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**Transportation Justice for All:
Addressing Equity in the 21st Century
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Transportation Justice for All: Addressing Equity in the 21st Century

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Abstract

In the United States all communities do not receive the same benefits from transportation advancements and investments. The authors discuss how transportation justice addresses the benefits and costs of transportation. Transportation is a basic ingredient for quality of life indicators such as health, education, employment, economic development, and access to municipal services, residential mobility, and environmental quality. The authors provide a comprehensive analysis of how transportation investments and economic resources have afforded advantages for some communities while other communities have been disadvantaged by transportation decision making. Improvements in transportation investments and air quality are of special needs to low-income persons and people of color who live in communities with reduce air quality as compared to their white counterparts.

Introduction

Transportation is basic to many other quality of life indicators such as health, education, employment, economic development, access to municipal services, residential mobility, and environmental quality. The continued residential segregation of people of color away from suburban job centers (where public transit is inadequate or nonexistent) may signal a new urban crisis and a new form of "residential apartheid."¹ Transportation investments, enhancements, and financial resources have provided advantages for some communities while at the same time other communities have been disadvantaged by transportation decision making.

Old Wars, New Battles

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court wrestled with this question of different treatment accorded blacks and whites. In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court examined the constitutionality of Louisiana laws that provided for the segregation of railroad car seating by race.² The court upheld the "white section" and "colored section" Jim Crow seating law, contending that segregation did not violate any rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

In 1953, nearly four decades after the *Plessy* decision relegated blacks to the back of the bus, African Americans in Baton Rouge, the capital of Louisiana, staged the nation's first successful bus boycott. African Americans accounted for the overwhelming majority of Baton Rouge bus riders and two-thirds of the bus company's revenue.³ Their economic boycott effectively disrupted the financial stability of the bus company, costing it over \$1,600 a day. The successful Baton Rouge bus boycott occurred two years before the famous 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* U.S. Supreme Court decision declared "separate but equal" unconstitutional.

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Alabama ignited the modern civil rights movement. Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man in defiance of local "Jim Crow" laws. Her action sparked new leadership around transportation and civil rights. Mrs. Parks summarized her feelings about resisting Jim Crow in an interview with sociologist Aldon Morris in 1981: "My resistance to being mistreated on the buses and anywhere else was just a regular thing with me and not just that day."⁴

Transportation was a central theme in the "Freedom Riders" campaign in the early 1960s. John Lewis and the young Freedom Riders exercised their constitutional right of interstate travel at the risk of death. Greyhound buses were attacked and some burned in 1961. Nevertheless, the Freedom Riders continued their quest for social justice on the nation's roads and highways.

Transportation spending has always been about opportunity and equity. Moreover, how transportation is defined and

measured can often determine how equity is evaluated.⁵ In the real world, costs and benefits associated with transportation developments are not randomly distributed. Transportation justice is concerned with factors that may create and or exacerbate inequities and measures to prevent or correct disparities in benefits and costs. Disparate transportation outcomes can be subsumed under three broad categories of inequity: procedural, geographic, and social.⁶

- *Procedural Inequity.* Attention is directed to the process by which transportation decisions may or may not be carried out in a uniform, fair, and consistent manner with involvement of diverse public stakeholders. Do the rules apply equally to everyone?
- *Geographic Inequity.* Transportation decisions may have distributive impacts (positive and negative) that are geographic and spatial, such as rural vs. urban vs. central city. Some communities are physically located on the "wrong side of the tracks" and often receive substandard transportation services.
- *Social Inequity.* The distribution of transportation benefits and burdens are not randomly distributed across population groups. Generally, transportation amenities (benefits) accrue to the wealthier and more educated segment of society, while transportation disamenities (burdens) fall disproportionately on people of color and individuals at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Intergenerational equity issues are also subsumed under this category. The impacts and consequences of some transportation decisions may reach into several generations.

The Struggle to Get on the Bus

Heavy government investment in road infrastructure may be contributing to an increase in household transportation costs. People of color, who generally have lower incomes than whites, spend more of their income on transportation costs than whites.

- The metropolitan areas where transportation takes the biggest bite out of the household budget are Houston, Atlanta, Dallas, Miami and Detroit.⁷
- Nationally, only about 5.3 percent of all Americans use public transit to get to work.⁸
- Public transit has received roughly \$50 Billion since the creation of the Urban Mass Transit Administration over thirty years ago. While roadway projects have received over \$205 Billion since 1956.⁹
- Nearly 40 percent of all rural counties in this country have little or no public transportation.¹⁰
- In areas with populations from one million and below, more than half of all transit passengers have incomes of less than \$15,000 per year. People of color riders (Black, Latino, Asian, Native American) account nationally for nearly 60 percent of all transit passengers.¹¹
- Over 31% of African Americans use public transit, compared to 5% of white Americans.¹²
- Public transit ridership in 1999 was 4.5 percent higher than in the previous year.¹³
- Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) reports that walking is 36 times more dangerous than driving.¹⁴
- The most dangerous metro areas for pedestrians were Tampa, Atlanta, Miami, Orlando and Jacksonville.¹⁵
- On average, states, spend just 55 cents per person of their federal transportation funds on pedestrian projects, less than 1 percent of their total federal transportation dollars. Average spending on highways came to \$72 per person.¹⁶

In order to arrest these unhealthy transportation trends, government needs to invest in public transportation, walkable neighborhoods and bicycle facilities, stop investing in sprawl-inducing roadway projects in exurban areas, and that mortgage lenders take into account transportation expenses when counseling buyers and approving loans.

People of color all across the United States are fighting to get representation on transportation boards and commissions, and to get their fair share of transit dollars, services, bus shelters and other amenities, handicapped accessible vehicles, and affordable fares. Some groups are waging grassroots campaigns to get "dirty diesel" buses and bus depots from being dumped in their neighborhoods. The campaign to "Dump Dirty Diesels" is about the

right to breathe clean air and protect public health. These are not “sexy” campaigns—they are life and death struggles.

Rosa Parks would have a difficult time sitting on the front or back of a Montgomery bus today, since the city dismantled its public bus system—which served mostly blacks and poor people. The cuts were made at the same time that federal tax dollars boosted the construction of the region’s extensive suburban highways.¹⁷ The changes in Montgomery took place amid growing racial geographic segregation and tension between white and black members of the city council. The City described its actions publicly as fiscally necessary, even as Montgomery received large federal transportation subsidies to fund renovation of non-transit improvements.

Windy Cooler, and organizers with the Montgomery Transportation Coalition (MTC), describes racial diversity on her region’s metropolitan planning organization (MPO):

In a city that is 50% African-American where historically and even today, the black community is so egregiously underserved and largely unheard, and where citizens, regardless of color are uninvolved and uneducated in the [transportation] planning process, it is no wonder, in fact it is inevitable, that the needs of the few, who are powerful for the moment, are put above the needs of the whole.”¹⁸

Alabama State Senator George Clay, D-Tuskegee, has vowed to introduce a bill to reign in the road builders. Getting such a bill through the Alabama legislature will not be an easy task because of the attitude of the legislature, Alabama DOT, and the powerful highway lobby. According to Sen. Clay, the Alabama DOT officials “think of the transportation money as their own private preserve.”¹⁹

It is ironic that Rosa Parks lived most of her life after Montgomery in Detroit—the nation’s largest metropolitan area without rapid transit. Detroit builds cars. Detroit is the “Motor City.” The federal government transfers \$100 million of Michigan’s annual federal transit taxes, paid by everyone who buys gasoline, to cities in other states that are building or expanding rapid transit lines. For decades, regional transit proposals offered by the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), and others were stymied. In October 2001, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) approved a regional transit plan—a plan that will set the direction for regional transit for the next 25 years.²⁰ Constructing a metro Detroit rapid transit system would cost about \$2 billion over 25 years, plus \$200 annually to operate.

After decades of inaction, metropolitan Detroit business leaders finally realized that the city of Detroit is connected to its suburbs, the rest of the region, state, nation, and globally. Even the Big Three automakers endorsed the new regional transit plan. The Big Three automaker’s statement of support reads: “We want to reiterate our support for public transit in Southeast Michigan. An effective regional transit system is important in connecting workers with jobs, serving a rapidly aging population, and in reducing traffic congestion, which has a positive effect on the environment.”²¹

Writing for the Michigan Land Use Institute, Kelly Thayer suggests that the sudden surge of support for rapid transit in metro Detroit can be attributable to economic power. She writes:

Economic power—nationally and globally—is a key reason why the state and metro Detroit’s political, business, and grassroots leaders have reached the final phase of the complex and promising initiative to build a rapid transit bus line. There really is no other choice . . . if Detroit and its suburbs hope to remain economically competitive with other urban regions.²²

Having the support from Ford, GM, and Chrysler were important, but getting the mostly black Detroit and its mostly white suburbs to agree on regional transit was even more important. Much of the credit for getting the plan accepted by the public was carried out by citizens groups on the ground who saw transit in metro Detroit as an economic, quality of life, health, and environmental justice issue.

Vehicles emissions have created a major air quality and health problem in metro Detroit. Bad air hits children with asthma and other respiratory illnesses especially hard. Over 39 percent of Detroit children have asthma-- three times the national rate.²³ Proponents of regional transit marketed their plan with supporting clean air and public health, and it worked.

From New York City to Los Angeles, community leaders are demanding an end to unfair subsidies between urban transit “dependent” riders and suburban “choice” riders and tax dollars that subsidize highway development on the suburban fringe. Transportation dollars are aiding and abetting flight of people, jobs, and development to the suburban fringe. Groups are also struggling to get public transit systems linked to jobs and economic activity centers. They are also challenging public transportation decisions, types of transit (i.e., rail vs buses, diesel vs clean fuels), unfair fare hikes, distribution of amenities, modernization, and enhancement projects that shortchange poor people and people of color.

Community groups are fighting to end the kind of transit racism that killed 17-year-old Cynthia Wiggins of Buffalo, New York. Wiggins, an African American, was crushed by a dump truck while crossing a seven-lane highway because Buffalo’s Number Six bus, an inner-city bus used mostly by African Americans, was not allowed to stop at the suburban Walden Galleria Mall. Cynthia had not been able to find a job in Buffalo but was able to secure work at a fast-food restaurant in the suburban mall. The bus stopped about 300 yards short of the mall.

The Wiggins family and other members of the African American community charged the Walden Galleria Mall with using the highway as a racial barrier to exclude some city residents. The high-profile trial, argued by Johnnie L. Cochran Jr., began on November 8, 1999. The lawsuit was settled 10 days later when the mall owners, Pyramid Companies of Syracuse, agreed to pay \$2 million of the \$2.55 million settlement, over time, to Wiggins’ four-year old son. The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority agreed to pay \$300,000, and the truck driver, John P. Bunch, agreed to pay \$250,000.²⁴

In September 1996, the Labor Community Strategy Center won an historic out-of-court settlement against the Los Angeles MTA.²⁵ In the process, the group was able to win major fare and bus pass concessions. They also forced MTA to spend \$89 million on 278 new buses that run on clean-burning compressed natural gas. The struggle, led by Los Angeles Bus Riders Union, epitomizes grassroots groups’ challenges to transit racism. In the summer of 1998, the Bus Riders Union began a “no seat, no fare” campaign against crowded buses and second-class treatment by MTA.²⁶

In 1994, African Americans in Macon, Georgia filed a class action lawsuit challenging Macon-Bibb County’s use of federal funds under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. Macon’s population is evenly divided between blacks and whites.²⁷ Over 90 percent of the bus riders in Macon are African Americans, and more than 28 percent of Macon’s African Americans do not own cars, compared with only 6 percent of the city’s whites. A disproportionate share of transportation dollars in Macon- Bibb County went to road construction and maintenance at the expense of the bus system.

In 1993, Macon-Bibb County devoted more than \$33.65 million of federal, state, and local funds for roads, streets, and highways, of which some \$10 million came from federal funds. During the same year, local officials accepted no federal funds for the Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority and budgeted only \$1.4 million for public transportation. In 1998, the lawsuit was settled out of court with Macon-Bibb County agreeing to accept federal funds for the first time to support their bus system that is used primarily by African Americans.

Metropolitan Atlanta is struggling to get its roads vs transit balancing act together. Because it is a nonattainment area, limitations were placed on its road-building programs. Even with the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority or GRTA, a super state transportation agency created specifically to address Atlanta’s transportation problem, it has been an uphill battle to get funds diverted into building a seamless, coordinated regional transit system linked to the

mature Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA). The outlying suburban counties (Cobb, Gwinnett, and Clayton) created their own “separate” bus systems—some with the aid of GRTA. For many white suburbanites, “MARTA” still stands for “Moving Africans Rapidly Through Atlanta.”²⁸

The Metropolitan Atlanta Transportation Equity Coalition (MATEC), a coalition of eleven black Atlanta organizations, filed an administrative complaint with the U.S. Department of Transportation charging MARTA with racial discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and failure to comply with the federally mandated Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

The MATEC alleged that MARTA's service delivery to communities of color is not up to par with the services provided to white communities. They point out that a disproportionate number of the MARTA's overcrowded bus lines are located in minority communities, and minority communities do not receive a proportionate share of clean compressed natural gas (CNG) buses and bus shelters. They also contend that MARTA rail stations located in people of color neighborhoods are poorly maintained and fewer amenities are provided in comparison to those located in white communities. Additionally, inadequate security is provided at the MARTA rail stations serving minority riders.

The MATEC insists that MARTA's decision to raise its fares has a negative, disproportionate, and discriminatory effect on the system's largely people of color (over 75 percent of MARTA's riders are African American), transit-dependent riders, and will cause them irreparable harm. The coalition alleges that MARTA has denied disabled riders equal access to public buses, entitling them to relief under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Disabled riders have not been accommodated in a timely manner and are disadvantaged due to malfunctioning equipment. The MATEC members also charge MARTA with failing to provide comparable paratransit services. The disabled utilizing MARTA's paratransit services are subjected to long delays and excessively long trips before reaching their destination. The complaint is currently in mediation.

Transportation subsidies continue to be a sore point in Boston. For years, people of color transit riders in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan have complained about poor services and charged the MBTA with using their fares to subsidize suburban riders. A recent study from a Harvard graduate student Masaya Otake confirmed what these residents has been saying for years—that they were getting shabby treatment by Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority (MBTA). Otake's study measures and compares subsidies of the various transit modes. He concludes that these subsidy/passenger among the various transit modes is very different: Otake concludes:

Subsidy/Passenger of Commuter rail (\$6.98) is much higher than bus (\$1.90) or subway (\$1.68). Even within bus system, Subsidy/Passenger is different according to the area. For Example, Operating-Subsidy/Passenger in Roxbury bus routes is \$0.71, much lower compared to the MBTA bus (\$1.08), South Boston Bus (\$1.31), and even lower than Regional bus (\$0.86) or “Minority & Low-income” bus routes (\$0.79). The difference may be more if including Capital expenses because of the marginal cost theory.²⁹

Roxbury residents use transit four times as often as suburbanites and, therefore contribute more money in fares to the T's operating costs than any other community. Comparing the funds the T uses to subsidize bus and rail routes, high ridership in Roxbury keeps subsidies per rider lower than in all other areas of the T system. A “reverse Robin Hood” policy operates in many transit systems where the meager resources of poor transit dependent riders are used to subsidize affluent transit riders.³⁰

A President Weighs In

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” This executive order reinforces what had been law for three decades. Indeed, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discriminatory practices in programs receiving federal funds.

Environmental requirements also reinforce a number of regulatory laws and statutes, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states, “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”³¹

The 1994 executive order also focuses on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a law that established policy goals for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the environment. NEPA’s goal is to ensure for all Americans a safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing environment. NEPA requires federal agencies to prepare a detailed statement on the environmental effects of proposed federal actions that significantly affect the quality of human health.

The executive order calls for improved methodologies for assessing and mitigating health effects from multiple and cumulative exposure. It also provides for collection of data on low-income and minority populations that may be disproportionately at risk. The order further calls for environmental health impact studies on people who subsist on fish and wildlife, and it encourages the affected populations to participate in the various phases of assessment and mitigation.

Then, on April 15, 1997, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued its Order on Environmental Justice, requiring the U.S. DOT to comply with the executive order within the framework of existing laws, regulations, and guidance.³² In December 1998, the Federal Highway Administration issued an order requiring the agency to incorporate environmental justice in all its programs, policies, and activities.

Transportation Equity and TEA-21

Congress passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 to improve “public transportation necessary to achieve national goals for improved air quality, energy conservation, international competitiveness, and mobility for elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged persons in urban and rural areas of the country.” ISTEA also promised to build intermodal connections between people to jobs, goods and markets, and neighborhoods.

ISTEA mandated that improvements comply with the Clean Air Act whereby priorities be given to projects that would clean up polluted air. ISTEA also required transportation plans to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination in the use of federal funds, investments, and transportation services.

The Transportation Efficiency Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21) is the largest infrastructure-funding bill ever and it includes policy provisions that are designed to provide funding for highway and transit programs until 2003.³³ “TEA-3 is the third iteration of the transportation vision established by Congress in 1991 with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and renewed in 1998 through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).”³⁴ TEA-21 expires September 2003. The 108th Congress will take on TEA-3 when it convenes in 2003.

Nationwide, organizations and transportation advocates are gearing up for debates on the TEA-21 renewal. Transportation advocates are positioning themselves to get TEA-3 legislation to include strong public support, public participation, and a demand of accountability for transportation agencies in the development of transportation projects. The Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) outlined four challenges of the TEA-21 renewal: “(1) fix it first; (2) create better transportation choices and build more livable communities; and (4) learn to serve people.”³⁵ To be effective, TEA-3 must better involve stakeholders and the public.

Clean Fuel, Clean Air, and Energy Security

Americans drive over 2 billion miles each year. Most of these trips---over 86 percent---involve the automobile. Three-fourths of all commuting cars carry only one person. Lest anyone dismiss transportation as a tangential issue, consider that Americans spend more on transportation than any other household expense except housing. The average American household spends one fifth of its income---or about \$6,000 a year---for each car that it owns and operates.³⁶ Americans spend more on transportation than they do on food, education, and health care. The American automobile culture was spurred on by massive government investments in roads (3 million miles) and interstate highways (45,000 miles). Just 20 percent of the gasoline tax goes to mass transit, while 80 percent goes to highways. The end result has meant more pollution, traffic congestion, wasted energy, urban sprawl, residential segregation, and threats to public health.³⁷

Improvements in transportation investments and air quality are of special significance to low-income persons and people of color who are more likely to live in areas with reduced air quality when compared with whites. A 1990 National Argonne Laboratory study discovered that 57 percent of whites, 65 percent of African Americans, and 80 percent of Latinos lived in the 437 counties that failed to meet at least one of the EPA ambient air quality standards.³⁸

Emissions from vehicles are the single largest source of air pollution in the United States. Transportation-related sources account for over 30 percent of the primary smog-forming pollutants emitted nationwide and 28 percent of the fine particulates. Vehicle emissions are the main reason 121 Air Quality Districts in the U.S. are in noncompliance with the 1970 Clean Air Act's National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Moreover, emissions from cars, trucks, and buses cause 60-90 percent of air pollution in cities. Transportation-related emissions also generate more than a quarter of the greenhouse gases.³⁹

The number of automobiles is increasing three times faster than the rate of population growth. Automobiles are a major contributor of smog. Children are at special risk from ozone.⁴⁰ The public health community has insufficient information to explain the magnitude of some of the air pollution-related health problems. Ground-level ozone may exacerbate health problems such as asthma, nasal congestions, throat irritation, respiratory tract inflammation, reduced resistance to infection, changes in cell function, loss of lung elasticity, chest pains, lung scarring, formation of lesions within the lungs, and premature aging of lung tissues.⁴¹

Reduction in motor vehicle emissions can have marked health improvements. For example, the CDC reports that "when the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996 brought about a reduction in auto use by 22.5%, asthma admissions to ERs and hospitals also decreased by 41.6%."⁴² The CDC researchers also concluded that "less driving, better public transport, well designed landscape and residential density will improve air quality more than will additional roadways."⁴³ Excessive ozone pollution contributed 86,000 asthma attacks in Baltimore, 27,000 in Richmond, and 130,000 in Washington, DC.⁴⁴

Asthma affects almost 5 million children under 18 years of age. Inner city children have the highest rates for asthma prevalence, hospitalization, and mortality.⁴⁵ In the United States, asthma is the fourth leading cause of disability among children under 18 years old.⁴⁶ The number of asthma sufferers doubled from 6.7 million in 1980 to 17.3 million in 1998.⁴⁷ Over 4.8 asthma sufferers are children.⁴⁸ Asthma hits poor, inner-city dwellers, and people of color hardest. African Americans and Latino are almost three times more likely than whites to die from asthma.⁴⁹ In 1995, more than 5,000 Americans died from asthma.⁵⁰ The hospitalization rate for African Americans and Latinos is 3 to 4 times the rate for whites.⁵¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that asthma accounts for more than 10 million lost school days, 1.2 million emergency room visits, 15 million outpatient visits, and over 500,000 hospitalizations each year. Asthma cost Americans over \$14.5 billion in 2000.⁵²

In addition to health and environment reasons for the U.S. to move our transportation beyond oil to more secure and sustainable alternative fuels, there are compelling energy security and economic strength reasons to invest in clean fuels technology. The U.S. has over 217 million cars, buses, and trucks that consume 67 percent of the nation's oil.

Transportation-related oil consumption in the U.S. has risen 43 percent since 1975. The United States accounts for almost one-third of the world's vehicles. With just five percent of the world's population, Americans consume more than 25 percent of the oil produced worldwide.⁵³ More important, almost 60 percent of our oil comes from foreign sources.

Global pressure on the world's dwindling oil supply will only add to energy insecurity at home and abroad. Investment in clean fuel technology would not only have considerable environmental, economic, and health benefits, but would go a long way in promoting domestic energy security.

Conclusion

Transportation justice deals with benefits and costs. All communities have not received the same benefits from transportation advancements and investments. In addition, some of our transportation policies have distributed the costs and externalities at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum and exacerbated social inequities. For example, some transportation projects cut wide paths through low-income and people of color neighborhoods, physically isolated residents from their institutions and businesses, disrupted once-stable communities, displaced thriving businesses, contributed to urban sprawl, subsidized infrastructure decline, created traffic gridlock, and subjected residents to elevated risks from accidents, noise, spills, and explosions from vehicles carrying hazardous chemicals and other dangerous materials.

The environmental justice movement has set out clear goals of eliminating unequal enforcement of the nation's environmental, public health, housing, employment, land use, civil rights, and transportation laws. Transportation is a key ingredient in any organization's plan to build economically viable and sustainable communities. State DOTs and MPOs have a major responsibility to ensure that their programs, policies, and practices do not discriminate against or adversely and disproportionately impact people of color and the poor. There is no cookie-cutter formula for dismantling discrimination and unjust transportation policies and practices.

Policy Recommendations

Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21). Build on, preserve, and strengthen the environmental, health, air quality, equity, and historic preservation framework and provisions of TEA-21. TEA-21 renewal will need address improved performance and accountability, mobility and choices, safety, economic prosperity, energy efficiency, and new transportation investments that meet the needs and challenges of creating healthy, livable and just communities.

Public Participation. Ensure greater stakeholder participation and public involvement to receive effective transportation decision making. The statewide transportation agencies and MPOs must design and implement MPO public involvement strategies with community-based organizations to identify minority and low-income populations, their concerns, and facilitate their involvement into transportation decision making.

Disproportionate and Adverse Impacts. Ensure the use performance measures to assess equity impacts (benefits and burdens) of state DOTs and MPOs transportation planning, investment decisions, and policies impact on Title VI protected classes, minority populations, and low-income populations.

Research and Evaluation. Improve research, data collection, and assessment techniques due to disparities that exist when it comes to transportation benefits. Incorporate an automated mapping system (Geographical Information System) that joins socioeconomic data with transportation plans.⁵⁴

Interagency Cooperation and Planning. Promote interagency cooperation in transportation planning, development, and program implementation to achieve livable, healthy, and sustainable communities. An interagency approach offers great promise in addressing social equity and environmental justice concerns. Solutions for many of these

local, regional, and state transportation problems will require several agencies working together with the public.

Environmental Justice and Certification Review. Incorporate environmental justice as a benchmark for MPO recertification to ensure that compliance of federal funds for transportation projects include public input and public involvement in the transportation decision making process.⁵⁵

Environmental Justice Planning Team. Create more environmental justice planning teams similar to the one formed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) which consists of stakeholders representing business, environmental and community-based organizations as well as civic groups, universities, and governmental agencies⁵⁶ to provide guidance on the development of regional transportation plans.

New Guidelines for Financial Disclosure for Transportation Planning. Encourage MPOs to develop new guidelines in publicizing their transportation improvement program documents. MPOs, DOTs and the FHWA need to create a common system of project tracking and data-sharing⁵⁷ among themselves and with community stakeholders.

Transportation and Workforce Investment Act. Promote transportation as support service which includes services for adult and youth services, adult education, literacy programs, and vocational rehabilitation.⁵⁸

Employment Transportation Projects Partnerships. Implement employment transportation projects⁵⁹ that are community-based and consist of training and educating community residents for transportation jobs and conduct transportation job fairs in low-income minority communities because they are transit dependent and rely on others for their mobility.

Baseline Assessment Tools. There is a need for increased knowledge in the development of improved baseline transportation equity assessments that estimate current levels of inaccessibility and adverse impacts; improved mobility assessment methods; air pollution and noise models that are more capable of micro-scale (neighborhood analysis); more effective methods of reaching affected populations and gauging neighborhood-level priorities regarding elements needing preservation or enhancement; better predictive approaches for estimating trip geography and travel desires of low-income populations and minority populations in specific situations; location analysis of public and private facilities that take into account protected populations' abilities to conduct their daily activities; and improved techniques for communicating probable impact, positive and negative, of contemplated transportation system changes.⁶⁰

Clean Fuel. There is an urgent need to move the nation's transportation systems away from its current over-dependence on oil.⁶¹ Research needs to be conducted to determine what types of regulatory reform is needed to remove the obstacles to transitioning toward a non-oil based transportation systems. Federal and state governments need to serve as a catalyst for promoting alternative fuel such as natural gas, fuel cell systems, and renewable hydrogen. An interagency approach is needed since no one federal agency (i.e., EPA, DOT, DOE, HHS, etc.) can address the issue alone. New government incentives and funding are needed to accelerate the deployment of clean fuel vehicle and infrastructure enhancements for transit, government vehicle fleets, delivery trucks, including garbage trucks, taxis, airport vehicles, school buses, and others. Over seventy cities in the U.S. are using natural-gas buses in their fleet. Grant, assistance, and other incentives are also needed to promote public and private sector partnerships and alternative fuel and hydrogen vehicle training and certification. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has a major role in public education and outreach efforts need to be expanded.

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