# Accessibility and Affordability Study

ITE SoCal Presentation
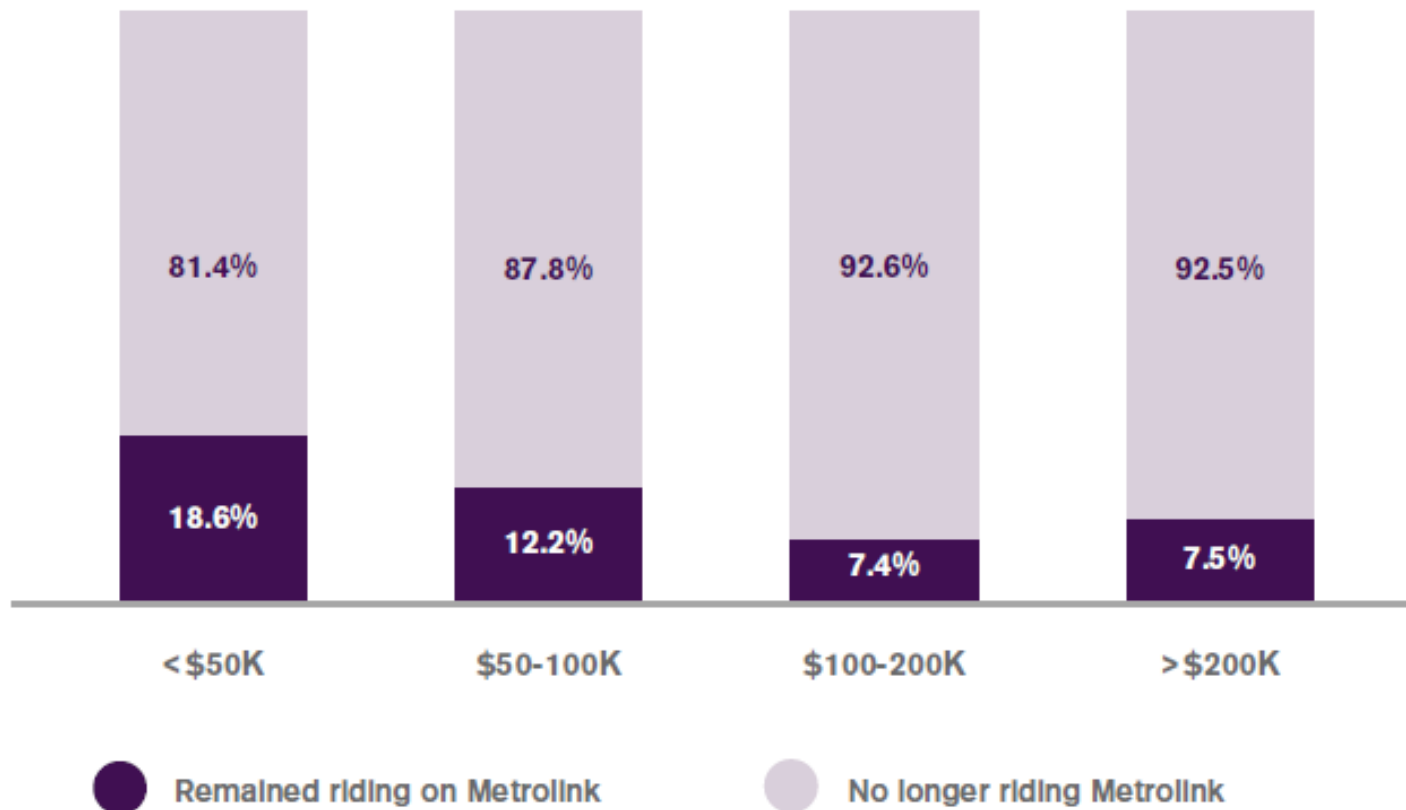
September 29, 2021

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# Background

- Metrolink has become the third largest regional passenger rail service in the U.S

- Record high ridership of 11.9 million boardings (FY 2019)

- Stay-at-home orders due to COVID-19 pandemic led to a sudden decrease in transit ridership

- Widespread social actions were spurred by violent actions against historically marginalized populations

- Conducted a survey in April 2020 to explore rider's concerns and expectations of us and our service

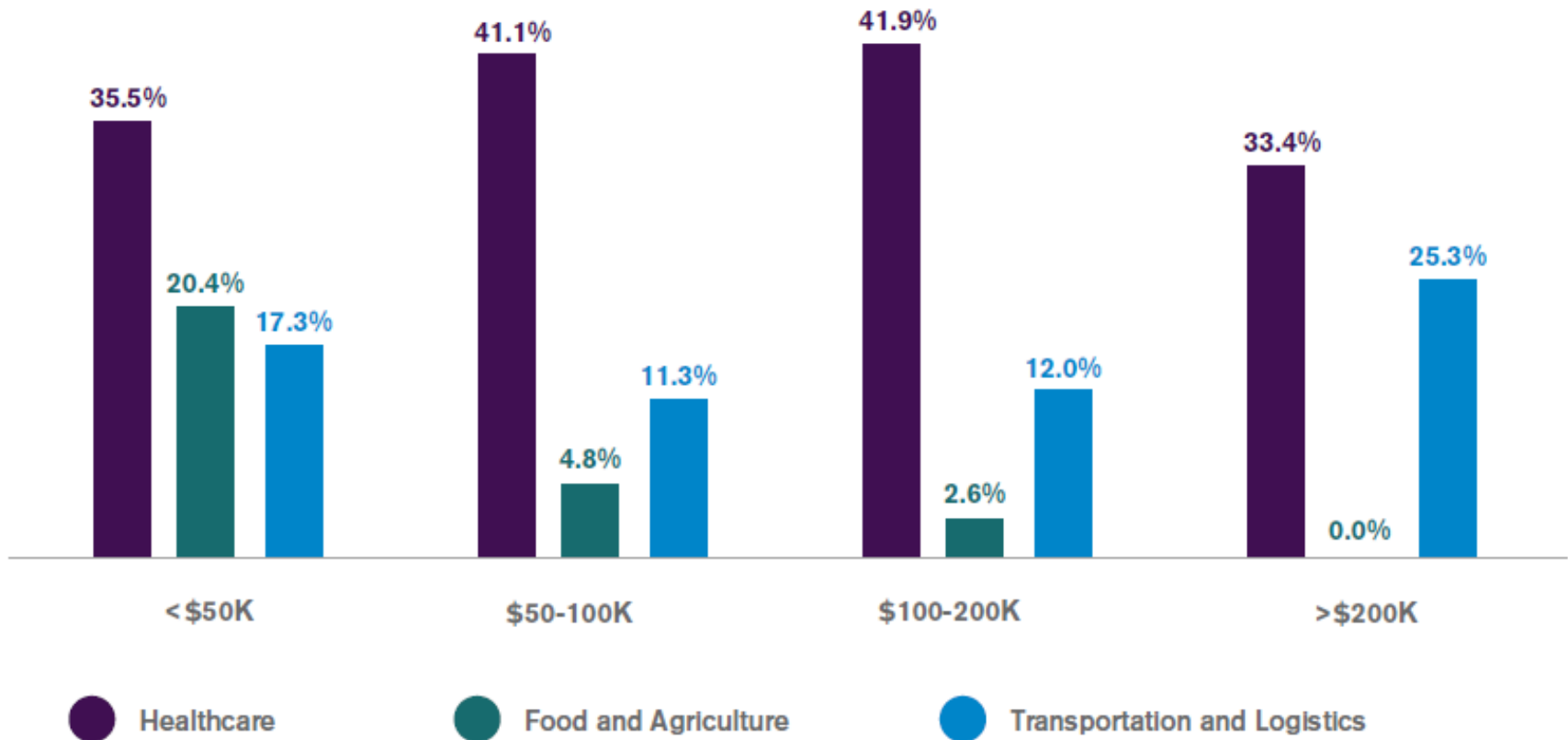METROLINK®

# April 2020 Customer Survey | Key Findings

**Share of Riders by Income Remaining on Metrolink After 2020 Pandemic Stay-at-Home Orders (April 2020)**

| Income | Remained riding on Metrolink | No longer riding Metrolink |
|---|---|---|
| <$50K | 18.6% | 81.4% |
| $50-100K | 12.2% | 87.8% |
| $100-200K | 7.4% | 92.6% |
| >$200K | 7.5% | 92.5% |

● Remained riding on Metrolink      ● No longer riding Metrolink

Source: Metrolink April 2020 Customer Survey

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# April 2020 Customer Survey | Key Findings



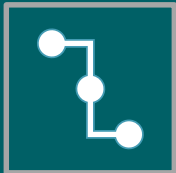Types of Essential Workers Remaining on Metrolink, by Income (April 2020)

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# Study Initiation

Urgency for Metrolink to re-evaluate our value proposition

Identify ways that Metrolink could respond to COVID-19 impacts and increase accessibility and affordability of its system.

Resulted in the initiation of Metrolink's first Accessibility and Affordability Study

# Study Goals

**1** — Identify the historic marginalization and present-date needs of Metrolink service area communities.

**2** — Develop a framework of equity for Metrolink to base their own goals, decisions, and performance measurement.

**3** — Recommend short-term responses for Metrolink to enhance accessibility and affordability within an equity framework.

**4** — Develop an analytical tool and performance measures for Metrolink to assess these short-term responses and define "social equity communities".

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# Research Approach

- The Study consultant team conducted two primary research activities to a gain deeper understanding of applicable equity best practices and tools:

   1. Conducted a best practices review on how public agencies implement equity frameworks, initiatives and tools

   2. Stakeholder interviews conducted to "groundtruth" assumptions and support development of actionable recommendations for Metrolink.

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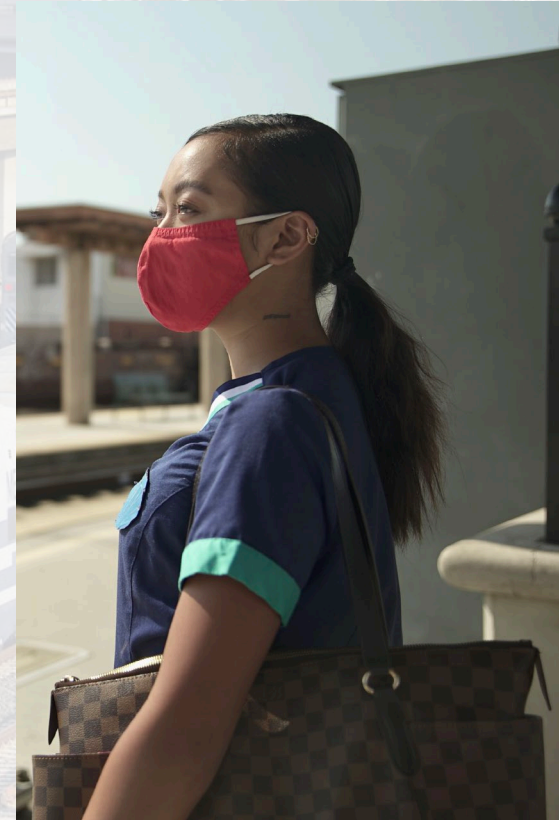
# Best Practices Scan

- Four common best practice categories emerged from this research:

1. **Define Equity** – Establishing an agency definition of equity is a critical first step to identifying and prioritizing disparate needs and developing appropriate tools and countermeasures.

2. **Develop Equity Tools** – Equity tools can be utilized to steer decision-making related to how an agency provides service and develops budgets

3. **Implement and Operationalize Equity** – Involves integrating equity into daily tasks, incorporating equity into the working culture, and restricting the organization to allow equity to steer decision-making

4. **Engage Individuals and Communities** – Successful approaches to engagement are focused on ongoing partnerships, not approval for specific project

# Stakeholder Feedback

- Stakeholder feedback was categorized based on four themes:

1. **Affordability** – Metrolink fares are always a consideration, and that **lower or discounted** ticket prices would be welcomed.

2. **Access** – Limited station access was identified as a barrier, due to both **surrounding land uses** and **lack of multi-modal connectivity**.

3. **Riders' Needs and Trip Purposes** – Many community members also continue to rely on Metrolink **to access health services**.

4. **Health and Safety** – Riders often feel they **must ride in overcrowded conditions** that do not reflect pandemic distancing guidelines but do not have alternative travel options to go to work or access necessary services.

# Study Recommendations

## Framework and Tools for Equity

- Adopt Agency Definition of Equity

- Create an Equity Atlas

- Use the Atlas to Define Social Equity Communities for Metrolink

## Programmatic Actions to Expand Accessibility & Affordability

- Adopt Changes to Fare Program to Increase Affordability

- Prioritize Station Access Improvements in Social Equity Communities

- Develop New Stakeholder Engagement Approaches

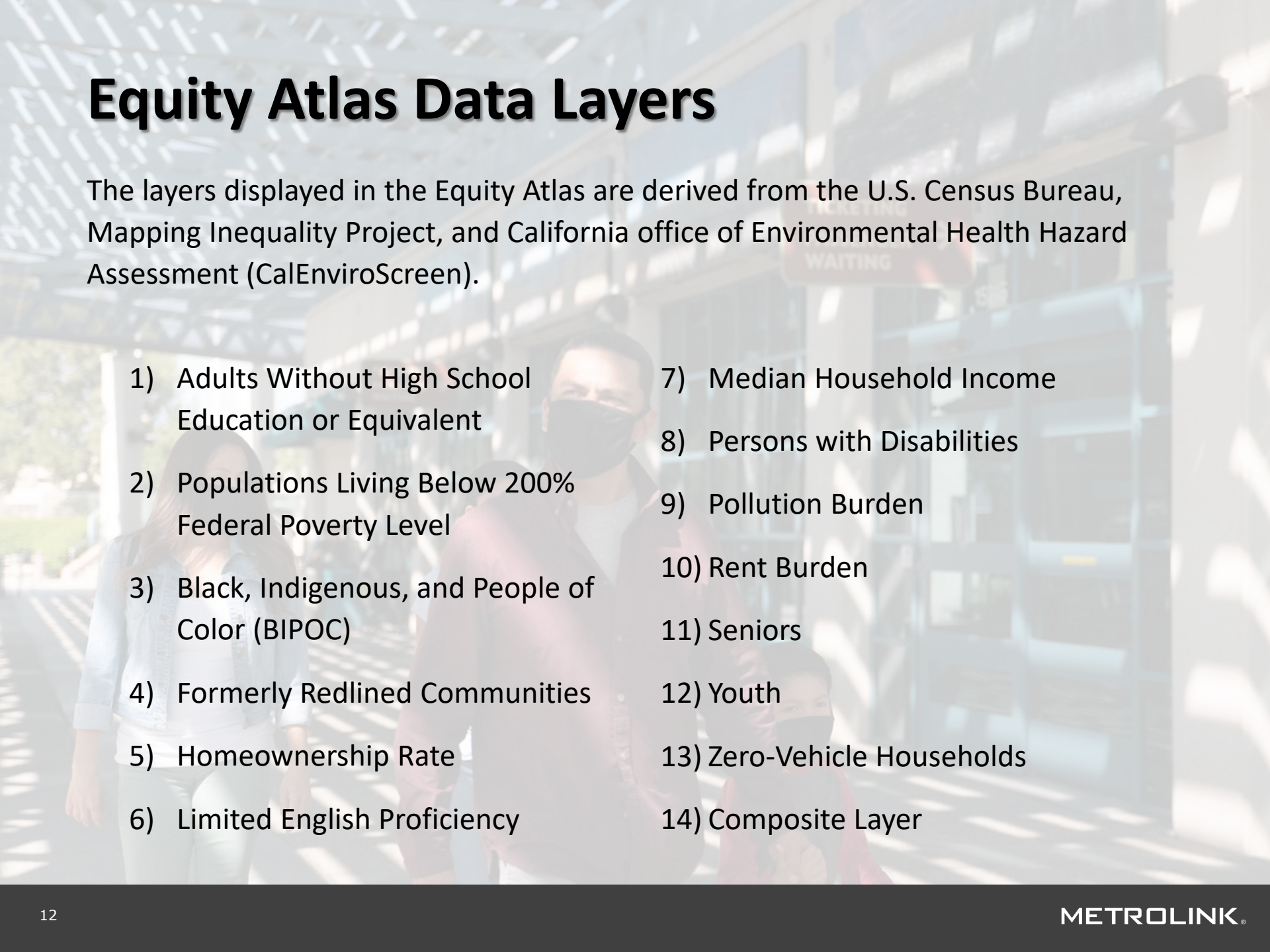- Develop Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Criteria

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# Recommendation Highlight: Equity Atlas
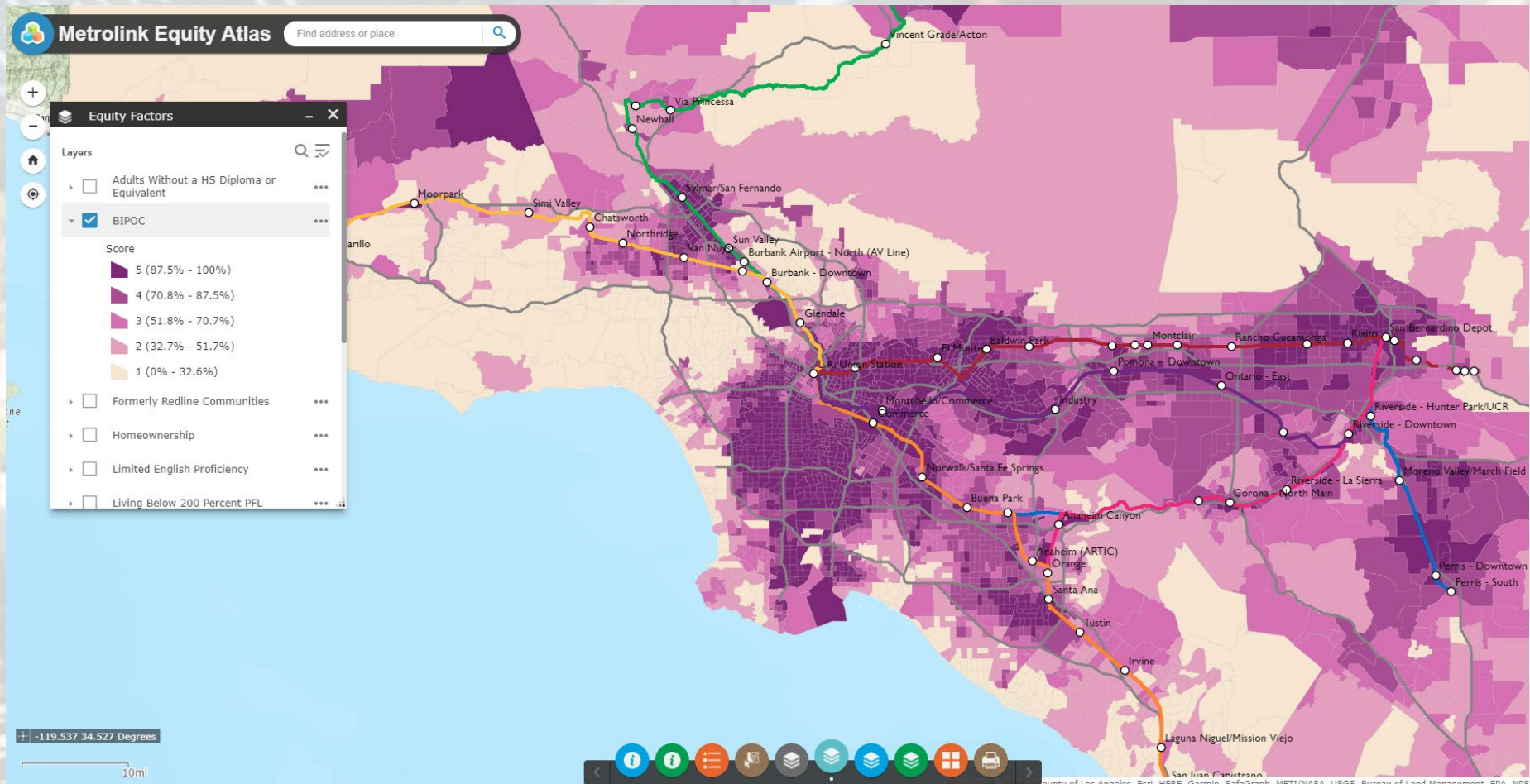
# Equity Atlas Data Layers

The layers displayed in the Equity Atlas are derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, Mapping Inequality Project, and California office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (CalEnviroScreen).

1) Adults Without High School Education or Equivalent

2) Populations Living Below 200% Federal Poverty Level

3) Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

4) Formerly Redlined Communities

5) Homeownership Rate

6) Limited English Proficiency

7) Median Household Income

8) Persons with Disabilities

9) Pollution Burden

10) Rent Burden

11) Seniors

12) Youth

13) Zero-Vehicle Households

14) Composite Layer

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# Conclusion

- The Accessibility and Affordability Study is an initial step towards implementing equitable **goals**, **tools**, and **practices** at Metrolink.

- A commitment to equity should be transparent and consistent.

- Metrolink has a role to play to provide equitable access to resources and opportunities throughout the region.

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# THANK YOU!

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