As federal support for the EV transition recedes, state and local planning processes are playing an increasingly central role in shaping equitable access to clean mobility infrastructure. Community engagement is a critical component of these efforts, yet relatively few case studies document how equity-oriented engagement processes work in practice.

CLEE has released a new issue brief examining the engagement process behind a regional EV planning initiative led by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) with Caltrans, Ecology Action, Rincon Consultants, and Regeneración Pájaro Valley Climate Action. The case study draws on interviews with project team members and results from a multilingual community survey of over 600 residents across San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey Counties.

Survey respondents—drawn primarily from low-income, Latino/a communities—identified range anxiety, vehicle cost, limited nearby charging, and low familiarity with EV technology as principal barriers to adoption. Notably, many respondents also reported broader transportation challenges, including limited public transit access and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, suggesting that barriers to EV adoption in these communities are embedded within wider patterns of transportation inequity.

The brief situates these findings within a framework of equity-oriented EV planning principles, including conducting community needs assessments, placing decision-making power in the hands of the local community, and prioritizing public participation that empowers and collaborates with community members in infrastructure investment decisions. The case study assesses EV CAR's alignment with these principles and with the strategies outlined in CLEE's Equitable EV Action Plan Framework, finding that EV CAR's combination of CBO-led engagement, in-person outreach, and multilingual survey design closely aligns with best practices for equity-oriented EV planning.

As AMBAG transitions to plan implementation, the brief recommends several equity-oriented strategies, including community oversight councils with decision-making authority over project development, participatory budgeting to align investments with community priorities, and Community Benefits Agreements for large-scale infrastructure. These recommendations build on the project design strategies presented in CLEE's 2024 report on equity-oriented EV infrastructure investments.

This brief was developed through CLEE's EV Equity Initiative, which aims to develop

locally tailored, community-driven approaches to EV and mobility infrastructure in underserved communities. The full brief can be accessed here.