

YEAR IN REVIEW: 2021

COWS is a values-based national think-and-do tank that promotes high-road economic and social development. This strategy reconciles, under “real world” competitive conditions, simultaneous demands for equity (economic fairness and social inclusion), environmental sustainability, and efficient and accountable democratic self-governance. It does so by using democratic practice, inside and outside government, to increase productivity, capturing and sharing the benefits of doing that with its producers, and promoting continuous learning from this.

STATE SMART TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

SSTI supports state and local transportation agencies across the country in moving toward more resilient, equitable, and transparent policies and practices.

With our support, the City of Madison, WI is now on track to begin screening new development projects for their impacts on walking, biking and transit use (as outlined in our guide, *Modernizing Mitigation*).

Houston, TX has implemented a platform for measuring the impacts of transportation investments on multimodal access (as outlined *Measuring Accessibility*).

Our state-level work focused on reducing transportation emissions. We:

- convened state agencies from 12 states to share best practices and discuss challenges and opportunities.

- provided technical assistance to 9 state agencies, modeling their transportation emissions and outlining key policy opportunities.

- worked directly with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to develop an internal climate action plan and implement the required analytical tools (summarized in our recent webinar with MnDOT).

AFFORDABLE WATER AS A HUMAN RIGHT

Several utilities announced major reforms to their water systems this year. In partnership with the Water Center at Penn, we convened two more editions of our acclaimed Water Affordability Academy and subsequent Community of Practice series. This program brought together 80 water utility leaders to help them build sustainable, equitable, and affordable systems.

Months after participating in our Academies and/or receiving ongoing assistance from us:

- Toledo, OH (Fall 2021) announced a series of sweeping new water affordability initiatives.
- South Bend, IN (Jan 2021) is addressing equity through a new water customer assistance program.
- Oakland County, MI (March 2021) received an Affordability and Planning Grant to create water affordability programs for the City of Pontiac and the Royal Oak Township system.
- Burlington, VT's (July 2021) affordability program and rate restructure was passed by council.
- New federal funding available for water infrastructure makes this work even more critical—and possible—going forward.

CONNECTING CITY LEADERS

Through the Mayors Innovation Project—a national learning network for mayors—we engaged 173 mayors and city leaders, providing policy support, peer learning, and leadership development opportunities. In addition to the Water Affordability Program above:

The Mayors Innovative Design Cohort—consisting of Eastpointe, MI; Clarksville, TN; and Blacksburg, VA—is working to address the climate crisis while creating equitable, inclusive public spaces in their communities.

In partnership with Equity Agenda, we have continued to support the needs of women mayors through the Women Mayors Network (WMN).

Fifteen mayors participated in our 2021 New Mayors Cohort, developing leadership and governance tools to advance work in their new roles. Most of the mayors were “firsts” in their roles in their cities—first Black mayor, first LGBTQ mayor, and/or first woman-identified mayor.

Five US cities—Duluth MN, Grand Rapids MI, Madison WI, Pine Bluff AR, and San Rafael CA—are improving health and equity outcomes for children through our Healthy Babies Initiative.



WORKING WISCONSIN

Released for Labor Day 2021, the State of Working Wisconsin shows how working people are doing in the labor market reshaped by Covid-19 and continues to shine a spotlight on the state's brutal Black-white disparities. The State of Working Wisconsin has presented the workers' perspective on the economy since 1996.

In 2021, we provided analysis of the impact of tight labor markets on service work and what can be done to improve service jobs. We also describe how apprenticeship can be a tool to bring new workers into "non-traditional" fields.

PROGOV21

We continued to grow our latest project, ProGov21 - a shared resource for progressive local policy makers and advocates. In 2021, 400 new policies, model laws, fact sheets and more were added to the ProGov21 library.

Additionally, 5 Policy Roadmaps were updated:

- Election Finance
- Environment
- Housing
- Transportation & Mobility
- Voting Rights

4 new Roadmaps were added:

- Education
- Procurement
- Public Finance & Investment
- Women's Health

ProGov21 featured 11 contributing policy organizations that focus on a range of issues spanning from housing and transportation to women's health and procurement. These featured contributors joined us on the ProGov Podcast, which resulted in 9 new podcast episodes.

ProGov21 staff spent the whole of 2021 working on developing a new ProGov21 website that offers updated library search and filtering functions, newly designed policy roadmaps, and updated material submission options. The new website went live in April of 2022.

GET INVOLVED



www.progov21.org



www.mayorsinnovation.org



State
Smart Transportation
Initiative

www.ssti.us

COWS | Building the
High Road

7122 Sewell Social Sciences Building | 1180 Observatory Dr | Madison, WI 53706
608.265.8665 | www.cows.org