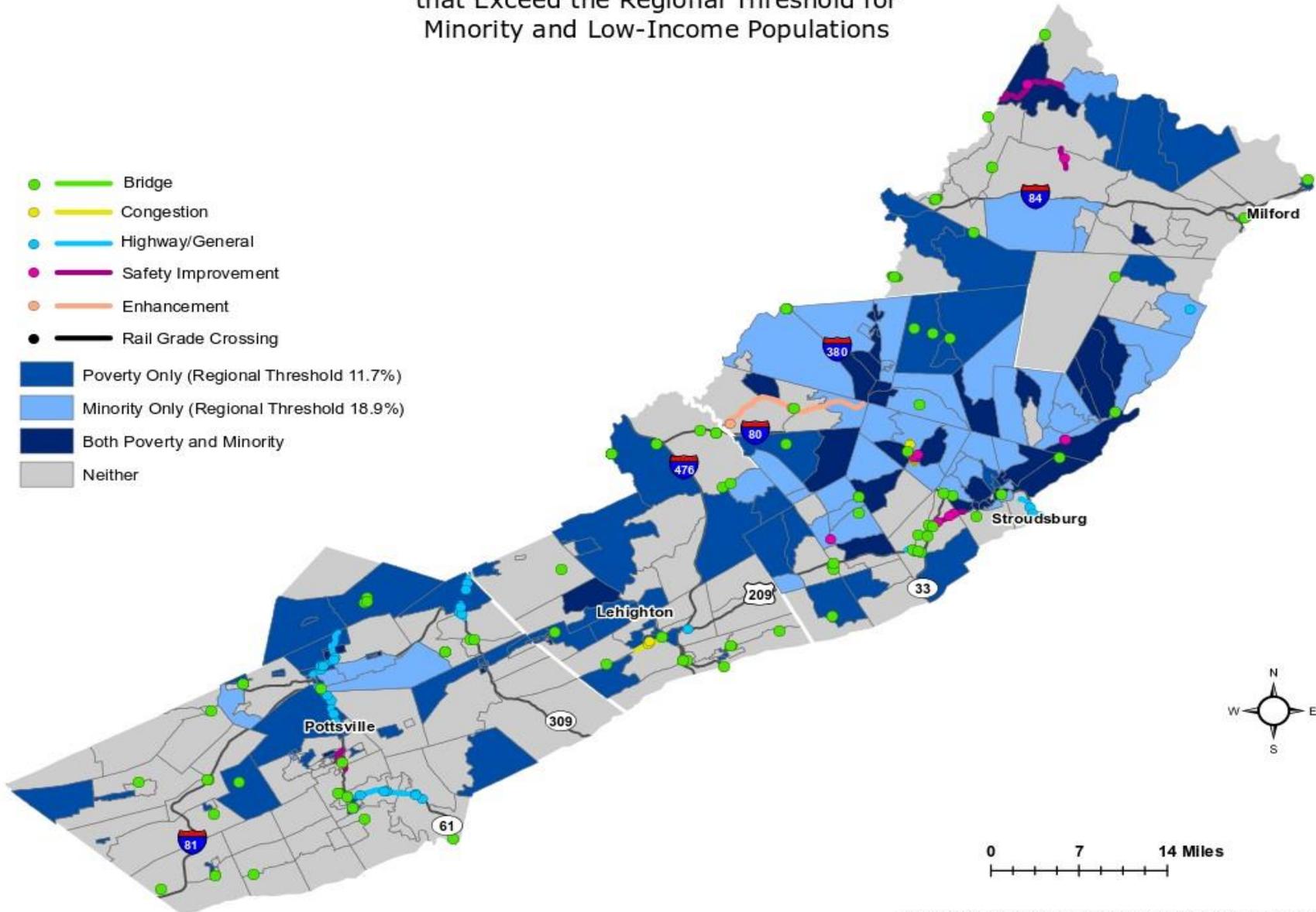
Table 1: Dollar Value of the Locatable 2021-2024 TIP Projects by Project Type in High Minority and In-Poverty Populations

Project Category	High Minority Only	In-Poverty Only	Both High Minority and High in Poverty	Neither High Minority nor High In-Poverty	NEPA MPO Regional Total
BRIDGE	\$8,373,270	\$20,040,670	\$578,300	\$59,700,740	\$88,692,980
	9%	23%	1%	67%	
HIGHWAY/ GENERAL	\$600,000	\$11,415,575	\$270,000	\$2,018,900	\$14,304,475
	4%	80%	2%	14%	
SAFETY	\$1,431,315		\$3,640,430	\$4,850,000	\$9,921,745
	14%		37%	49%	
CONGESTION	\$4,370,920	\$655,564		0	\$5,026,484
	87%	13%			
ENHANCEMENT	\$550,000	0	0	\$650,000	\$1,200,000
	46%			54%	
RAIL GRADE CROSSING				\$240,000	\$240,000
				100%	
Total Projections with Location Information	\$14,725,505	\$32,111,809	\$4,488,730	\$67,459,640	\$118,785,684
	12.4%	27.0%	3.8%	56.8%	

Source: NEPA MPO 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program- Bridge and Highway Public Narrative

The below mapping illustrates the geographic proximity between different 2021-2024 TIP project types and high minority and high in poverty areas.

2021-2024 TIP Project Locations and Census Block Groups that Exceed the Regional Threshold for Minority and Low-Income Populations



CONDITION ASSESSMENT

In order to analyze benefits and adverse effects, the MPO examined the existing conditions of transportation assets throughout the region, as well as determining disparities of safety performance measures among the minority and low-income populations. The use of these tables going forward allow the MPO to track number of crashes, poor condition bridges, and poor pavement mileage in the region and identify safety gaps and distribution disparities between minority and low-income populations and populations that are not minority or low-income.

The NEPA Region currently has 305 bridges in poor condition. Of those bridges, 70, or 23%, are location within High Minority block groups and 102, or 33%, are within High Poverty block groups.

Table 2: Distribution of Poor Condition Bridges by Minority Population Intervals

<i>Population/Asset</i>	Percent Minority Population Intervals					<i>Total</i>
	0% -7.43%	7.44% -18.91%	18.92% -31.89%	31.9% -48.57%	48.58% -70.25%	
Poor Condition Bridge Count	81	154	25	24	21	305
Percentage	26.6%	50.5%	8.2%	7.9%	6.9%	100%
Total Population	157,436	117,130	51,768	65,613	39,320	431,267
Total Population (in %)	36.5%	27.2%	12.0%	15.2%	9.1%	100%
Minority Population	4,697	14,703	12,757	26,300	23,124	81,581
Minority Population (in %)	5.8%	18.0%	15.6%	32.2%	28.3%	19%

Source: 2013-2017 ACS, PennDOT

Table 3: Distribution of Poor Condition Bridges by Poverty Population Intervals

<i>Population/Asset</i>	Percent Below Poverty Population Intervals					<i>Total</i>
	0% -6.45%	6.46% -11.65%	11.66% -20.99%	21.0% -34.2%	34.21% -55.2%	
Poor Condition Bridge Count	59	144	39	50	13	305
Percentage	19.3%	47.2%	12.8%	16.4%	4.3%	100%
Total Population	159,154	101,597	111,137	50,149	9,230	431,267
Total Population (in %)	36.9%	23.6%	25.8%	11.6%	2.1%	100%
Below Poverty Population	15,255	13,718	8,352	8,088	3,535	48,948
Below Poverty Population (in %)	31.2%	28.0%	17.1%	16.5%	7.2%	11%