



Part 1: Introduction

Transportation disparities have profound implications, particularly within the context of underserved communities. Marginalized populations, including BIPOC individuals and those with limited income, face pronounced challenges in accessing essential services due to unequal transportation access. This report centers on the Tompkins County Transportation Equity Needs Assessment, a strategic initiative led by the Human Services Coalition. The objective is to comprehensively address these disparities, focusing on underserved communities' transportation needs and experiences. By deploying a multifaceted approach, the assessment aims to unravel the complexities of transportation inequities and foster informed, inclusive solutions.

The assessment is guided by community-based participatory research principles, underscoring the significance of involving community voices directly. This approach champions a more authentic understanding of the challenges faced by underserved residents and positions them as co-researchers. The assessment draws upon diverse methodologies, including a county-wide survey, focus groups, data analysis from various sources, and facilitated stakeholder meetings. These methodologies collectively furnish a holistic perspective on transportation needs and barriers, informed by both quantitative data and qualitative narratives.

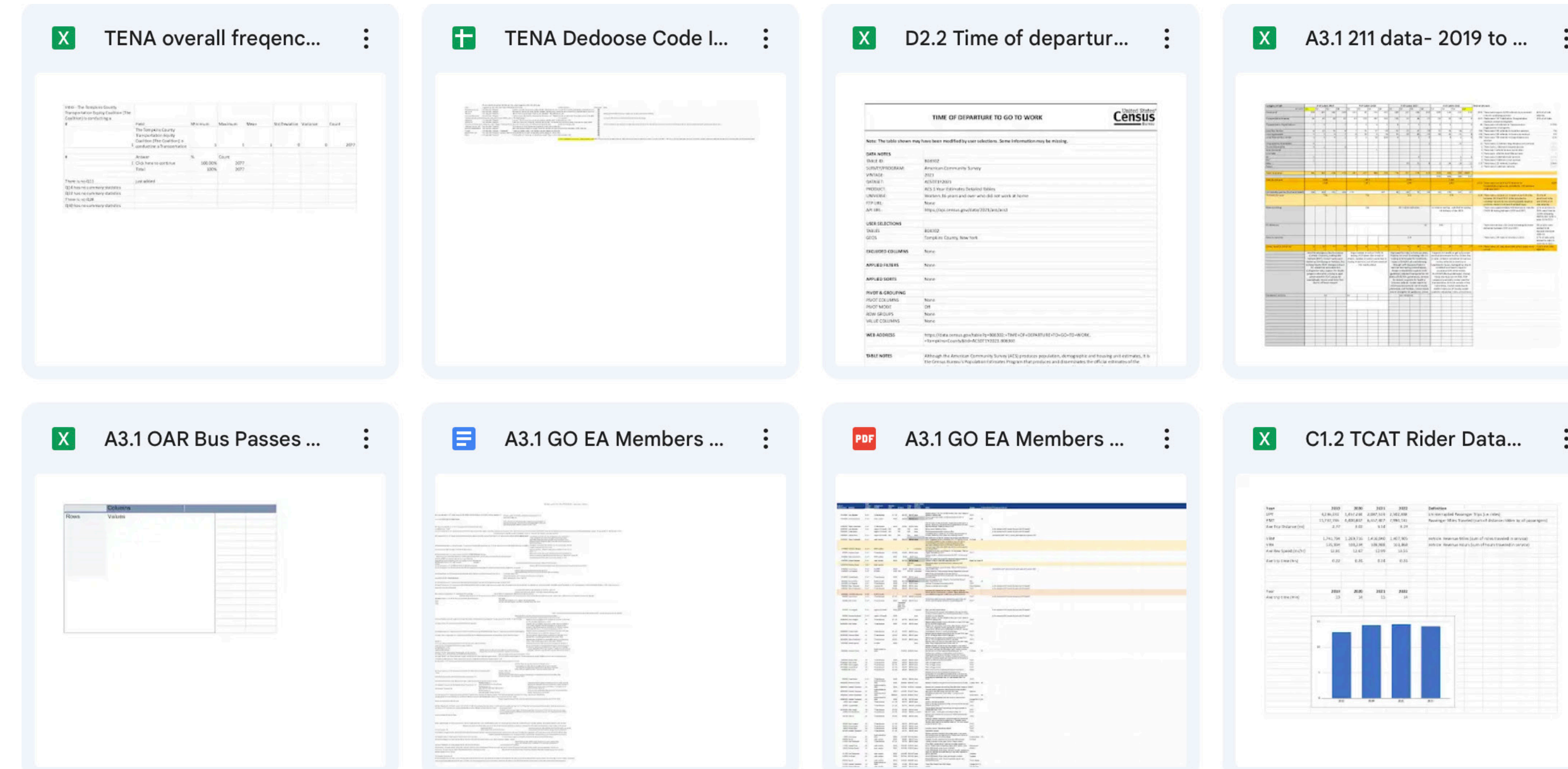
The outcomes of this assessment hold potential to catalyze positive change. By elucidating transportation disparities, the assessment can inform policies, interventions, and infrastructural improvements that foster equitable access for underserved communities. This report illuminates the multifaceted nature of the project, encompassing its objectives, methodologies, and anticipated outcomes. It further emphasizes the transformative power of community-centered research in reshaping transportation equity paradigms. Through active engagement in this assessment, a more equitable transportation landscape in Tompkins County is envisaged, one that takes into account the unique needs and challenges of underserved communities.



Images from the Human Services Coalition. Bike lanes, EVs, and electric buses in Tompkins County.

Part 2: Methodology

The Tompkins County Transportation Equity Needs Assessment employs a multi-pronged methodology that systematically addresses the complexities of transportation disparities experienced by underserved communities. The following methodologies are integrated to provide a comprehensive evaluation:



1. **County-Wide Survey:** Informed by community voices, the survey is meticulously designed to uncover intricate transportation needs, preferences, and barriers encountered by individuals within underserved communities. By actively involving the community in survey development, the assessment ensures alignment with pertinent issues and a faithful representation of their experiences.

2. **Focus Groups:** The assessment leverages the expertise of partner organizations to orchestrate focus groups, offering an avenue for in-depth exploration of key topics. These focus groups, led by proficient partner organization staff, create a safe space for participants to share lived experiences, insights, and the challenges woven into their transportation journeys.

3. **Secondary Data Collection and Analysis:** The inclusion of secondary data from an array of sources, ranging from transportation service providers to support organizations and existing secondary data, culminates in a panoramic perspective. Incorporating data from the Human Services Coalition, community health assessments, and Census data enriches the analytical depth.

4. **Facilitated Stakeholder Meetings:** Facilitated stakeholder meetings serve as a dynamic platform for shaping measurement instruments and jointly interpreting results. Stakeholders, armed with contextual knowledge and domain expertise, contribute to the refinement of assessment methodologies, ensuring alignment with real-world dynamics.

The methodological orchestration of the Tompkins County Transportation Equity Needs Assessment has offered profound insights into the intricate web of transportation disparities and their societal ramifications. The community-based participatory approach has underscored the significance of involving the community directly in research initiatives. This approach not only generates data but empowers the community, elevates their voices, and augments the authenticity of the assessment's findings.

Images screenshot from the working google drive of the TENA project.

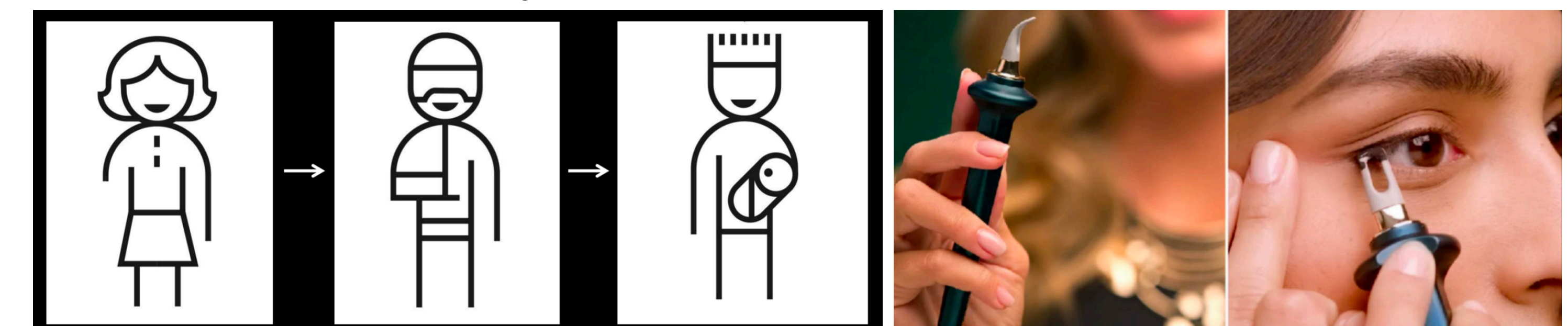
Part 3: Insights and Implications

The Tompkins County Transportation Equity Needs Assessment's methodologies encapsulate the lived experiences of underserved communities. At a broader perspective, taking into account the "extreme user" could be our next point of penetration no matter when improving the organization of small events or when seeking social development and policy change.

Encountering unique responses during my data analysis process reminded me of the concept of "extreme users"- individuals who deviate from typical product usage patterns due to unmet or unaddressed needs within their current context. In the process of my research project, I identified another instance of an "extreme user" - in data analysis, data points that are difficult to categorize into prevailing themes, and thus remain unnoticed, frequently signify "extreme users."

There are three main reasons why we should care about extreme users. Anyone could be an extreme user at some point in time or space. For instance, a language barrier on public transport can affect anyone traveling to a different culture. Also, designing for extreme users pushes societal development. Consider the invention of baby car seats - efforts to protect these "extreme users" ultimately reduced child fatalities in car accidents. Finally, with our advanced economy and technology, we have the resources and capability to be inclusive.

Understanding the necessity and possibility of considering extreme users within the design of our processes, I thought about the three roles I might play in improving inclusiveness in my immediate environment: as an event organizer, as a design professional, and as an extreme user myself.



As an event organizer, creating an inclusive environment goes beyond surface-level accommodation. It involves fostering an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and heard. Open communication channels, proactive identification of challenges, and providing clear information about accessibility features are essential. As a designer, promoting inclusivity extends beyond product design. Disseminating inclusivity theories and tools to a broader audience is crucial. Designing for one extreme user often results in the inclusion of many. Lastly, as an extreme user, I believe it's essential for individuals facing unique challenges to advocate for their needs. Personal narratives and advocacy can drive change and create a more inclusive world for all individuals, regardless of their unique circumstances.

The concept of extreme users challenges us to rethink inclusivity in our society. Addressing the needs of those who deviate from conventional product usage patterns not only improves their lives but also advances society as a whole.

Image from Microsoft Inclusive Design Handbook and Guided Beauty.