

# Community Connectors

New grants to help small and mid-sized communities repair the damage of divisive infrastructure



Smart Growth America  
Improving lives by improving communities



EQUITABLE  
CITIES



New Urban  
Mobility  
alliance



# Community Connectors:

Supporting leaders in small and mid-sized communities—in and out of government—to repair the damage of divisive infrastructure.

Supported by the  
Robert Wood Johnson  
Foundation





# Have a question?



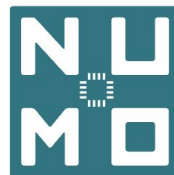
Please enter any questions for our panelists or hosts in the Q&A section of your user dashboard.

**THIS WEBINAR IS RECORDED AND  
WILL BE UPLOADED**

## The project team:



**Smart Growth America**  
Improving lives by improving communities



**New Urban  
Mobility  
alliance**

**AMERICA WALKS**



**EQUITABLE  
CITIES**



# Speakers



**Ben Crowther,**  
America Walks



**Charles T. Brown,**  
Equitable Cities



**Beth Osborne,**  
Smart Growth America



**Harriet Tregoning,**  
New Urban Mobility





**What is the problem  
we're aiming to  
address?**





# Divisive and dangerous arterials



# Missing sidewalks and other essentials that divide





# Rail infrastructure



# 2014 - Rochester, NY

## Highway teardowns and removals







# Who can apply?

**Teams** representing **small and mid-sized cities**. (50k up to 500k). Public agencies, nonprofits, community based organizations, tribes, etc. But these teams will have:

**Extensive partnerships** across sectors (public, private, etc).

Some **control** of infrastructure.

Prioritization **community engagement**.





# What 15 selected teams will receive:

**(1) Capacity building grant of up to \$130,000 per selected community team**

**(2) Tailored technical assistance up to \$65,000 per community team**

**(3) Travel & expenses for participation in a 2023 convening + ongoing learning exchange**





# Possible uses for capacity building grants

- **Assistance preparing applications** for Reconnecting Communities or Neighborhood Access & Equity Grant funding;
- **Assessing and updating land-use or zoning codes;**
- **Analyzing market needs** in terms of residential, affordable housing, retail, office along a corridor;
- **Developing strategies** for identifying, mitigating or **preventing displacement;**
- **Updating roadway design standards or procedures;**
- **Research and analysis of community needs**, including intercept surveys, focus groups, etc; and
- **Conducting meaningful public engagement** and supporting the participation of CBOs and residents.



# Application

1. **Project type and description:** the barrier, ideas for change, goals/priority outcomes, and timelines.
2. **Community information and teaming arrangement:** overview of community, lead organization/team, community engagement, time/staff commitment.
3. **Capacity challenges:** needs and constraints.
4. **Convening participation.**
5. **Optional supplemental materials:** applications, pictures, letters of support, links, etc.





# Our steering committee is assisting on five key tasks

1. Help shape our **overall approach**
2. Provide feedback on our **application and selection process.**
3. Assist with **outreach**
4. Help **develop the agenda** for convening
5. *Potentially* **participate in convening** as instructors

- 1) **Gina Ramirez** SE Environmental Task Force NRDC (IL)
- 2) **Nathaniel Smith** Partnership for Southern Equity (GA)
- 3) **Paulo Nunes-Ueno** Front and Centered (PA/WA)
- 4) **Warren Logan** Progress Public Affairs, formerly City of Oakland (CA)
- 5) **Anne Dasilva Tella** City of Rochester (NY)
- 6) **LeRoy Moore** Tampa Housing Authority (FL)
- 7) **Diamond Spratling** Girl + Environment (GA)
- 8) **Jay Arzu** UPenn (PA)
- 9) **Brett Stark** Bureau of Engineering and Construction, Connecticut DOT
- 10) **Audrey Wennink** Metropolitan Planning Council (IL)



# Types of projects

## Type 1: Advancing a specific project:

We have a well-developed project concept, for which we *may* have already procured some level of funding to advance.

## Type 2: Developing a project:

We have a specific idea for a project, which we need to better scope and develop, and procure funding sources to advance.

## Type 3: Considering an approach:

We have a corridor or an issue that is in need of repair, reconfiguration, or demolition and replacement, and we need help to study and develop solutions together.

# Selection criteria

- Geographic diversity
- Range of capacity
- Different types of projects
- Different stages
- Prioritization:
  - clear goals
  - strong team







# Notable dates

May 22	June 6	July 15	Aug/Sep	Nov 13-16
Applications open to the public	Informational webinar: for the public and any interested communities	Application period closes, team starts reviewing applications	Winners notified somewhere in here	Convening of all community teams, project team, and other instructors in Atlanta, GA.

Early 2024	2024	Early 2025
TA likely starts in earnest	Projects advancing TA ongoing Learning cohorts? Virtual learning Reporting on progress	Funds are reserved for a second convening, TBD. May take a different form.



# Resources for all

## Dive into the content

This **Community Connectors** portal is our evolving tool for explaining **1) Who is involved**, **2) How the process unfolds**, and **3) What DOTs really mean when they say \_\_\_**, and then sharing **4) Real world stories** from advocates—both successes and looming challenges.

Click on any graphic or title to explore each of these four areas, or right on a bulleted item to dive right in.



### Explaining the actors

**Who** has control over the hundreds of billions in federal and state transportation dollars for transportation projects? Who are the entities involved in spending this money? Who are the agencies involved in making the decisions? Start here to find out more about the people you need to know: **who is involved**.

- State DOTs
- USDOT
- Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)



### Demystifying the process

**How** does transportation money get spent? Where does the money come from? What things *can* federal transportation money be spent on? Start here to find out more about the process: **how it happens**.

- How are projects chosen for funding? (Programming)
- A plethora of plans: what do they all mean? (Planning)
- The limits of environmental laws (like NEPA) to protect communities



### Decoding common terms

Transportation engineers, planners, and decision makers often bury advocates in a sea of jargon and acronyms, accompanied by an explicit message that *you can't possibly understand things well enough* to suggest a different path. Start here to learn about the obscure, complex measures and models that have incredible influence over what gets built and where: **things DOTs say**.

- "We have to preserve level of service (LOS)"
- "Sorry, our street design standards don't allow that"
- "The transportation models tells us that we have to..."



### Advocate stories

"Community Connectors" all across the country are **fighting divisive, destructive, and unaffordable freeway expansions**, advancing projects to remove old highways, making wide, dangerous arterial roads a little safer for people to cross, or just improving basic infrastructure people depend on each day. These battles are won and lost—often on the same project. **Read a growing list of profiles** our team is producing about these stories.

#### Stories of success

- **Greenville, SC:** Out with the cars, in with the people
- **Gretna, LA:** Tracking a downtown divide
- **Milwaukee, WI:** The long fight for connectivity



# Six big picture program objectives

- 1) Build partnerships and trust to co-create plans and projects to reconnect communities;**
- 2) Expand the capacity of applicants;**
- 3) Expand and create new and diverse partnerships among the applicants & other stakeholders;**
- 4) Leverage and align funds;**
- 5) Identify and assess the needs of applicant teams for longer-term TA and capacity-building support; and**
- 6) Support efforts to receive state/federal sources.**



# QUESTIONS?



Smart Growth America  
Improving lives by improving communities



EQUITABLE  
CITIES



New Urban  
Mobility  
alliance