



Memorandum

To: Todd Muck, Deputy Executive Director
From: Christina Watson, Principal Transportation Planner
Meeting Date: January 27, 2021
Subject: 2020 Rail~Volution Conference

On October 21, October 28-29, and November 12, 2020, I attended the virtual Rail~Volution Conference. The program of the conference is available here: <https://railvolution.org/>. Some of the sessions had an artist render the discussion. Highlights of some of the sessions I attended:

Keynote with Ibram X Kendi: Tactical Anti-Racism

This plenary examined the dynamics that foster systemic racism and the challenges to changing the systems that perpetuate disparities. Best-selling author of *How to Be an Antiracist* and Director of Boston University’s Center for Anti-Racist Research, Ibram X. Kendi, shared what he has learned from his research and personal experience to help us better understand and confront the insidious nature of discrimination.



Following the keynote by Dr. Kendi, I participated in a discussion on confronting systemic racism in transportation planning. We discussed the challenges in including everyone in the decision-making process, particularly during this pandemic when people have so many other more important priorities than participating in surveys.



Keynote with Peter Calthorpe: Beyond Today's TOD

Peter Calthorpe, a pioneer of innovative approaches to urban revitalization, suburban growth, and regional planning, shared new research with some win-win models to consider. As Transit Oriented Development has evolved over 25 years the transit and mobility landscape has been radically transformed by new technology, land-use patterns, and the sharing economy, especially in recent years.



Akisa Omulepu with residents and leaders from Brownsville, New York: Equity in Housing and Transportation

Moderated by Emmy-nominated documentarian, director, and producer Akisa Omulepu, this discussion focused on the real-life impacts of limited affordable housing and access to transportation on everyday New Yorkers. Residents and community leaders of Seth Low Houses in Brownsville, New York, shared some of their experiences of living in a neighborhood often overlooked as a place of potential.



I participated in a workshop on Transit Ridership in the COVID era and beyond, in which we discussed ridership strategies during a pandemic, including ensuring that essential workers can still depend on transit for their commute, communicating the cleanliness of buses and trains, and the efforts transit agencies are making to ensure social distancing and no-touch ticketing.



Another session I attended that was very interesting was the one on community outreach and engagement, where we discussed how to adapt the adage of “meeting them where they already are” to the COVID era, including participating in established meetings and trying to be creative about online outreach, integrating games and storytelling into the strategy.

