

Dr. Christine Baker-Smith, Research Director

Dr. Matt Crespi, Program Director

Civic Mapping Initiative, National League of Cities

March 6, 2024

[5:00 pm] [Dr. Pam Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Welcome back to #EquityChat sponsored by @CollegeFutures w/your hosts @IamKeithCurry @DrTammeil & @DrPamLuster. This week, we're chatting w/@ecbakersmith, Research Director, & @MattCrespi, Program Director for Civic Mapping Initiative @leagueofcities. Welcome!

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

Great to be here! [#equitychat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

Thanks, it's a pleasure to be here!

[5:05 pm] [Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q1 @ecbakersmith @MattCrespi. As you engage in equity-focused work, what is your walk-up song or anthem? @DrPamLuster @IamKeithCurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

[#equitychat](#) come on and ride it by quad city djs

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

Hm...I do a lot of transit work, so I'm debating between something ABOUT trains vs something BY Train. ...actually, I've been doing a lot of Head Start access work too, so let's go with "Wheels on the Bus." That song slaps. [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

Weird AI's "Another One Rides the Bus" is a good anthem candidate. This is a tough question. Hopefully they get easier. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:11 pm] [Dr. Keith Curry \(@lamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q2 @ecbakersmith @MattCrespi. Tell us about your work with @leagueofcities and Civic Mapping Initiative (CMI). Was there a defining moment or experience that catalyzed your journey to engage in this work?
@DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

(1/2) I've discovered that almost every area of domestic policy eventually becomes transportation policy. My personal origin story started with worrying about getting people to polling places, but there are so many starting places that lead folks to this world. [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

2/2 CMI was created along the journey as our research agenda, list of partners, and impact all kept growing. There wasn't one moment. It was dozens of moments, and dozens of people without whom this would just be a mildly interesting and very obscure research project.
[#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

I've been studying ed for a couple decades but was always struggling to figure out how to highlight its intersection with other things like transit, basic needs etc. these maps do the trick! [#equitychat](#)

[5:18 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Q3 @ecbakersmith @MattCrespi. Can you share more about how public transportation impacts #racialequity in the #higher ed space? @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

(1/n) Public transit has the ability to either close or compound equity gaps, depending on planning, priorities, resource allocation, and even (and especially) land use policies. And we see both effects in different places and projects! [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

(2/3) Bus lines can be lifelines to some neighborhoods, while other city plans invest in improving urbanism for the white and/or wealthy while settling for car dependency elsewhere.
[#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

(3/3) This affects access to all kinds of resources, including higher ed. It's especially important for community & technical college students, who are the least likely to live on campus and among the most likely to find reliable car ownership unaffordable. [#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

... (1/2)And importantly, when gaps already exist, they are biggest for the most marginalized communities. For example, there are correlations between race and socio-economic status ... and socio-economic status and the ability to own a car.
[#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

(2/2) Bc of this we can expect that low-income students-who are likely to be People of Color-are most likely to rely on public transit – getting public transit right is an opportunity to address historical inequities across multiple systems.
[#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\) @MattCrespi](#)

That planning is so important. It's hard to fix a structural problem that's been decades in the making. But some planning needs months not years! Eg: transit agencies & schools working together to align bus and class schedules and prevent mid-semester disruptions. [#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

Those small steps can make a huge difference--tons of research highlights the time scarcity that students in higher ed have & this is even greater for those with young children. [#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

One of our colleagues, [@saragoldrickrab](#) has a great book with examples the importance of time scarcity called Paying the Price if anyone's looking for a great read. . . .
[#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Gotta go slow to go fast, but sometimes it's just getting out of our silos and working together on a solution. Love this!

[Marica Sharpe @MaricaShar35453](#)

I'm a community college student and I'm so tired of the lack of transportation options in my area. I live in a food desert and I don't have a car. I have to rely on my mom to take me to school and my job. It's so frustrating.

[5:25 pm] [Dr. Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q4 @ecbakersmith @MattCrespi. How can community college leaders utilize CMI's data to improve transportation accessibility to their campuses? Can you share examples where this has been successfully implemented? @DrPamLuster @iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

As we were just talking about, colleges can work with their local transit authorities in planning course schedules and transit routes to align. [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\) @MattCrespi](#)

(1/3) Absolutely. Schools don't need us to tell them if they have a bus stop or not; they know. But we've seen schools use CMI resources in a variety of ways... (cont'd) [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\) @MattCrespi](#)

(2/3) We've helped schools find allies in lobbying & planning, coordinate with their local transit agency, identify trends to policymakers, and find peer schools doing things they might want to copy or adapt for themselves. [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\) @MattCrespi](#)

(3/3) The maps have been successful conversation starters between schools, transit providers, local leaders, advocates...even media outlets and legislators. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:32 pm] [Dr. Curry \(@iamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q5 @ecbakersmith @MattCrespi How does @leagueofcities' acquisition of CMI position this work to better support policy initiatives around improving public transit access & access to public services like highered? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

[@leagueofcities](#) is SO excited to have CMI for local municipal leaders! We're hoping they will see the tool as one way to use their ARPA & BIL funds to improve transit infrastructure and increase access to education and workforce development. [#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

Info on ARPA/BIL: [https://nlc.org/resource/local-government-arpa-investment-tracker/...](https://nlc.org/resource/local-government-arpa-investment-tracker/)
and

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

NLC is also using the community college maps & data to gather support for the PATH to College Act, which was actually inspired in part by CMI research (before it was called CMI). It would direct funding to help close gaps in accessibility.

[#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith](#) [@ecbakersmith](#)

And don't forget [@leagueofcities](#) Early Childhood team who are already implementing the Head Start Transit Map with one of their technical assistance cohorts! [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

And one more: Christy and I are also thrilled to have CMI supporting the Kids on Campus Initiative, a nationwide push to get more Head Start centers on community college campuses (and led by [@CCTrustees](#) and [@NatlHeadStart](#)).

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

We've got a map of what we've found so far, and we'll be tracking new sites as they open. We've even had a 4-year school add a Head Start based on this work, which we hope makes degree completion more attainable.

<https://google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=157YPJLzmktgDXgyBSYA5y358WrIfQzA&usp=sharing...> [#EquityChat](#)

[5:39 pm] [Dr. Luster](#) ([@DrPamLuster](#))

Q6 [@ecbakersmith](#) [@MattCrespi](#). To do this work, we must continue learning and partnering with others. How do you educate yourself and who is informing your practice? [@DrTammeil](#) [@lamkeithcurry](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) [#EquityChat](#) [#EquityAvengers](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith](#) [@ecbakersmith](#)

For me, speaking to municipal leaders is both the highlight and most informative part of this job. Sometimes we proactively reach out when we need to understand their needs and practices, & sometimes they come to us for things like technical assistance. [#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith](#) [@ecbakersmith](#)



EQUITY AVENGERS

(2/2) We get great opportunities to do this at conferences like [@leagueofcities](#) [#CCC24](#) coming up later this week where over 3000 municipal leaders gather from across the country to share experiences and ideas with each other and with our federal partners. [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

(1/n) I think casting a wide net and getting out of your bubbles is important for anyone learning about policy & research, but it's especially critical when we sit at the intersection of many different policy areas (education, transit, sustainability, equity, etc.). [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

(2/n) At a basic level, I try to diversify my information sources. Staying in touch with practitioners in transit, education and more; news outlets from all over the country; urbanist YouTubers; academic researchers; think tanks; and more. [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

(3/n) I try to stay focused on what will make a difference, not just what's interesting. That's where being part of [@leagueofcities](#) and working w/partners is crucial, from local gov'ts to national orgs (eg [@NatlHeadStart](#) [@CCTrustees](#) [@APTA_Transit](#) [@Nat_RTAP](#) et al). [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

(4/4) I could honestly spend the whole hour praising writers, researchers, and practitioners doing great work and not scratch the surface. Before this, I spent years studying networks and collaboration, so believe me when I say: nothing good we do is done alone. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:46pm] [Dr. Gilkerson](#) ([@DrTammeil](#))

Q7 [@ecbakersmith](#) [@MattCrespi](#). We all have a vision of the future we want to live in. What is your freedom dream for higher education and what gives you hope for its future? [@DrPamLuster](#) [@IamKeithCurry](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) [#EquityChat](#) [#EquityAvengers](#)

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

(1/n) I want a future where participation in all the core functions of society & citizenship—voting, grocery shopping, working, socializing, getting an education and more—is in no way dependent on one's ability to afford and drive a personal vehicle. [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)

(2/3) What gives me hope? We see cities like Memphis move bus stops to make Head Start and community college more accessible. We're seeing Gen Z get excited about traditionally boring topics like urban planning. Cities experiment every day, which makes us all better. [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi](#) ([@mattcrespi.bsky.social](#)) [@MattCrespi](#)



EQUITY AVENGERS

Q7) And we've learned a lot the last 5 years about how to accomplish many activities, especially education and training, remotely. Geography and transportation are still huge barriers, but they're slowly shrinking. Let's keep it up and not forget those lessons. [#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

puppy dogs and ice cream? [#EquityChat](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\) @MattCrespi](#)

...in the classrooms? [#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

Sure! But seriously, it's a system where education is not just a BA, it's education and training. This would go a long way to solving some workforce issues. But obviously this also requires greater federal and state investment in our public institutions. [#EquityChat](#) (1/2)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

I am hopeful that our country is on the path towards this given the increased federal investment in local solutions. Also, some schools have had success bringing therapy dogs on campus, and plenty already serve ice cream... [#EquityChat](#) (2/2)

[5:53 pm] [Dr. Curry \(@iamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q8 [@ecbakersmith @MattCrespi](#). The road to racial equity is long. How are you sustaining yourself? What practice would you recommend to other [#EquityAvengers](#)? [@DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers](#)

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\) @MattCrespi](#)

(1/n) It IS a long road, and progress can be slow, which tells me: (1) Sounds like a good candidate for high speed rail and (2) we need to look for and work towards a variety of different kinds of successes, both short term and long term, small and large. [#EquityChat](#)

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)

and we make a lot of cheesy puns over here

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\) @MattCrespi](#)

(2/n) On sustaining myself, well, I'm a Philadelphian, so I just housed a hoagie right before doing this. Aside from that...I'm kind of winging it? I'll say that working with good people makes a HUGE difference, highly recommend.

[Christy Baker-Smith @ecbakersmith](#)



Finding ways to support those who do the work daily, I am usually in the background but hearing stories of meaningful moments helps me remember what matters – seeing students supported in their search for a greater future . . . and wine [#EquityChat](#)

[6:00 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

TY @ecbaksmith @MattCrespi for sharing CMI & @leagueofcities's research with #EquityChat @CollegeFutures. Join us next week as we host @DrHarrisJay to talk about her new book #BlackWomenIvoryTower. Until next time - @IamKeithCurry @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster @equityavengers OUT!

[Matt Crespi \(@mattcrespi.bsky.social\)](#) @MattCrespi

Thanks so much for having us tonight! We'll be checking Twitter tomorrow and Friday too in case folks have follow-up questions (or want to ping us again on anything we missed tonight). [#EquityChat](#)