Transportation Reveals the Heart of U.S. Culture

Our transportation system can tell us a lot about U.S. society. It can tell us about racism, economic injustice and environmental degradation. The patterns of our complex historical development as a nation - economic, social, cultural, political, environmental - are imbedded in a transportation system many people take for granted. It is a system that destabilizes urban core communities and does not serve the needs of many people of color, women, working, poor, young, elderly and disabled people in urban, rural and Native American tribal communities alike.

Rural America is where 43 percent of disabled, 39 percent of elderly, 32 percent of unemployed and 39 percent of people below poverty live. However, less than 10 percent of federal spending for public transportation goes to rural communities, which have high numbers of people who are transit-dependent.

In rural Native American communities, roads are often poorly maintained or do not provide efficient access to needed services and destinations. Public transit is poor or non-existent, leaving virtually no alternative but to rely on motor vehicles. In many cases, the costs of owning and maintaining a motor vehicle produces severe financial hardship and competes with other basic human needs for good nutrition, a safe home and good quality health care.

Highways cut through inner cities, creating environmental hazards and fracturing communities physically, socially and economically. Measurably higher levels of immediate and long-term toxic effects from air, water and noise pollution and debris degrade local land values and further destabilize urban areas. These same areas are challenged by low employment, poor services, crumbling infrastructure and loss of tax revenues to the suburbs.

Such communities become isolated. Their infrastructure decays and land becomes under-utilized as development goes elsewhere, duplicating infrastructure to support new urban sprawl and consuming ever more land, energy and other natural resources. The crumbling public transportation system is underfunded and neglected, directly contributing to the social, economic and environmental deterioration of our cities, where nearly 75 percent of all Americans live. Of these, 30 to 50 percent are transit-dependent - those too poor, young, old, disabled or unwilling to drive.

Internationally, the South is rapidly implementing auto-dominated infrastructure patterned after the U.S. transportation system. Consequently, as global urbanization increases, many of the same hands of social, economic and environmental stresses are exacerbated, leaving those most vulnerable without safe, efficient, accessible and affordable transportation alternatives. Poor communities around the world end up receiving the fewest benefits from the transportation system while incurring the highest costs in terms of poor access, limited mobility, social neglect, economic injustice and environmental degradation. As the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) approaches in June 1996, in Istanbul, Turkey, the linkage of transportation to basic survival and livability for communities around the world is crucial.

A socially just and ecologically sustainable transportation system has the potential to increase job and income opportunities, promote efficient and healthy land use patterns, create environmentally safe communities, decrease fossil fuel consumption and improve the overall social, economic and environmental quality of life. But, to improve public transit and other transportation alternatives, including bicycling and walking, and to protect public health and environmental resources means we must broaden and democratize the debate and policy-making process.

This issue of Race Poverty and the Environment (RPE) examines these and other transportation issues from a variety of perspectives and experiences. Important voices from communities of color, women, disabled people, labor, social justice advocates, environmentalists, transportation reform advocates and others frame the issues, illustrate examples, relate real-life experiences and offer strategies for reforming our transportation system to serve the needs of all people. We learn that community struggles are regional struggles that national struggles are global struggles. For example, privatization attacks on organized Mexican public transit workers are similar to the attacks on San Francisco bus drivers and political efforts to privatize public transit in the United States.

While international financial institutions force market incentives on the South, U.S. environmentalists are pushing similar policies. Market-based transportation pricing policies proposed as solutions for congestion and air pollution, for example, may end up allowing wealthy people to drive with ease, while poor people stay stuck in traffic with no affordable, safe, efficient, accessible transportation alternatives. Public funding going to support these class-biased policies takes away resources from basic

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transportation services where they are needed most. Disinvesting in the public sector and using public money for private gain is an all too familiar pattern in this country and around the world.

This issue of RPE evolved from the issues addressed in our own work. At the Urban Habitat Program (UHP), we have been working with community-based organizations, transit workers, environmentalists, social justice advocates, public agencies and the socially responsible private sector to proactively and constructively engage these issues. UHP’s Bayview Hunters Point Social and Ecological Justice Transportation Project developed a social justice approach to a community-based transportation planning process that linked public transportation investments and improvements to community economic development, land use, energy efficiency, environmental protection and community revitalization. The Bayview Hunters Point District in San Francisco is a predominantly African American and Asian American community heavily impacted by industry, toxic pollution and locally unwanted land uses. A community partnership involving community-based organizations and residents, transportation planning consultants and UHP independently created a community transportation plan, much of which is very likely to be implemented. Similar community efforts are underway in places like Oakland, CA and Chicago.

We have actively worked with transit workers and environmental groups to oppose transit service cutbacks and fare increases and the weakening of the public’s ability to challenge transit reductions under the California Environmental Quality Act. We continue to work with the local transit workers union to counter media attacks and political attempts to privatize San Francisco’s public transit system.

In early 1996, UHP will publish a ground-breaking report on Congestion Pricing and the Right to Access: A Social

Justice and Ecological Sustainability Framework and Analysis: This report articulates a framework and methodology for addressing the social, economic and environmental justice dimensions of market-based transportation pricing policy proposals. The framework is applied to the recently completed “San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Congestion Pricing Demonstration Program”, the first such national demonstration project funded by the Federal Highway Administration. Traditional “equity” analyses do not address the larger context of the transportation system; the linkages of social, economic and environmental issues and impacts; nor the process of policy-making; they do not speak to the social justice implications of community participation in the on-going problem definition, needs assessment, planning, project development, implementation, evaluation and related decision-making processes. All of these are fundamental to the principles of social justice, ecological sustainability and the creation of a truly sustainable transportation system.

The profile of social justice and transportation challenges in this issue of RPE provides an overview of the critical role transportation plays in our lives and in our communities, urban, rural and tribal alike. It is by no means an exhaustive illustration of these challenges or perspectives. We have not included the very important cultural dimensions to our transportation history, such as the “Underground Railroad” traveled by Africans and African Americans escaping the inhumane brutality and exploitation of slavery, the forced relocation and genocide committed against the original native peoples of this continent on the militarily coerced "Trail of Tears", the exploitation of Chinese immigrant “slave labor” in building the western railroad expansion to fulfill Eurocentric fantasies of “manifest destiny” and many other muted stories. Yet, all of these experiences are part of our legacy and the political, social, economic, cultural and environmental values and attitudes that have given rise to the transportation system we know and use today.

Two national conferences on transportation and environmental justice took place over the last year in Chicago and Atlanta. These brought together over 400 community activists, social justice advocates, environmentalists, and local, state and federal officials to begin a national dialogue on the environmental and social justice dimensions of our transportation system.

Social justice, ecological sustainability and principles of environmental justice must be at the heart of creating healthy, livable communities, cities and regions. If we meet the transportation needs of the most vulnerable people in our society - people of color, women, working, poor, young, elderly and disabled people and those who have the fewest transportation options - we meet the basic needs of everyone. Making public mass transit, bicycling and walking the primary modes of urban transportation, and designing urban space to accommodate people and not automobiles can reduce suburban sprawl and inner-city abandonment, while protecting public health and the environment. Providing much needed transportation alternatives for rural and tribal communities can significantly improve the quality of life for people who live there. Creating this baseline threshold should be given a high priority as the way to develop a transportation system that is truly socially just and ecologically sustainable.

Henry Holmes is the Associate Director of the Urban Habitat Program. He is also the Director of UHP’s Social and Ecological Justice Transportation Improvement Project.
By Hank Dittmar

Rosa Parks sparked the greatest social change of the modem era forty years ago when she asserted her civil rights in transportation by refusing to sit at the back of the bus. Today Ms. Parks might find that bus service in her neighborhood is nonexistent or dangerously overcrowded. She would almost certainly find that it fails to connect her conveniently with job opportunities, health care and government services.

Everyone is familiar with public debate and government action on issues of civil rights and equal protection in government services such as education and housing. The application of these guarantees to the provision of transportation infrastructure and service by federal grantees is less familiar. Yet, the federal Civil Rights Act applies to all federal programs. In fact, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act’s (ISTEA) planning regulations specify that states and metropolitan planning organizations must demonstrate compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. A demonstration of compliance in a state or metropolitan long range plan or transportation improvement program could examine several distinct issues:

- the accessibility of the transportation system to different population and ethnic groups in the area;
- an analysis of transit and road system expenditures by geographic subarea, focusing on census tracts with high minority populations;
- a review of the decision making process for transportation funding, to ensure both representation and public access; and
- transportation system use by the different population groups, revealing the distribution of the benefits of federal transportation investment.

How Accessible is the Transportation System?

Measures of system accessibility begin with the question of and how crowded is it? For roads, one would examine congestion levels and access to the freeway. Urban people of color neighborhoods are often characterized by packed buses and pass-ups while suburban commuters get a seat. Similarly, freeways and arterials in urban core neighborhoods are often crowded with commuters while suburban arterials are less crowded. In rural areas, people of color neighborhoods may have unpaved roads or no transit service at all. A judge in Contra Costa County, California recently ordered the County to consider access to transit in locating county facilities in response to a lawsuit brought by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

Are Tax Dollars Being Invested Fairly and Equitably?

A Title VI analysis could also examine investment patterns proposed in the long range plan or transportation improvement program. While ISTEA regulations discourage suballocation to specific jurisdictions, they encourage transportation agencies to meet the needs of central city residents and of traditionally underserved segments of the population. What percentage of road and transit funding is going to areas with high proportions of people of color and how does this investment pattern compare to the population pattern in the region or state? Is adequate funding being devoted to maintain older areas with high populations of people of color or is the bulk of funding being devoted to new projects in newly developing areas? The Labor Community Strategy Center in Los Angeles has pointed out that overcrowded bus routes in the LA’s center city actually break even or make money while the new commuter rail lines to outlying suburbs require tax subsidies of $10-$20 per rider. Parents in Little Rock, Arkansas are concerned that a new highway project will encourage white flight from the city, aggravating segregation problems in the city’s schools. For another example, Minnesota state legislator Myron Orfield’s study of public investment in the Twin Cities reveals deep disparities in spending that favor the wealthy suburbs over city neighborhoods with high percentages of residents of color. Title VI should be a tool to define and correct these biases.
IS THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS REPRESENTATIVE AND FAIR?

A third area to examine is the decision making process for transportation funding. With 80 percent of ISTEA dollars remaining in state control, this question is relevant both at the state and metropolitan level. How open or representative is a decision made by an appointed state highway official or a state highway commission? Are these groups representative of the state’s population? Similarly, does the voting body of the metropolitan planning organization reflect population distribution within the region? A recent study of voting by metropolitan planning organizations by the Advisory commission on Intergovernmental relations revealed that the center city was under-represented on over three quarters of these bodies. In Chicago, for example, the City has five percent of the votes on the Chicago Area Transportation Study and over 40 percent of the area’s population.

ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE SYSTEM ENJOYED BY ALL?

Finally, a civil rights analysis should review the use of the transportation system by different population groups. Are the benefits (and costs) of the transportation system shared among the population? Much data is available from the 1990 Census on this matter though the Urban Transportation Planning Package. At a national level, this data reveals large disparities in rates of travel, auto ownership, transit dependency and enjoyment of the benefits of transportation. These disparities exist along many lines: racial, ethnic, income, sex, and urban vs. suburban.

If inequities or deficiencies are identified as a result of an analysis, then the plan should document what steps are being taken to address the problem. The end result of such a review would be an orientation of the transportation plan toward providing needed services to neighborhoods and communities — a planning approach where people matter. While a civil rights analysis needs to begin by identifying and correcting what’s wrong with the present system, a transportation program focused on social justice must go beyond to ensure that transportation contributes toward healthy and just communities. It is not enough to just stop doing things wrong; with $25 billion in federal tax dollars being invested in transportation every year, we have to recognize that transportation can be a big part of doing things right.

Hank Ditmar is the Executive Director of the Surface Transportation Policy Project.

Mable Daisy Howard

February 3, 1905 • March 29, 1994

If I could put my arms around the whole world I would!

— Mable Howard

Mable Howard, your skillfulness has paralyzed the injustice of the powerful and converted cynics to activists. We call you endearingly, 'Ma Howard', because you symbolize the Black maternal determination to protect and defend.

So spoke Reverend Hasiah Williams in 1978 on the occasion of Mable Howard receiving the honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, from the Center for Urban Black Studies. Countless others have echoed his sentiment.

Mable D. Howard, long time Berkeley resident died in the home of her daughter Jessie Blackmon, Tuesday morning at 12:30 am, March 29, 1994 at the age of 89. She had lived in Berkeley since 1946 and was a resident of the San Francisco Bay Area since 1942. She was a mother, grandmother, great grandmother, humanitarian, political and union activist, community and civic leader, and friend to thousands.

As a shipyard worker at Bethlehem steel in the early 1940s, she fought for entrance into the painters union and was the first Black woman admitted. For over thirty years she was extremely active with the ILWU and friends with the late Harry Bridges. In the early 1950's with the Longshoremen on strike in San Francisco, and rampant discrimination keeping Blacks unemployed, Mable Howard, determined to support her family, took half of them to Alaska, where she homesteaded and worked for six months.

Returning to the Bay Area, she continued her activist role. Her house was a meeting place for the lesser known and well known, and home to young people who needed someone to talk with or a place to stay. Mable Howard was called Mama Howard in part because she politically nurtured so many prominent civic leaders.

In the 1960's, when the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) was being constructed, Mable Howard, made it her personal crusade to prevent BART from dividing Berkeley. She instigated a one million dollar suit, and stopped construction for nine months until BART officials agreed to run BART underground. The Ashby BART station is really Mama Howard Station.

The 1960's also found her militantly opposed to the Vietnam War, and actively demonstrating with César Chávez and other leading Civil Rights leaders. Mable Howard leaves her spirit of undying opposition to injustice in all forms and the all encompassing love for people that informed her every action.

Edited from Mabel Howard’s memorial booklet.
Still Getting on the Back of the Bus?

By Lu Blaine

Harlem is a multi-racial neighborhood and a cultural center for many ethnic groups. It is also a perfect example of environmental injustice caused by transportation policy. In addition to being saddled with most of Manhattan's bus depots (each with more than 100 diesel buses idling daily), West Harlem residents wait in subway stations during rush hour bypassed by trains skipping through Harlem to benefit mostly white communities uptown. The fence around a recently rejuvenated high-speed rail line was left unbuilt until a child was killed. To absorb excess traffic from a nearby highway, New York City recently turned a mile-long stretch of a Harlem street into a high-speed drive with dividers shrinking the adjacent park and sidewalks while protecting the park further downtown in the predominantly white neighborhood immediately south.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is finally repairing Central Harlem's underground subway stations that were in such a state of disrepair that when it rained at street level water poured onto the platforms. It took months of organizing to force the MTA to fix the escalator at the 125th street subway station, which was breaking all the time. All of these problems just in one neighborhood exacerbated residents' already negative opinions of mass transit. This points to a concern that many social justice activists share — they advocate for innovative mass transportation policies at the same time they work against entrenched biases that have placed service and accessibility to people of color and poor people at a low priority.

Transportation and service improvements in communities of color are social justice issues. Safe, reliable, affordable and accessible mass transportation is critical to the survival of urban communities of color that are often heavily dependent on public transportation. Transportation services have historically been designed to restrict or eliminate options that would serve the often undocumented needs of inner city residents. For example, Robert Moses, the proto-typical urban planner, placed low bridges over Long Island highways in order to bar buses 'full of Black people' from entering the area. Additionally, the relationship between race, transportation policy and facilities siting has taken a toll on the long-term development and growth of entire communities by restricting their options for employment and recreation.

Subsidizing Whose Transit?

In New York State, Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) riders' household incomes are more than double that of NYC subway riders, yet 60% of the cost of their ride is subsidized. NYC subway riders receive less than a 40% subsidy. More than half of New York's subway riders are people of color, and 60% of LIRR riders are white. Both commuter lines serving NYC's suburbs offer monthly discount passes, while the NYC Transit Authority has just begun to consider discounts to city residents. One of their few existing discount programs is only offered to users of the suburban commuter lines. Clearly, these commuter lines underserve NYC-based commuters, who are cut off from employment opportunities by infrequent reverse commuting schedules and spotty transit access to the suburban office parks where many new jobs are located.

Despite receiving preferential transit treatment, many suburbanites are still driving. One million vehicles enter Manhattan's central business district every day. Although the detrimental environmental, social and economic impacts of society's reliance on cars affect society as a whole, the greatest impact occurs not to the drivers of the vehicles but to the communities that are being driven through. Transportation policies treat communities of color and low-income communities as throughways for highways and homes for transit projects, rather than places where people live and work, and where children play. Huge tracts of housing were destroyed by highways, cutting right through communities providing federally subsidized routes to white flighters' sanctuaries outside urban areas. The Cross Bronx Expressway, which uprooted residences along much of its right of way, is like the Great Wall of the Bronx, one with very few crossings and one which literally severs previously united communities. Additionally, the noise and air pollution alongside the expressway, said to be the most traveled highway per mile in the nation, is a constant reminder to the Bronx of suburban residents' needs being prioritized above urban dwellers' health.

Noise and air pollution is a trademark of NYC. The air in the NYC metropolitan region has consistently failed federal standards for the Clean Air Act. Particulate matter less than 10 micrometers in size (PM-10), emitted by diesel buses and industry, poses a particular cancer and respiratory threat. Many communities of color, such as Williamsburg and Brooklyn, are besieged with municipal bus depots, highways and waste transfer stations, all of which cause an influx of diesel trucks. The parks and playgrounds of communities of color in NYC are laden with lead deposited from decades of vehicular traffic on highways that were built by planners such as Robert Moses. As one New York City activist stated, "the
Social justice activists need to ensure that we haven't moved from the back of the bus to behind the tailpipe.

Officials Avoid Accountability

Public authorities, it seems, exist to isolate politicians from being accountable for actions taken with public money. When the Tri-State Transportation Campaign (a coalition of 14 groups addressing regional transit issues) included environmental justice issues formulated by the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance in its Citizen Action Plan, the MTA promptly responded by urging the Campaign to "strongly consider deleting the references in the plan to (our) alleged targeting of communities of color." During the same period, the MTA postponed plans to rehabilitate the long neglected Franklin Avenue Shuttle subway line in Brooklyn. Its #1 train was skipping stops during rush hour in predominantly Latino and Black Harlem and Washington Heights in order to provide better service for commuters further north in Riverdale and western Kingsbridge in the Bronx. Several years before, the MTA had argued that the renovation of an old trolley barn located in Harlem, unused for decades, into a modem bus depot was essentially the Manhattan side of the bridge. The DOT changed it's sandblasting practices only after several front page stories of lead raining down on NYC's kids hit the papers.

Students Make a Difference

In my last five years as a student activist, I’ve seen students have a great impact on transportation policy in NYC. Students active with the Straphangers Campaign have fought regressive and exclusionary pricing policies of the MTA while also struggling to win funding levels that would allow the MTA to make much needed capital improvements in its 469 subway stations. In one campaign, students handed out more than 200,000 leaflets urging the users of mass transit to call the Governor and Mayor to urge them to stop a proposed fare hike. We waged a campaign against the "unfair fare hike," that linked college students together realizing that the subway fare was a student issue – fare hikes affected us just as harshly as tuition increases. Students were mobilized under the banner "A fare hike is a tuition hike," and dozens of students testified at citywide hearings regarding the proposed fare increase. When Governor Cuomo was hiding behind the MTA, a board that he largely appoints, we brought a life-size cardboard cutout of him to hearings, which served to focus attention on his absence. Also, students, in coalition with unions and other civic associations, have been able to buy ad space in the subways urging action by community residents who used stations particularly hard hit by service changes.

Students have also fought on other mass transit related issues. Since the subways have a large ridership of people of color, students struggled to eliminate the attack on our communities by tobacco companies, who use cartoon advertising to attract youth to their products. On subway cars, buses and billboards tower over communities like my own in the Bronx, their advertisements deceptively entice young people to smoke. By forming coalitions with health organizations and other youth groups, we won a ban on tobacco advertising throughout the mass transit system, thereby preventing ads selling cancer from targeting our youth’s "school bus." The elimination of tobacco ads and the tobacco companies’ retraction of almost all their other advertising in retaliation has left space for more healthy advertisements and public service announcements.

Getting in the Driver’s Seat

The major problem with motor vehicle use is that although its benefits accrue to its users, its harms can mostly be categorized as 'externalities'- costs that are paid by non-participants. Therefore, many drivers are getting a free ride, leaving the check to South Bronx residents near highways, taxpayers funding asthma treatment, and soldiers protecting oil shipping lanes. Fashioning economic incentives that reveal to drivers the true costs of car use, therefore encouraging a change in their actions due to the increased cost of driving, and funding of better transportation alternatives, is the next step.

Without going into more detail here, I refer readers to the Komanoff Energy Associates report, "Pollution Taxes for Roadway Transportation." In short, charging car users directly for the social, health and economic cost of their actions (which are now paid by all taxpayers), must be done, but that policy will be
unjust without mitigating procedures that encourage travel by mass transit within and between cities, and provide environmentally sound transportation models for rural areas.

In addition, we must struggle to ensure accountability of public authorities and other government agencies that create transportation policy. We cannot allow revisions that only make racism and segregation ecologically friendly, nor struggle to make white flight environmentally sound. Activists must advocate for and create alternatives that are humanistic, equitable and just. Reducing the United States reliance on the car must occur, but neither the environmental nor the financial burden can be placed on communities of color and low income communities. Social justice activists need to ensure that we haven’t moved from the back of the bus to behind its tailpipe.

Ludovic Blain is the Environmental Justice Advocate for the New York Public Interest Research Group. He is a student at the City College of New York, and is a co-founder/board member of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance.

Health Care, Transportation & Quality of Life: The Salem, Oregon Connection

By Christine Kirk and Melanie Smith

In 1990, the Tahana Whitecrow Advocacy Alliance lead an organized effort to increase transit service to the Chemawa Indian Health Clinic in the Salem, Oregon area. For over ten years, Salem Area Transit (SAT) had dropped off clinic users at a K-Mart located one mile away from the clinic. Elderly, handicapped, pregnant women and small children had to walk approximately one mile on trails during all kinds of weather conditions to get to clinic appointments. There were numerous documented incidents of canceled appointments due to lack of alternative transportation services to the clinic. This lack of public transportation service provided an example of a grave social inequity in transportation and planning policies. It is also an example of how a lack of transportation can decrease the quality of life of a particular community of people.

In Oregon, Indians have historically suffered from lower health standards compared to other races. One in six Indian mothers receive inadequate prenatal care. Indian babies are 40.4 percent more likely to die during the first year of life. There are many factors which contribute to lower health standards among Native Americans. The lack of access to health care is one fundamental factor.

Until recently, the Chemawa Clinic was the only clinic serving the Native American population (in urban areas) in Western Oregon. Historically (and understandably) Native Americans have a distrust of "white man's" government. Particularly regarding health care, cultural sensitivity and understanding is extremely important. Sensitivity to and respect for our way of life, beliefs and practices is of the utmost importance in terms of our comfort level and willingness to use available resources. These factors make the Chemawa Clinic even more valuable to the local Native American population. The clinic has in many cases helped bridge the cultural gap in educating doctors outside of the clinic to the cultural needs of many Native Americans. So, not only does the clinic provide culturally sensitive medical services, it refers patients to other doctors in the community, thus furthering the medical resources available for Native Americans and increasing the number of doctors who are culturally sensitive.

For ten years, Salem Area Transit had made many promises that the bus line would be extended to the Chemawa Clinic. After ten years of stalling, broken promises and extended deadlines, the Native American community and the Tahana Whitecrow Advocacy Alliance concluded that SAT’s failure to expand the bus route to serve the Clinic was an infringement of their basic rights. They would not wait patiently any longer as one more extension to the deadline was added.

Initially, Tahana Whitecrow organized a letter writing campaign to inform Salem Area Transit of community concerns and the request for a service extension. These letters were at first ignored. The Alliance then held meetings for government agencies and various tribes to coordinate and focus their efforts. One point of difficulty for the Alliance was a difference of opinion among local Native American tribes. Some wanted to take the middle ground, not a confrontational stance, to get rightful access to the clinic. Further organizing efforts were needed by the Alliance to hold the torch for those in direct need for increased bus service to the clinic. Testimonial letters from many tribes as well as by the Chemawa Clinic and School
wereread to the the Salem Transit Authority Board.

In June of 1991, the Salem Transit Board finally agreed to extend bus service to the Chemawa Clinic beginning in September, 1991. The extension would be of no additional cost to SAT. In August of 1991, the Alliance learned of yet another delay. At that point the Alliance informed SAT that they were calling for a demonstration against SAT with full media coverage and pursuing a federal lawsuit for infringement of basic human and civil rights. The Acting Director of the Alliance, Melanie Smith, informed SAT that "we will not stand on empty promises any more." Melanie also advised the General Manager of SAT to inform her of their plans to install service by no later than September, 1991, or the above actions would be taken. Transit service to the clinic began in September!

Although the concern over access to Chemawa clinic has been resolved, there is still a very real concern over transportation and social justice in Salem. The riders in Salem only run during the day. There is no evening service.

The Tahana Whitecrow Advocacy Alliance and the Tahana Whitecrow Foundation serve to protect and advance the civil rights and improve the health standards of Native Americans, low income people and the environment in the Salem, Oregon area. For further information please contact Melanie Smith, P.O. Box 181181, Salem, OR 97305, (503)585-0564.

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**Labor/Community Strategy Center Organizes**

**Bus Riders Union in L.A.**

*By Lisa Durán*

The ability of a 48-year old Spanish speaking Latino immigrant who works in the garment district to move around the city of Los Angeles using a $42 monthly pass seems a remote issue in the huge hall where the Metropolitan Transportation Authority holds its monthly meetings, and where the Bus Riders Union (BRU), composed of immigrants and poor people, is taking on a government agency which is one of the most powerful in Southern California, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The MTA is a joint powers authority, and its board includes four representatives of the city of Los Angeles, and all five L.A. County Supervisors. The budget of the MTA, consisting of funds generated by a two and one half cent sales tax and monies secured from the federal government, is approximately three billion dollars. Seventy percent of the budget is dedicated to building a transportation infra-structure (read “rail” by the MTA) in the largest public works program in the country.

The MTA Board insists on building a rail system that will serve mostly suburban commuters and for which they admit funds do not exist to complete. Rail construction is sucking up dollars with the force of a black hole (it costs $300 million to build one mile of subway, barring any change orders). Now bus riders are being forced to finance rail construction with fare increases, cancellations and reductions in service, and elimination of the monthly pass — hence the proposals last July by the MTA to raise bus fares from $1.10 to $1.35 and to eliminate the $42 monthly pass. The average subsidy for bus riders is $1.17 per ride, while for rail riders it is $28.

The 350,000 bus riders who use the public transportation system in L.A. each day are 80% people of color, 80% poor, with 60% having annual household incomes of less than $15,000 per year. Many do not speak English. Many do not vote. Most have never attended a meeting of the MTA, let alone feel as if they would be able to affect the direction of the policies on which the agency votes. Our members do not make thousands of dollars in campaign contributions like Tutor Saliba and Parsons Brinkerhoff, two of the largest rail developers.

The demographics of transportation policy issues begs the question of democracy in an electoral system in which a growing majority of the population does not vote; a shrinking minority of persons makes decisions for that majority, which is increasingly emiserated, and which is often negatively affected by the policies voted in by the electorate.

The BRU is working to erase that inequality through organizing that will insert the voices, needs and policy alternatives of the bus riders into transportation policy. Because of who our members are, we choose to focus, not on an electoral strategy, but on direct organizing of those most affected, with the goal of creating public opinion and pressure on the officials at the MTA. The groundbreaking civil rights lawsuit filed by the Labor/Community Strategy Center against the MTA on behalf of the bus riders was also filed to support the building of a social movement, and not simply as an end in itself.

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The 350,000 bus riders who use the public transportation system in L.A. each day are 80% people of color, 80% poor, with 60% having annual household incomes of less than $15,000 per year.
Our tactics over the last six months have ranged from the lawsuit, to testimony at MTA Board of Directors meetings and public hearings, to demonstrations in the districts of those board members we feel would be most open to public pressure – that is, Board members of color. For example, we met with a representative from MTA Director and County Supervisor Gloria Molina’s office about funding alternatives to raising fares – a direct result of prior meetings with her and demonstrations held in her district.

Because there are several directors of color on MTA’s board, all of whom are considered centrist/liberal, questions arise about whether they are appropriate organizing targets. Perhaps we should be targeting Board members with political agendas that unabashedly promote market based social policies that hurt poor communities. Are not the Board members of color from oppressed groups themselves? Do they not represent constituents similar to our membership? The answer to the first question is “yes.” The answer to the second is unfortunately, often “no.” Elected officials of color are rarely of the urban poor, and campaign finance pressures, as well as the reality that the poorest are often unorganized, means officials can become remote from the needs of the most disenfranchised. Often they claim to speak for the entire community, but are unable to fully understand the realities of a majority of African American and Latino poor — often unemployed or low wage workers. Their constituents are, in fact, the middle sectors of the Latino or African American communities — they tend to be the ones with financial resources to participate more fully in electoral politics. Thus, a Latino or African American developer gets “heard,” but Latina immigrant Blanca Vasquez does not, although the consequences of transit policy on her life are grave; her income is limited to the $8,000 yearly she receives from her seamstress business, and for her the elimination of the monthly pass would mean she would have to eat less food, be deprived of social outings like picnics with her daughter, and she would have to struggle to maintain her seamstress business since she currently uses the bus to travel, to purchase materials and to meet with clients.

Our attempts to influence Board members of color have two aspects: 1) In this era of a growing polarization of income in all communities, there is a need to emphasize that policies, not ethnicity, should be used to determine an elected official’s allegiances and accountability; and 2) the reality of their positions as elected officials of color who have experienced racism in their positions means that they may indeed be more open to the needs of the poor and working people of color that we put forth as the Bus Riders Union.

Lisa Durán is the former Lead Organizer of the Bus Riders Union with the Labor/Community Strategy Center.
By Reverend Calvin Peterson

When I graduated from High School in 1967, I became an activist for disabled people in the areas of transportation, social services, education and housing. These were addressed because I and others were directly affected by the lack of these services. I spoke with local and state officials about the lack of accessible transportation in Atlanta at that time. Nothing was done until 1971 or 1972.

At this time Atlanta constructed a transit system. Within this transit system an ad-hoc board was formed which generated and regulated guidelines for public transportation and the developing public transit system in Atlanta. In 1968 I raised issues about public transportation and how disabled people needed access to transportation, particularly in low income areas. For example, the issue of handicap accessible streets with curb cuts installed was raised. I had been exposed to the 1968 Architecture Barrier Act that required every local municipality to come into compliance with this Act. It was also

operate every now and then as opposed to a more frequent and consistent schedule. I can recall two or three incidents where the elevators at the train stations in these areas were out more often than they were operational. I received very serious injuries because of these facts. Though the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) expounded on increased transportation accessibility, we are still confronted with barriers to accessibility like inoperable elevators and curbs that do not provide for wheelchair access.

We must become sensitive in the implementation of laws that require transit systems to be operational in all areas as opposed to selective areas. We must devise a system that can accommodate all people with disabilities.

Additionally, we must hold all local municipalities accountable to the 1968 Architectural Barrier Act which is still on the books as law. We urge the Department of Transportation to render a mandate that would cause a more comprehensive

And though Atlanta has a modernized transit system, it is still inaccessible to people who are forced to live in poverty.

frustrating and is still unfortunate that the implementation of this Act is still not visible in poverty-stricken areas. As I travel throughout this country, I make it a point to go into low-income areas. I find on most occasions that curb cuts aren’t visible in those areas. And though Atlanta has a modernized transit system, it is still inaccessible to people who are forced to live in poverty. Too often, people in poverty continue to endure an inaccessible transportation system.

I have devoted so much energy to making the transportation system accessible for disabled people in poverty. In Atlanta I served on the ad-hoc committee of MARTA and expended a lot of energy in focusing attention on transportation in areas of poverty. Yet, the trains in poverty stricken areas operate every now and then as opposed to a more frequent and consistent schedule. I can recall two or three incidents where the elevators at the train stations in these areas were out more often than they were operational. I received very serious injuries because of these facts. Though the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) expounded on increased transportation accessibility, we are still confronted with barriers to accessibility like inoperable elevators and curbs that do not provide for wheelchair access.

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Reverend Calvin Peterson is the President of Disabled In Action, Inc. Please feel free to contact him at: Disabled in Action, P.O. Box 566 Atlanta, GA 30301. Telephone: (404) 756-0583; or Fax (404)756-0804.
Public Facilities Siting & Transportation Access

By Jacky Grimshaw

**Overview**

There are many people who, because of their age, mobility, or economic standing, rely on public transportation for access to essential services. Without access to transportation, and to the process through which transportation policies and plans are made, many citizens are locked out of opportunities for education and employment and are denied health care, and social as well as other governmental services.

Those officials responsible for choosing the location of facilities typically use conventional marketplace criteria in making their decisions. Like their private market counterparts, they focus on the lowest immediate costs associated with sites for federal, state, county and municipal public service offices—the price of land, construction costs and build-out expense. Assessment of such costs is the criterion applied to decisions about a wide range of public facilities, including county hospitals, post offices, and public welfare offices; services and accommodations for senior citizens; and public housing complexes. The rationale is that the government must "get a good deal" for tax-payers. One key factor in the long-term success of a facility is often overlooked, however: is there a transportation system that can provide people efficient, affordable access to it. The best of facilities is useless if those who most need its services are prevented from receiving them.

Public decision-makers are not always sensitive to those citizens who do not have the choices that automobile ownership allows. Data indicate that people of color in poor communities have the lowest rates of automobile ownership. Siting public facilities in areas without public transit denies access to these citizens. This type of inequity is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). The government's failure to act in the best interest of these citizens or consider the discriminatory impact of its actions can result in its being in non-compliance with federal laws.

Government programs and policies sometimes work at cross purposes. Even in agencies with a mandate to promote access, the agency’s real estate office, working in isolation, may locate facilities where they are inaccessible. In contrast, transportation programs, working in concert with housing, health, education and other community service systems, can dramatically enhance equity and environmental quality.

The essential connection between transportation and location of governmental services is part of a broader issue. Transportation planning usually focuses on "mobility"—getting people from here to there. But "location" and "access" are much more important—making sure that public facilities are near the people who need to use them minimizes the need for transportation services and makes access to them through existing transit systems significantly easier.

Transportation plays a positive role in securing a community's ability to provide services such as education and cultural programs and to control crime. It is an asset upon which communities can build and develop. It allows communities an option to the suburban sprawl which degrades inner cities and the environment and creates public health problems. Yet there is an inequity in the expenditure of public funds on **urban/rural** poor and communities of color in comparison with those spent on **wealthy/suburban** communities. Government has a responsibility to correct its historical lack of investment in inner city communities and repair the harm already done.

Governments that locate facilities in areas where there are few or no alternatives to auto use contribute to violations of the Clean Air Act (CAA). While the goal of the CAA is to reduce vehicle miles traveled and air pollution emissions, facilities that are inaccessible by mass transit promote increased motor vehicle miles and harmful air emissions. Low-income and people of color residents of urban areas are hardest hit by air pollution, another transportation system inequity.

The policy framework and planning process for locating public facilities by the federal, state, or local governments have to include assessments of the facilities’ impacts on community and economic development. Public policy, in failing to mitigate racial injustice and reverse historical trends, has stranded low income people and people of color (especially African Americans) in central cities. These citizens have been increasingly isolated from employment opportunities as jobs move out to the suburbs. Government can and should address their mobility and employment needs through public policy decisions.

Governments have opportunities to plan facility locations that not only avoid creating barriers, but also promote community economic development in inner...
Transportation investments are being made without the needs of those most dependent on public transit being considered.

made as an integral part of neighborhood-determined community economic development plans.

One of the objectives of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) is to assure that our transportation system “...is economically efficient and environmentally sound, provides the foundation for the Nation to compete in the global economy ...” This goal can be achieved in part by making facility location decisions within the context of an overall community and economic development strategy.

Public participation in decision-making is essential. Transportation needs of people of color and low-income people are often overlooked because these groups are not represented in the decision-making process. Decision-makers see only their own perspective, which has usually been created by habitual automobile use. Since automobiles and highways are a normal part of their experience, they make sure that streets, highways, and parking are accommodated in site planning. Alternative transportation modes for those who don’t own automobiles, if considered at all, are an afterthought. Transit-dependent riders are not involved in the decision-making process, so public transportation access to public facilities is not a planning priority. If users are routinely left out of facility siting decisions, their needs are not addressed.

Making citizens partners in the planning process may lead to the development of more equitable solutions to siting problems. It is unacceptable for government to do no more than give citizens the opportunity to comment.

ISTEA requires public participation in transportation planning. It states that “social benefits must be considered with particular attention to the external benefits of reduced air pollution, reduced traffic congestion and other aspects of the quality of life of the United States.” (Congressional Record-House, November 26, 1991, H11517). The ability to get to needed services in a cost-effective and timely manner is certainly a quality of life issue, so a similar provision should be applied.

One more regulation for government officials to follow will not solve this problem, however. Officials must be held accountable for ensuring public involvement in a meaningful way. ISTEA places the responsibility for public involvement input with regional metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). These bodies often comply the letter rather than the spirit of the law, maintaining business as usual.

Transportation investments are being made without the needs of those most dependent on public transit being considered.

Examples

Health Care is an issue that has held the attention of a majority of Americans over the last two years. The discussion has focused on providing access to health care for all Americans, regardless of ability to pay. The goal of health reform was to establish health care as a right. Health services would be available to those employed or not, young or old, healthy or with preexisting conditions. The realization of this goal will have to wait for the next Congress, but even if the 103rd Congress had provided the universal Health Security Card, some Americans would still be denied access.

In many communities today, health care facilities already exist to serve the poor and the uninsured. Yet, people are still denied health services because they are still denied health services because they just cannot physically get to the health facility. Facilities are located in areas that are not served by public transportation. People without automobiles must rely on expensive alternatives — taxis, ambulances, or car rental. The choice for these Americans is either to spend limited funds needed for food and shelter to get to the clinic for routine check-ups or to go without preventive health care. Emergency care becomes the only kind they get. Transportation's impact on health care is illustrated by data indicating that transportation is the second greatest Medicaid and Medicare expense — after doctors and hospitals.

In 1970, the Chimawa Indian Health Clinic, originally established to provide health care to the children in the Chimawa Boarding School, was expanded to serve the Native American population living in Western Oregon. The availability of health care for more people was indeed a victory. Unfortunately, the public transit line serving that population stopped one mile from the clinic. Since there were no sidewalks, transit-dependent patients had to walk a mile on a muddy trail often in inclement weather. Many of those patients were sick, pregnant, disabled, elderly or simply in need of routine check-ups they might be tempted to postpone because of lack of transit access.

The Tahana Whitecrow Advocacy Alliance asked the transit agency on behalf of the community to extend the transit line an additional mile. The General Manager denied their request. The allegation that such a refusal amounted to de facto racial discrimination held no sway. It took protests, legal
challenges, and a new General Manager before the community won the mile-long extension.

There are 32,000 patients registered at the clinic. Eighteen thousand of these regularly use the clinic, with 6,000 of those in the greater Salem area. However, the line is in jeopardy now because of low ridership. The community needs the transit agency’s assistance in marketing and educating patients about service availability. The curtailment of the line will not only restrict patient access once again but also deny clinic workers transit access to their jobs.

Another example is St. Mary’s Hospital in Ozaukee County, Wisconsin, a county of 80,000 people. St. Mary’s was located in Port Washington for a long time. A decision was made to build a new facility and the decision-makers chose to move the hospital to Mequon, WI, a town of 20,000 people located ten miles away, off a country road and two miles from an Interstate 43 interchange. The hospital was able to get a certificate of need to relocate even though there was and still is no sewer service to the site. Mequon, however, is an affluent area. The new location places the hospital at the center of an upscale market where, incidentally, its doctors also live.

The Woodstock Memorial Hospital in Woodstock, Illinois used to be located in the town, right next to the high school. Like St. Mary’s in Mequon, it is now located in a former cornfield between the towns of Woodstock and Crystal Lake. When the new Memorial Hospital opened in September of 1994, it did have sewer service, but was only accessible by automobile.

Decision-makers in both Woodstock and Crystal Lake also requested bids for land on which to relocate the main post offices. In both cases they choose the sites which were most immediately cost effective. The existing P.O.s were downtown, close to public transit. The new, lowest-price sites in contrast are in outlying areas accessible only by automobile. The Woodstock post office was moved from the town square to a side road off Illinois Route 47. The Crystal Lake post office was moved from downtown to an industrial subdivision north of Illinois Route 14.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, Contra Costa County’s citizens were more successful. They engaged the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund to file a class-action lawsuit to prevent the county from building a new hospital in an area inaccessible to poor and minority residents. Although the hospital was already under construction the federal district court halted the project, finding that “Construction of the new county hospital in Central County, without any improvement in public transportation or availability of health care services to the West and East County minority poor, will, in effect, entrench and perpetuate the county’s alleged systemic discrimination against the county’s indigent minorities.” (U.S. District Judge Saundra Brown Armstrong, August 1, 1994, as reported in the West County Times.) Judge Armstrong also made it clear that looking at statistics on travel time for all county residents was not relevant; only data that zeroed in on the people who actually used the hospital were to be considered.

**Analysis**

Transportation’s interrelationship with service delivery needs to be viewed from three perspectives: citizens’ access to facilities, community economic development, and public participation in decision-making.

Fragmented governmental authority is sometimes a culprit in instances of social inequity. Usually, a capital
planning, real estate, or procurement office does the work of finding location, negotiating leases, and purchasing properties. Their locational decisions contribute to disinvestment in inner city communities. The lure of the green-field, open space, and cheaper short-term costs trap real estate officials into inequitable decisions.

Often the operating agency which will occupy the facility is not involved in the siting process, even though it will ultimately be accountable for providing services and best understands the potential impacts that siting decisions can have on their clientele. Clearly, operating agencies should be more intimately involved in the location of their facilities so that they can be held accountable for their success in providing services.

In the case of the federal government, the procurement agency is the General Services Administration (GSA). President Jimmy Carter’s Executive Order of 1978 on Federal Space Management provided guidance that seeks to achieve both economic and community development goals, and which could be the initial model for state, local, and other public servicing institutions. Unfortunately, it does not give guidance on transportation connections and public participation. It does emphasize that the location of facilities should be seen as a development opportunity for local communities. The power and resulting influence of a governmental decision to locate a facility can be enough to spark compact development in suburban transit served areas and reinvestment in central cities. Local communities can use the investment as an economic incentive to maintain an urbanized core, avoid sprawl and create more livable and sustainable communities. Governments, as well as private investors, should not, through omission or action, effectively redline inner city and other low-income communities.

The need to expand limited public transit service is extremely acute in rural areas, as well in inter-village/town transportation. Many such areas have no public transit access and thus maintain a serious, chronic barrier to accessible government services.

**CONCLUSION**

Location decisions affect equity and social justice. Federal facilities that create inequities need to be reevaluated and reshaped to eliminate rather than reinforce conditions that deny access to all citizens. GSA’s evaluation criteria should include coordination and cooperation among federal agencies in implementing a comprehensive policy on social equity. FTA officials, working with GSA, should have a policy which forces GSA decisions to be in compliance with ISTEA, CAA, ADA, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the President’s Executive Order on Environmental Justice. This policy should apply to all federal agencies and state and local government facilities which are federally funded, in whole or part. A Presidential Executive Order might be the most appropriate way to ensure the policy is broadly applied.

Location decisions affect air quality and public health conditions. The location of government facilities in transit-rich areas not only allows access by those that do not have cars, but allows those with autos to choose not to be auto dependent.

Location decisions affect community and economic development and community employment. Facility siting should also support community development. This should be considered a priority. Decision-makers should provide local residents with the opportunity to participate in planning processes, so that those residents can take steps to ensure that they are recipients of economic justice and share in economic democracy. Governments should seize the opportunity to reinvest and reverse the trend of disinvestment in and segregation of inner city communities.

Location decisions affect land use. Government officials choosing between urban and suburban locations must consider well the social, economic and environmental ramifications of their decisions.

Location decisions affect community empowerment. Government policies on siting of government facilities need to include public transit accessibility criteria. This issue is fundamental to poor and low income residents’ quality of life. The right of the public to partici-

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The lure of the greenfield, open space, and cheaper short-term costs trap real estate officials into inequitable decisions.

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The power and resulting influence of a governmental decision to locate a facility can be enough to spark compact development in suburban transit served areas and reinvestment in central cities.

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Jacky Grimshaw is the transportation and air quality coordinator for the Center for Neighborhood Technology, Chicago, IL. She was also the campaign manager to the late Mayor Harold Washington.
This case study of a proposed light-rail system for the Austin metropolitan area will attempt to illustrate the types of issues which communities of color must consider when evaluating the siting of transportation facilities. In particular it looks at the impact of the proposed light-rail system on the Central East Austin Area which is made-up primarily of people of color. It defines the area which is referred to as Central East Austin. It also describes the light-rail system proposal which is being considered for the Austin metropolitan area. The accessibility of this system with regard to Central East Austin as well as the impacts of that system on Central East Austin will be considered. Finally, it looks at current transportation guidelines to see how they do and do not support principles of Environmental Justice.

**Central East Austin**

Central East Austin is defined by the census tracts which make up the 78702 area code. As evidenced by the statistics, this area has a very large African-American and Mexican-American population. African-Americans and Mexican-Americans make up more than 88 percent of the population of the area. In addition, it is characterized by a high degree of poverty. Five of the seven census tracts which make up this area have a poverty rate which exceeds 30 percent. Two of the census tracts have poverty rates which exceed 50 percent. When we think of those who are disadvantaged in terms of access to transportation, we think of the young, the old, the poor and the physically challenged. A great percentage of Central East Austin residents qualify as transportation disadvantaged solely on the basis of their income. What we sometimes fail to realize is that low-income communities and communities of color also tend to have high proportions of young, old and physically challenged people. In the Central East Austin area, 30 percent of the population is below the age of sixteen and 14.2 percent of the population is over the age of sixty-five. By way of comparison, 21.5 percent of the population of Austin is below the age of sixteen and 7.5 percent is over the age of sixty-five. In addition, 11.9 percent of civilian noninstitutionalized persons between the ages of sixteen and sixty-four are physically challenged. The percentage of civilian noninstitutionalized persons sixty-five and over who are physically challenged is 34.3 percent. The percentages for Austin are 3.8 percent and 21.4 percent respectively. It becomes evident that the residents of Central East Austin have a much greater need for transportation services than the population at large.

**Central East Austin and the Light Rail System**

Light-rail systems run on routes (railways) which are specifically dedicated for their use. These systems provide public transportation which is more efficient than traditional bus systems because they are not hindered by traffic signals and traffic congestion. However, light-rail systems, as so many other transportation improvements, are often designed to address the transportation needs of those travelling at peak periods (rush hour), not to address the transportation needs of the disadvantaged. Because the concerns of low-income communities and communities of color are usually not considered at the design phase, these systems tend to provide limited transportation access to these communities. This is one of the concerns regarding the light-rail system proposal for Austin. The majority of the light-rail system services the area West of Interstate Highway 35 (IH-35). Only the short segment from IH-35 to Pleasant Valley Road provides direct access to residents who live east of the interstate. Although the system would provide some access to Central East Austin residents, the majority of the people in this area would remain unserved by the system. Access to such a system could be further limited if the light-rail system is not affordable to low-income users.

The proposed system would also have very significant environmental, economic and social impacts on Central East Austin. Included within the short segment of the light-rail line serving Central East Austin is a light-rail storage and maintenance facility. This facility would have to be of considerable size in order to accommodate the desired services. While location of the storage/maintenance yard is in a blighted segment of Central East Austin which is in need of redevelopment, one has to consider how much of an improvement this type of land use would be. The increased noise and air pollution generated by such a facility would be a nuisance to the surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, the presence of the storage/maintenance yard would tend to drive down property values in the areas immediately surrounding the facility. The system would also have a significant effect on circulation within the neighborhoods in Central East Austin. The proposed light-rail line runs along East Fourth and East Fifth Streets. Residents who live south of East Fourth would have to cross the railway each time they wanted to go to the grocery store, to a restaurant, or to church. Children who live north of East Fifth would have to cross the railway every day to get to school. Residents of this area might consider avoiding these routes due to issues of convenience and safety, thus splitting...
the community. Light-rail may also have a direct impact on some residences and businesses in the surrounding neighborhoods. Areas around light-rail stations have a great potential for increased business activity due to the increased transportation access. The light-rail stations in Central East Austin are in an area which is quite deteriorated. There has been much talk about how light-rail can revitalize this section of East Austin. In fact, a study regarding the redevelopment of this area has already been completed. Concerns here are with regard to the manner in which redevelopment occurs. There is always a potential that existing residences or businesses will be removed. If this is the case, it is important to ask ourselves if the displacement is necessary. If so, what will be done about relocation? It is also important to ask if new businesses which are brought in might take away from the customer base of existing businesses. Existing businesses should be given the opportunity to locate along the light-rail corridor, particularly those which are being displaced or which have been otherwise adversely affected.

**Environmental Justice**

The issues considered with regard to the light-rail proposal should generally be considered when evaluating all transportation system proposals. Ideally, these issues will be considered during the plan development process. Historically, this has not been the case, due in large part to the fact that low-income communities and communities of color have been left out of the planning process. For this reason, the involvement of these communities in transportation has most often been reactive to specific projects and not proactive. The Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act (ISTEA) breaks new ground in this regard by calling for increased public participation and consideration of social and environmental issues in the development of transportation improvement programs and long range transportation plans.

Public participation is one of the cornerstones of Environmental Justice. "Environmental Justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation."

While President Clinton's Executive Order on Environmental Justice does not go very far in calling for public participation by people of color, ISTEA has relatively strong language with regard to public involvement. ISTEA states that the metropolitan planning process shall: (1) Include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs [Transportation Improvement Programs]. A further requirement of the planning process is that it "seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households.” This is very powerful language which should be invoked when demanding that metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and state departments of transportation (state DOTs) be inclusive and considerate of the concerns of people of color.

Unfortunately, this is just language. ISTEA does not specify how MPOs and state DOTs will be held accountable to these requirements. Although the certification process is a potential avenue for addressing this shortcoming, certification is to a large extent at the discretion of the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. Certification guidelines should be strengthened so that public involvement by people of color will not be reduced to an ad in the newspaper or a name on a mailing list.

With regard to the social and environmental effects of the siting of transportation facilities, the Executive Order on Environmental Justice specifies that "to the extent practical and appropriate, federal agencies shall use this information [on environmental and human health risks borne by various populations] to determine whether their programs, policies, and activities have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations..." Although ISTEA does not state that these considerations must be made specifically with regard to low-income communities and communities of color, it does require that MPOs consider "the overall social, economic, energy, and environmental effects of transportation decisions (including consideration of the effects and impacts of the plan on the human, natural and man-made environment...)." Due consideration for such impacts on communities of color should be specified in the regulations.

For light-rail and roadway systems which constitute major financial investments, a major investment study (MIS) is required. Current regulations specify that a MIS "will include environmental studies which will be used for environmental documents..." This requirement should specify that the MIS should take into account social, economic, energy and environmental effects as quoted in the planning factor above. Furthermore, regarding Sec. 3-301 (b) of the Executive Order on Environmental Justice, the MIS should weigh the impacts of the new transportation projects according to the negative social, economic, energy and environmental impacts already experienced by the affected low-income communities and communities of color.

Finally, ISTEA does not provide any specific requirements for improving transportation access to the transportation disadvantaged. ISTEA’s policy statement suggests that the transportation system should "help implement national goals relating to mobility for elderly persons, persons with disabilities and economically disadvantaged persons.” This policy should be translated into requirements for using access as a criterion for project evaluation.

**Conclusion**

There are many factors which low-income communities and communities of color should consider when evaluating the siting of transportation facilities. What will be the impacts of siting these facilities in the community? Will the system provide transportation access to members of the community? Has there been meaningful involvement of the community in the decision-making process? This study used a specific example from Austin to show how we
might start thinking about these proposals and their development. It also tried to show which transportation regulations could be used to demand that there be more involvement by and consideration for the issues of low-income communities and communities of color, and how these regulations could be strengthened.

It is imperative that low-income communities and communities of color get involved in the planning of these transportation systems if concern for issues which affect our communities are to become the rule, not the exception.

Susana Almanza is the Director of PODER (People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources). Raul Alvarez is the Transportation Program Assistant. PODER is located in Austin TX.

When we refer to the siting of transportation facilities we are specifically referring to the siting of freeways and fixed-route systems (such as light-rail) and the siting of facilities which support these systems such as bus yards, light-rail yards, and light-rail turnarounds. We also refer to designation and improvement of roads for transport of freight cargo and hazardous cargo.

We use the term physically challenged to describe what the 1990 Census of Population and Housing refers to as someone who has "a mobility or self care limitation."

All statistics in this section are from the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, Census of Population and Housing, Austin TX MSA, 1990.


All references to ISTEA rules and regulations are from the Federal Register, October 28, 1993.

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## AIR POLLUTION FROM ROAD VEHICLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>U.S. EPA Limit</th>
<th>Health Effects</th>
<th>Environmental Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carbon Monoxide</strong></td>
<td>90% from all of transport sector, 65% from road vehicles</td>
<td>40 mg/m³ (35 parts per million - ppm) over 1 hour 10 µg/m³(8.6 ppm) over 8 hours</td>
<td>Fatal in large doses; aggravates heart diseases, can affect the central nervous system; impairs oxygen carrying capacity of the blood, resulting in impaired perception, slowed reflexes, and drowsiness</td>
<td>Contributes to global warming by removing hydroxyl radical from the air, allowing buildup of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nitrogen Oxides</strong></td>
<td>47% from road vehicle emissions</td>
<td>(For NO,) 100 µg/m³ (0.053 ppm) annual arithmetic mean</td>
<td>Irritation of respiratory tract, reduced lung function, increased susceptibility to viral infections, and possibly cancer</td>
<td>Acid rain, indirect contribution to global warming through formation of ground level ozone, a greenhouse gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ozone</strong></td>
<td>Interaction of hydrocarbon emissions from road vehicles (and other sources) and nitrogen oxides in the presence of sunlight</td>
<td>Max. daily 1 hr. avg. 235 µg/m³ (.12 ppm)</td>
<td>Eye, nose and throat irritation; risks to asthmatics, those with lung or heart disease, children and those involved in heavy exercise</td>
<td>Damage to vegetation and crops; and is a greenhouse gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead</strong></td>
<td>Fuel additive (tetraethyl lead)</td>
<td>Max. quarterly avg. 1.5 µg/m³</td>
<td>Extremely toxic, affects nervous system and blood; can impair mental development, especially in young children</td>
<td>Long-lived in soil, leaches into water, enters food chain at several levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hydrocarbons</strong></td>
<td>Up to 50% from vehicle emissions, excluding methane</td>
<td>No limit specified to date</td>
<td>Drowsiness, eye irritation, coughing</td>
<td>Indirect contribution to global warming through formation of ground level ozone (smog)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benzene</strong></td>
<td>Vehicle emissions, evaporative fuel losses</td>
<td>No safe level (World Health Organization)</td>
<td>Carcinogenic</td>
<td>No specific environmental effects identified to date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrimination in Transportation: WHO DECIDES?

By Mutsumi R. Mizuno

This time, the question is not whether Rosa Parks can sit at the front of the bus — it’s whether she gets to ride the bus at all. While discrimination in transportation is no longer a matter of overt racism, many poor working people find public transportation services inadequate. And because the costs of owning and driving a car are high, private automobile transportation is not an easy option.

Out-migration to the suburbs and a lack of transit service in rural areas have created a societal dependence on automobiles that concerns both social justice advocates and environmentalists. Regrettably, their approaches to solving transportation access problems are divergent and often conflicting. While environmentalists develop ways to discourage suburban and urban automobile use, advocates for poor working people focus on obtaining any transportation means possible.

This split was brought into focus in a 1991 study conducted by the Human Environment Center. The author, Charles Fox, pointed out that national environmental groups were moving towards "aggressive, market-oriented [transportation] policies that would entail enormous disproportionate effects on low-income and minority households [without making any] recommendations to minimize or eliminate these effects." Equally at fault from the other side was the National Urban League proposal for a Marshall Plan for America, focusing on job creation and the economy, but "show[ing] little sensitivity to transportation-related environmental and public health threats... [it] stressed the need for new investments in highways ('good highways mean good business and a strong economy') and emphasized that the urban poor’s difficulty in accessing suburban jobs stem from the unavailability of the automobile."

To correct the trends that have exacerbated reliance on the automobile and widened social inequities, the environmental concerns for clean air and global warming and the social concerns for affordability and equal access to mobility must not remain on separate tracks. Improved communication among the concerned groups and better understanding of the issues are fundamental to the wise design of transportation solutions — ones that will take into account long-term social, economic, and environmental consequences. Indeed, sustainable transportation — a component of sustainable development — requires a nexus between the environment, economy, and equity.

CAR DEPENDENCE

The transportation decisions of the past several decades have created an infrastructure that favors automobile use and a resulting social inequity. Between 1956 and 1989, the Highway Trust Fund provided $205 billion for state road projects, while mass transit received only $50 billion in federal funds over the last 25 years. Unfortunately, highway investments do not benefit all people equally. In 1983, 40% of households earning less than $10,000 had no access to a car, whereas 99% of households with incomes over $40,000 owned one vehicle and nearly 90% owned two or more. Furthermore, the racial component to this inequity is clear. In 1980, 32.9% of black households and 22.7% of Latino households were without vehicles, compared to only 10.1% of white households.

It is not surprising, then, that Mtangulizi Sanyika and James Head of the National Economic Development and Law Center found in a 1990 study that many low-income people were "transportation disadvantaged...unable to access basic institutions, jobs, or services due to transportation barriers." Others included in the "transportation disadvantaged person (TDP)" category were seniors, youth, women with children, homeless, unemployed, developmentally disadvantaged, low income and people of color, and non-auto owners.

Existing buses and rail systems, as alternatives to cars, do not provide sufficient service to these groups. Even though a report by the American Public Transit Association in 1992 showed that public transit disproportionately serves low income workers and minorities, some social justice advocates argue that transit systems need to be made "more efficient, affordable, safe and competitive" to assure social equality. However, in many parts of the country, transit fares are increasing and services decreasing.

Rural areas need attention as well. According to Jean Smith of the Central Arkansas Development Council, while 36% of America’s population lives in rural areas, only 7% of federal transportation funds are spent there. Moreover, 43% of the disabled, 39% of the elderly, and 39% of the impoverished live in rural areas. "In rural states where transit users have found bus service to be more reliable than most of the cars they own, the regrettable fact is that only 50% of counties may have public transportation available." This leads rural activists to argue that transportation policies not only affect lifestyles, they cause poverty.
**Market “Solutions”**

Highlighting the difference in approaches to meeting environmental goals and the goals of communities are market mechanisms and mobility strategies. The former is often put forth as a mechanism to reduce vehicle emissions while the latter seeks to maximize transportation for workers to get jobs. Neither desirable social goal provides a full solution to the transportation and equity problem.

On the pricing/emission reduction side, a 1992 report by Jon Kessler and Will Schroer of the Environmental Protection Agency concluded that pricing mechanisms are a necessary complement to more traditional traffic control measures (i.e., traffic control improvements, highway reconstruction and traditional mass transit). Seeking significant improvements in air quality, these authors recommend pricing, since “governing interventions which redirect capital resources often produce inefficiencies.” Also, they calculated that any technological-related emissions reduction will be overtaken by more vehicle-miles-travelled (VMT) by the year 2005 because road space will be utilized as long as driving is inexpensive.

**Indeed, sustainable transportation – a component of sustainable development – requires a nexus between the environment, economy and equity.**

Among the alternative pricing measures recommended were: pay-as-you-drive registration or inspection fees; congestion pricing; cash-out plans for employer-paid parking and private transit. Revenues from these measures would be used to invest in alternative transportation schemes and to offset economic disadvantages.

However, there is no consensus among public interest groups on the use of such "offsets" to compensate the poor. While some advocates find it acceptable to redistribute funds into the community, others point out that price signals inadvertently target people of moderate- or low-incomes, leaving wealthy segments relatively immune. Moreover, "offsets" often disappear during economic downturns. And some community members dislike the idea of "another poverty hand-out." In any case, more research is necessary to determine which market mechanisms have what effects.

This article was first published for the State Report on the Environment when Mutsumi was working at the Center for Policy Alternatives. This past summer Mutsumi moved to Burma after being a policy analyst at the Environmental Action Foundation.

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**The Equity Implications of Market-Based Transportation Control**

**By Mtangulizi Sanyika**

The topic of equity in market-based transportation control measures is one that has rankled my nerves quite a bit over the last several years, not because there is not merit in raising these questions, but I am not sure that the issues have been thoroughly examined. I am not convinced that they have been critiqued to such an extent that I would be willing to argue that we should support market-based approaches to the transportation crisis.

I say that out of a particular perspective which brings to the table a number of particular biases. I spend a considerable amount of my own professional working time in communities that are economically marginal: communities of color, communities that have large numbers of low and moderate income persons in them, young and old, female headed households, and developmentally disabled people. The constituencies that I work with are going to be, if they are not already, the predominant constituency in the Bay Area and the state of California. They already are in Los Angeles.

Therefore, it amuses me that today's meeting, while it is full of professionals, is not full of the constituencies that are impacted by market based pricing. And I don't mean that as a criticism, but I'm pointing this out because the reality of the future of California is going to look very different from the way we look in this room today. And thus, when we start discussing major changes in public policy we need to give some consideration to those constituencies and how they are impacted.

I am a member of a group called California Transportation Directions (CTD) 2010. It is a statewide organization that serves as one of the growth management advisory committees to the Governor. It has spent the last two to three years developing a strategic plan for transportation in California and this issue of market-based pricing is one of the central debates we are currently having within CTD. I am interested in examining and exploring what market-based pricing offers, but I am not yet convinced that it addresses issues that are of concern to the constituencies that I work with. These issues are different from those of transportation advocates, the business community, and environmentalists.
I want to share with you some analysis that we did that tries to raise another question, not necessarily to critique everything about market-based strategies, but to raise the question of transportation dependent communities and what market-based pricing does and does not mean to those communities vis-a-vis the issue of fairness and equity and access.

Let me define equity a little differently from the way you may be used to using it. Equity to me means equal access to efficient transportation. It doesn't necessarily refer to participation. Equal access to efficient modes of transportation; that to me is what equity is. How efficiently will the transportation be available for, or function in relationship to, transportation-dependent persons? And here I might shift gears and use the term transit-dependent rather than transportation-dependent. We define transit-dependent as those persons who are absolutely required to use the public transit system as their primary means of transportation.

Our research suggests that a major problem for this constituency I am referring to is not freeway gridlock, but rather the need for improvements in the transit system to make it more efficient, affordable, safe and competitive. The communities that I work in are not concerned about gridlock, they're concerned about how to get from Point A to Point B on the public transit system. That is what is of central concern to an increasingly larger number of California residents.

Those of us that are in the middle income category moving up are automobile-dependent. I can tell you that because I had an auto accident in May, and I was without an automobile for four or five months and I could not work. I could not move around. I tried using the public transit system and it was horrible. And I had never used it so extensively in the Bay Area, from bus to Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to San Francisco Municipal Railway (MUNI) to an even smaller system where I live called Westcat. For instance, I had a meeting down at Stanford one day. I live in Hercules. It took me four hours just to get from where I live to a meeting at Stanford. That's half a working day. My market rate is $125 an hour, I lost $500 just fooling with the transit system. If I, in the middle income category, had to rely on the public transit system, as inefficient as it is, I simply could not earn a living.

And that raised other kinds of questions. I grew up on the public transit system and only got a car after I went to college. But, I discovered that to be dependent on a car is the worst thing that could happen in America, because when you don't have the car you can't function. Although most people I work with tend to be transit-dependent automobile-induced gridlock does have negative consequences in their communities. For instance, the rates of air pollution are worse. The rates of lung disease are higher in these communities because when the gridlocked freeway runs through West Oakland, for instance, it leaves its residues and deposits. So it's not that these constituencies are not concerned about gridlock, but it's not their primary transportation problem. That's the difference I'm raising.

Transit-dependent people do not have access to basic institutions such as jobs, services, and recreation because of transportation barriers. Transit dependent people includes seniors, youth, women, children, the homeless, the unemployed, the developmentally disabled, low-income persons, persons of color, and non-auto owners.

In an earlier report, the organization that I once worked for documents that there were roughly one million persons in the Bay Area who were low and moderate income who overlap with this transit-dependent population. These were the rough statistics a decade ago. But assuming that the region's transportation systems are in need of intervention, fine tuning, and in some cases major overhauls, one might support several regulatory approaches to improve transportation options for this constituency, including market-based approaches, if one could be convinced that they're operative, and that they address transportation needs.

Consistent with this approach, I wish to offer specific comments. First, road pricing tools, parking pricing, and emissions-based fees are strategies that make polluters pay more for the pollution they generate and in general terms that's a fair approach. Polluters should pay. Currently we are over subsidizing the automobile. We're subsidizing roads with sales taxes. We cover the costs of free parking spaces through office rents, tax deductions and general funds. We pay for the damages this causes in air pollution, noise pollution, neighborhood disruption and we pay for the health and property damage caused by accidents through lower property values, health insurance, hospital bills, and disability and life insurance. Few people realize what the automobile is costing them, especially when these hidden costs are accounted for. Removing some of these subsidies might be a reasonable option.

However, more importantly perhaps, is the fact that we've created a land use and transportation system that is dependent on freeways, and multiple auto subsidies. Most people depend on their cars for their basic mobility, and for many low and moderate income families, transportation by car is a necessity, not a luxury. Unless specific attention and detail is paid to preserving the ability of these families to continue to access needed services, specifically, preserving the ability of such families to have equal access to efficient, competitive transit, any policy change which affects their transportation use will have a negative impact.

Second, except perhaps in our major central business districts, bus transit
services are not competitive. They require a walk to the shop or station, a wait, perhaps a transfer, and then you get there slower than a car would take, because transit makes multiple stops. In the newest suburban areas, where many new jobs are being created, transit service barely exists. Lower and moderate income persons can't get there on existing transit systems, which further marginalizes them. In strategies to reduce travel by car, we must have as a priority the review and overhaul of the regional bus transit system. Those dependent on car transportation must have viable and accessible alternative ways to travel.

Third, carpooling and vanpooling have a different set of limitations. They lock their members into a rigid schedule and rule out trips on the way to or from work. It's also hard to take a child to the day care center and pick the child up again in the evening if you carpool. While we recognize that high occupancy vehicle lanes do reduce gridlock and pollution, attention to these limitations will increase specific attractiveness of carpooling and vanpooling as an option.

Fourth, if pricing strategies are going to work, they'll have to be part of the package that works for everyone. Higher income people don't have to change their behavior in any way because of pricing strategies. People with modest incomes could find they have no choice if they don't have enough discretionary income to permit a choice. People with the lower incomes would find themselves left out completely with no way to get to the new suburban jobs, or perhaps even to keep a car for other travel needs, grocery shopping, medical trips or simply visiting one's family. To avoid such pernicious effects, it is imperative that pricing strategies be linked to strategies to maintain mobility for all income and racial groups. Such a package should include a specific plan for improving transit. Traditional operator services will need to be augmented, but there is also room for creative solutions in areas not now served well. Subscription services, shuttle buses, vans, and a variety of other options will be needed to assure decent access for everyone.

Fifth, private sector advocates of market-based pricing strategies could take a number of steps right now to help make their proposals workable and fair, such as:

**Step A:** Include developing transportation solutions in the context of rebuilding the infrastructure of urban centers as the initial approach to market-based pricing strategies. In other words, let's not just charge people who are congesting the roads, but let's look at rebuilding the infrastructure of the urban centers that people are commuting to. For instance, the Association of Bay Area Governments tells us that 163,000 people are commuting every day into the Bay Area. Where are they going? They're going to San Francisco. They're going to Oakland. They're going to San Jose. They're going to where jobs are located, but perhaps if we look to rebuilding the infrastructure, and where we situate housing and jobs in relationship to public transportation, we could reduce the number of vehicles that are causing congestion and pollution.

**Step B:** Allow workers whose jobs permit it to work flexible hours. Four day workweeks, or work-at-home, if they chose to do so. We're living in an era of tele-everything. You tele-walk, you tele-talk — why can't you tele-work? Why do we have to get on the road every day during a peak travel period in the early morning and late afternoon? Why can't we ask employers to allow flex-time in the workplace? That would also reduce the number of cars on the road, reduce congestion and reduce pollution. Yes, it's asking business to do a lot, but they're
the ones responsible for this congestion in the first place because of where they have built their factories and their plants, or where real estate companies have built housing (which is cheaper way into the valley as opposed to closer to the Bay). I don't believe that the business should be let off the hook because it's comfortable for them. I'm not anti-business, but I believe that this is an instance where they have got to pay some dues like everybody else has to pay some dues. And they've got to rethink where they locate themselves, especially in a time when the satellite is more important to how business operates than where you are geographically located. So I say, "Look business community, let's get creative together." Public sector, private sector and citizen sector, let's get creative together to try to find some solutions into the 21st century.

Businesses should support workers who choose pollution reducing options. If a worker says, "I prefer working at home if the job permits", the company should support that. If the worker wishes flex-time, the company ought to ask, "Can we rationally develop a flexible work schedule for all of our employees?"...It may not work for all businesses, but lets ask the business community to ask the question.

Step C: Provide affordable day care at or near the workplace for pre-school age children. Support programs that would make after school care available to all. How much time is spent driving around dropping kids off every day? I know you brothers in the house don't appreciate all that, because most of us don't do that, but the women know.

Step D: Replace free parking with travel allowance for all workers, or help with the cost of transit passes and ride-sharing. Don't subsidize parking for management and then expect lower level workers to be the good people who use the commute alternatives. That is not fair.

What I am basically saying is that the transportation needs of a large number of Californians, specifically those of color and low to moderate income, are primarily transit-related rather than vehicular-based. However, if you modify policies related to who has access to the road, which is what some market-based pricing tactics would affect, then you've got to raise the larger question of the impacts on transit-dependent people, or the impact on people who have the older, more polluting cars, which is what low-income people have anyway. They don't have the latest fuel efficient cars with all the catalytic converters. And by the way, those of you who don't think that regulatory approaches work, the catalytic converter worked. That was a regulatory approach that was imposed upon us, but it worked and it did have positive impacts.

The poor are paying disproportionately for their basic transportation in relationship to all the needs that they have, and we've got to look at equity in relationship to how we can reduce the cost to such populations, and how we can make transit more efficient. Current systems are not designed to move the people to where the jobs are located. For instance, in the Bay Area, we have 153,000 surplus jobs; we have more jobs than people. But the jobs are not being developed in Oakland, Richmond or in San Francisco. They are being developed in the Interstate 580 corridor. There's not an efficient transportation system to get them there. If you do not have a car to get there, then you have a serious problem getting to where the jobs are located. Yet we've got people in the cities looking for work and we have work looking for people, and they can't find each other because of the absence of an efficient transportation system. It seems to me that the business community ought to be focusing on that, as well as reducing congestion.

We need to be clearer about who does the polluting by race, income, and occupation. I have not seen the data yet that tells me who by race, income, and occupation is driving down I-80. We do not have systematic data that tells us what the differential consequences are from usage of the road and all of these various market pricing proposals by race, income, and occupation. I think we need to be more scientific than we've been. Instead of just saying market-based pricing will help the poor, or will help low-income people, or will be fair or will be equitable, let us be more scientific.

And then finally we've got to link the pollution control to transit equity. I just want to keep saying that: transit equity. Equal access to competitive, efficient transit systems that allow people to go where they need to go to work, shop, recreate, and do everything else that everyone else assumes can be done if you have a vehicle.

In summary, there are many unanswered questions. I'm not categorically opposed to market-based pricing strategies; I just don't think that all of the questions have been sufficiently answered by the information I've seen to date.

Mtangulizi Sanyika is a transportation planner living in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is an edited transcription of a presentation made during a conference of the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA). The Conference was titled "Market-Based Transportation Control Strategies For The 90's," held at the Oakland Airport Hilton, January 1992.
CASH FOR CLUNKERS
Can Hurt the Poor

By Roger D. Colton and Michael F. Sheehan

Environmental programs are often hard on the poor. The "Cash for Clunkers" proposal to purchase old, polluting automobiles is one example. It may be a perfectly legitimate clean air strategy, but unless it is carefully structured with the poor in mind, it may directly threaten low-income access to food, housing, heating and medical care.

Buying up and retiring old cars may make environmental and economic sense. It might be less expensive, as well as more effective, to retire older automobiles than it is to install more expensive scrubbers or other cleanup measures on power plants, factories and the like. A purchasing agency or industry could allocate up to $1,500 to buy a new car, for example, if it accomplishes the same cleanup that would result from installing alternative pollution control equipment costing $1,501 or more. Or that money could be given as a grant to a low-income household to help them buy a new car. If a newer, cleaner car costs $2,500, the purchasing agent should be willing to give a grant of $1,500 to match $1,000 by the low-income household to help purchase the newer car.

Despite its initial attractiveness from an environmental perspective, this proposal to retire old, polluting automobiles is likely to have adverse implications for poor people. Consider the following:

1. **Price impact of increased demand.** If another player enters the market for old cars, the new demand will drive up their cost, very possibly beyond the point at which they are affordable to the poor.

2. **Decreasing supply of affordable automobiles.** The purpose of an environmental program to purchase old cars is to remove pollution-intensive vehicles from the market. That’s good environmentally. If the program succeeds, however, there will be fewer affordable cars available to the poor. Thus, the very measure of "effectiveness" from an environmental perspective, i.e., the retirement of older and dirtier cars, is a measure of "harm" from a poverty perspective, i.e., the retirement of older and more affordable cars.

3. **Taxability of financial assistance.** One reasonable response to these affordability problems might be to have the purchasing agency (whether local or state government or private industry) provide financial assistance to help low-income households purchase newer cleaner cars. That process, however, raises its own problems, particularly when undertaken by private industry. Recent experience with utility programs offering forgiveness of arrears (as well as those offering weatherization incentives) has shown that the utility contribution is classified as taxable income to the low-income household. The taxes must come out of income that would have been devoted to other household necessities, such as food, clothes, medicine and the like. From a cash perspective, the household ends up worse off. The same could be true of automobile grants.

4. **The effect on food stamps.** Providing a monetary grant (even for a specific purpose) has implications for public benefits. For example, one impact of the Boston Harbor cleanup was to dramatically increase local water and sewer rates. One study on how to mitigate the effects of such increases found that some types of rate relief proposals for low-income households (involving cash supplements) would directly reduce food stamps. For each dollar of added income provided through the proposals, federal regulations require a proportionate reduction in a poor family’s food stamp allotment. It must be clear that a $1,500 grant to pay for a newer, cleaner automobile, which results in a $500 reduction in households food stamps, will not necessarily be welcomed. A poor family might well be justified to question why it should forfeit $500 in food stamps to provide cleaner air.

5. **Public benefits and automobile asset limits.** A number of public benefit programs (including winter home heating assistance in some states) have total asset tests. When the level of assets devoted to cars is forced up, two other things occur. Some households will be forced off these public benefit programs entirely to the extent that they exceed the total asset limits; and, for all households, the program will drive down the assets that these households can devote to other uses. If total assets are $5,000, in other words, and auto assets just went from $1,500 (old car) to $3,000 (new car), assets devoted to housing must necessarily decrease to stay within the total asset limits. It is important to note that it is not simply that poor people cannot afford to purchase these new cars; the asset problem is independent of the affordability question.

The effectiveness of programs in achieving environmental cleanup goals cannot be the only point of analysis for proposed public policies. Consider, too, the impact on poor people.

Roger D. Colton and Michael F. Sheehan of Fisher, Sheehan & Colton, Belmont, MA., work on poverty, natural resources and regulatory issues. This article was first printed in State Legislatures in May 1993.
CONGESTION PRICING AND THE ROLE OF "EQUITY" ANALYSIS

By Cameron Yee

Transportation policies affect the allocation of costs and benefits of the transportation system to different people. Generally, examining "equity" impacts entails looking at the distribution of the cost and benefit effects on different socio-economic groups (typical divisions include by income, neighborhood, and ethnicity). But how are these impacts defined and do they really look at the effects of policies on low income groups and people of color?

PROBLEMS WITH "EQUITY" ANALYSES

Policies related to transportation more often than not focus on reducing automobile use or increasing the efficiency of freeways because of congestion. Congestion on freeways typically occurs during peak travel periods, greatly restricting mobility. But this mobility is described in terms of the ease of travel for automobile users during peak travel periods on freeways, which does not include many low income people. Further, congestion is usually defined in terms of level of service, the average speed of traffic over a freeway corridor or in terms of vehicle delay that a freeway user experiences. This leads to narrow policy analyses that focus on improving the mobility of the car and not the mobility of the region's people.

One common method of defining costs in "equity" analyses is by valuing people's time. The cost of congestion to a person is measured in terms of delay due to traffic. In many instances, the analysis assumes the dollar amount of this foregone time should be measured in terms of a person's wages or income. As a result, poorer people's time is undervalued because their wages are lower and they tend to travel less using automobiles.

The Bay Bridge Congestion Pricing Demonstration Program

As perceptions of an increasingly congested freeway system persist and the realization that building more roads to accommodate drivers does not solve congestion problems, market based transportation policies such as congestion pricing are being considered for implementation. Congestion pricing essentially charges a fee to drivers who use the road during the times in which it is most congested. Congestion pricing is increasingly being considered for implementation because it promises a way to make freeways less congested while targeting the people who use the freeways at the most congested time. Like other policies, this type of program focuses on congestion and improving the freeways for auto users. The Bay Bridge Congestion Pricing Demonstration Program (BBCPDP) is one such program.

In November of 1992, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) solicited offers to fund up to five congestion pricing pilot programs across the United States. The FHWA accepted only one proposal, the BBCPDP developed by the San Francisco Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The BBCPDP proposes to raise the toll of the Bay Bridge between the 6 to 9 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. peak periods from $1 to $3 when traffic congestion is worst. In the process of developing this pricing scheme, the program team has acknowledged that there are concerns regarding the "equity" impacts of the increased toll on low income drivers. They have addressed this area in two ways:

1) Revenues derived from the project will be used to expand alternatives to driving in the corridor; and
2) A "lifeline" toll rate of $1 will be given to low income drivers who can prove they use the corridor during the peak times and whose household income is at or below 150% of the federal poverty level.

Larger Implications of the BBCPDP

While the people involved in the program have put a great deal of effort into trying to address the impacts on low income drivers, many questions remain before congestion pricing and other market-based programs can be fairly implemented:

1. What will the revenues from these programs be used for? While the proposed use of revenues from the BBCPDP is to mostly improve transit alternatives in the corridor, there is no guarantee that the revenues will actually be used in this manner. Revenues from such programs must be used to improve the overall mobility alternatives for the entire region's transportation system, not just for automobile users.

2. What kind of potential spillover effects on other freeways and corridors in the region will result from implementing the program? There will be health and air quality effects that impact other freeways and interchanges and the surrounding land uses. In the San Francisco Bay Area many of these are located in "flatland" communities where many people of color and low-income people live.

3. How will this type of program affect land use? Will it encourage or discourage sprawl? Will the transportation and land use link be better addressed? Higher income groups may...
find that improved travel time over the corridor means that they can locate further away from their place of employment. Urban areas could become more isolated from the suburbs and impoverished while new suburbs continue to chew up more land and open space. Many unanswered questions and uncertainties remain on how market-based policies will affect land use.

While addressing these issues is a difficult task, it is an important one in terms of building a socially just transportation system that provides equal mobility alternatives to all people. Such issues make it imperative that the transportation system is appropriately defined before any analysis takes place. Policy makers must realize who they are affecting before making policy decisions. Analyses that address questions such as these will provide policy makers with a complete picture before decisions are made that affect human, community and environmental health.

Cameron Yee is a Transportation Policy Associate with the Urban Habitat Program. UHP is currently working to develop a framework and methodology to address "equity" issues and impacts of market-based transportation control measures (TCMs) and transportation policies. Using this social and ecological justice framework, UHP will critique the BBCPDP over the next year, and other TCMs in the future, making alternative recommendations as appropriate.

**Market “Solutions”**

Higher income groups may find that improved travel time over the corridor means they can locate further away from their place of employment. Urban areas could become more isolated from the suburbs and more impoverished.

**Highway Robbery!**

Drive Alone + Money = Speed

Car commercials portray shiny new metal products burning rubber at high speeds on two lane roads. Now, people with money can buy high speed travel on freeway lanes that were once dedicated to carpools. In San Diego and Riverside, High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) "buy-in lanes," appropriately called high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, (and even more fondly called "Lexus Lanes") are being developed. For a fee, those rich enough to pay can use these lanes, leaving those without money stuck in traffic.

HOV lanes, or carpool lanes, were built with our tax money to encourage those who drove alone to drive with other people or use transit. Because these lanes are not congested like general use lanes, people are attracted to carpool, which saves the stress, gasoline and time of driving alone. Now, all this may change. Many cities across the U.S. are now considering auctioning off the "excess capacity" of carpool lanes to those willing to pay. The attractiveness of carpool lanes may diminish completely, leaving no reason to carpool. Meanwhile, the poor remain in traffic, and pollution and excessive energy consumption are likely to worsen.

Who’s paying for these projects? The San Diego project is funded by the Federal Highway Administration and California’s Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The Riverside project is on state-owned roads, leased to private toll companies. So much for social justice in transportation policy.
Americans In Transit:
A Profile of Public Transit Passengers

By The American Public Transit Association

During the past two decades, public transit has experienced a marked revitalization. In 1990 alone Americans took 8.8 billion transit trips and, on any average weekday, over 7.5 million people will ride on public transit vehicles.

This article explores the socio-economic characteristics of the transit riding population; it describes the gender, age, race, ethnicity, income and trip purpose of the average public transit rider and searches for future trends. Briefly, the findings are:

- The majority of riders are female;
- 30.8 percent are black;* 17.9 percent are Hispanic;
- 6.9 percent are senior citizens;
- 10.3 percent are age 18 or under;
- 1.2 percent are people with disabilities (this increases to 2.5 percent excluding New York);
- 27.5 percent have annual family incomes below $15,000 (38.2 percent excluding New York);
- Work trips comprise 54.4 percent of all transit trips while medical and school trips account comprise 5.5 and 14.6 percent respectively, and;
- Over 16 million work trips are taken by transit passengers on an average workday.

However, there are wide variations within this description. Specifically, small communities have much different transit use patterns than do large cities.

The national transit ridership profile, using current and projected Census Information, imparts three major conclusions:

1. Public transit disproportionately serves low income workers and minorities.
2. Transit performs a critical economic function in the journey-to-work.
3. The trend of increasing public transportation usage is expected to continue well into the 21st century.

BACKGROUND

The ridership profiles in this article were collected from a survey of 136 U.S. transit systems in May 1992. These systems ranged from New York’s Metropolitan Transit Authority, which serves almost 27 percent of the U.S. transit market, to the Kings Area Rural Transit, which provides about 600 passenger trips daily in remote Hanford, California. This large and extremely diverse sample accounts for nearly 60 percent of the total U.S. public transit ridership. The national means were calculated with a weighted average formula and the transit systems’ average weekday ridership is used as the weight for each observation. Thus, the national statistics are strongly influenced by the responses of the larger systems which carry the majority of riders.

In order to understand the ridership profile of transit systems serving less populous areas, the analysis includes survey responses grouped according to the population of the system’s urbanized area or urban place. This permits analysis and comparison of transit use patterns by community size. Again, the population group means were calculated with the weighted average formula.*

GENDER OF TRANSIT RIDERS

The U.S. Bureau of the Census reports that 48.8 percent of the U.S. population is male and 51.2 percent is female. Likewise, the national transit statistics reveal that 48.1 percent of all passengers are male and 51.9 percent are female. In smaller cities and towns, however, a distinct majority of riders are female. Figure 1 gives a breakdown of ridership by gender according to population group. It shows that about 60 percent of transit riders are female, in places below one million population. In fact, many rural transit systems report that over 75 percent of their riders are female.

AGE OF TRANSIT RIDERS

The American population has been gradually aging from a median of 28.0 years in 1970 to 33.1 years in 1991. Furthermore, the number of persons age 65 and over is projected to increase 9.9 percent to 34.9 million people by year 2000. This population phenomenon has been referred to as the "graying of America" and it will strain all services for the elderly, including public transit.

At the national level almost seven percent of all transit riders are senior citizens. As with the comparison by gender, small cities and rural areas have a greater percentage of elderly riders. In communities of less than 50,000 population, 18 percent of passengers are 65 years old or older. This high rate of usage by senior citizens implies that transit performs an indispensable service for their medical, shopping, recreational and other non-work travel needs; it is not uncommon to find that many seniors in rural areas rely exclusively on public transit for transportation.

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*Editors Note: Use of the term like "minorities" and "Hispanic" are as they appear in the original source. UHP uses terms like African-American, Latino and people of color to reflect a multicultural consciousness and political reality. For example, in many places (and in the world) "minorities" are in fact the majority. For many, "Hispanic" reflects a eurocentric cultural perspective while Latino speaks to a more diverse range of spanish-speaking cultures, perspectives, experiences. The editors also note that no statistics were provided for Asian/Pacific Islanders or Native Americans.
Ridership by Ethnicity/Race

Ethnic and racial minorities are another large and important segment of the U.S. transit market. In places with population of 1 million or more, 48.7 percent of riders are black or Hispanic. In contrast, transit systems operating in areas below 50,000 population report that only 6.2 percent of riders are black and 9 percent are Hispanic. Nationally, 45.1 percent of riders are white, 30.8 percent are black, 17.9 percent are Hispanic and 6.2 percent are other. Clearly, minorities are transit users, disproportionate to their population shares.

Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities make up a larger percentage of transit riders in the more populous areas. The proportion of white riders drops from 82 percent in places under 50,000 to 47.6 percent in UZA’s [urbanized area] of one million or more population. What is interesting is that many systems serving small UZA’s and rural places report a relatively high percentage of Hispanics.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census projects the non-white population to expand to 17.4 percent of the total U.S. population by the year 2000. Again, these Census projections give strong evidence of increased future demand for public transit services.

Riders with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone who has a physical or mental disability in the areas of employment, public services, public accommodations and telecommunications. Regarding transit, the ADA is a very important and far-reaching law because it is expected to dramatically increase the number of persons with disabilities who have access to public transportation.

At the national level, 1.2 percent of all transit riders have disabilities. However, if one excludes the New York City Transit Authority, the national average jumps to 2.5 percent. Table 1 shows that the percentage of riders with disabilities increases rapidly as community size decreases; it is not uncommon for 10 to 15 percent of riders in smaller places to have disabilities. As with the elderly, many people with disabilities rely entirely on public transit for basic transportation.

Trip Purpose

Across America more than half of all transit trips are made to and from work. Another 14.6 percent are for school purposes and the remainder are trips taken for a variety of shopping, medical, social and recreational purposes. The variations in trip purposes are significant, however, when one looks at the transit use patterns in communities of different size.

Figure 2 presents a breakdown of transit trips by population group according to trip purpose. In areas of less than 50,000 population, 60.5 percent of trips are taken for medical and social/recreational purposes, while 20.5 percent of transit trips are for work. On the other hand, in areas of 1 million or more only 14.7 percent are medical and social/recreational trips, while

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<td><strong>Populations of Urbanized Area/Urban Place</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent with Disabilities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Million and More</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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<td>500,000-1 Million</td>
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<td>200,000-500,000</td>
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<td>Under 50,000</td>
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almost 55 percent are work trips. The implications are unambiguous. The importance of transit in populous areas of the country, where 70 percent of total transit use supports business and educational activities, is predominantly economic. In smaller areas, the significance of transit may be most profound in a social rather than economic sense. In any case, both purposes (economic and social) are served in virtually every area where public transit service is provided.

**Income Characteristics**

Income data in Figure 3 show that 27.5 percent of transit riders have an annual family income below $15,000. If one excludes the New York City Transit Authority, then the percentage increases dramatically to 38 percent. This is nearly three times the 14.2 percent of Americans below the Census Bureau's poverty level of $13,924 for a family of four.

Transportation economists believe that income and public transit use are inversely related, so that transit demand increases as income decreases. Accordingly, increasing poverty will result in an increase in transit use. The Census Bureau reports that in 1991 the number of Americans below the poverty line increased to 35.7 million — the highest number since 1964. Furthermore, many
economists believe that the U.S. economy is moving from an industrial orientation to a service sector orientation, where wages are generally lower. Thus, given the low income profile of transit users, increasing transit demand is highly likely.

The breakdown by population group is even more interesting. In places below 1 million population, more than half of transit passengers report family incomes below $15,000 per year. Furthermore, in areas below 50,000 population, over 61 percent of transit riders have annual family incomes below $15,000. Figure 3 shows that there are high income passengers in every population group. Commuter rail service exhibits an especially large ratio of high income riders. Nevertheless, it is the economically disadvantaged — often without alternative means of travel — who constitute the largest share of total public transit ridership.

**National Ridership Profile and the General Population**

The 1990 census provides a wealth of information on U.S. demographics. It is essential to the understanding of transit ridership characteristics to compare and contrast this general population data with the national transit ridership profile.

Figure 4 shows a comparison by age of the national ridership profile and the general population. Notice that the percentage of working-age transit riders (ages 18 to 65 years) is very high at 82.2 percent. In contrast the census statistics show that only 60.3 percent of the U.S. population in this age group [sic]. This reflects the dominance of the work trip in the national ridership profile and the importance of public transit to the working people.

Figure 5 compares the national ridership profile with the general population at annual family income. This graph shows that while 27.5 percent of transit riders have annual family incomes below $15,000 only 16.9 percent of the general population are in this low income bracket. Correspondingly, the percentage of riders in the high income bracket is almost half that of the general population. This illustrates the relative importance of transit to lower and lower-middle class individuals.

Figure 6 charts the ethnic/racial composition of transit riders against the general population. Notice that the total percentage of black and Hispanic riders at 48.7 percent is over twice the total percentage of blacks and Hispanics in the general population at 21 percent. Of course, this shows the relative value of public transit to minority groups.

Combined, the three graphs easily lead to this deduction: public transit is disproportionately used by minority workers in low income jobs who depend on the local transit authority to bring them to the workplace.

Finally, the census data also points out that America is becoming increasingly urbanized. The percentage of the population in urban areas has steadily expanded from 73.6 percent in 1970 to 73.7 percent in 1980 to 75.2 percent in 1990. Naturally, public transit is best suited to serving urban communities and will be in greater demand as this trend continues.

**Conclusions**

1. **Minorities and low income workers constitute a large proportion of public transit passengers.** The comparison with the U.S. Census data shows that these groups use transit at a much higher rate than their representation in the general public.

2. **Public transit is part of our nation’s “social safety net.”** For the elderly, women, students, people with disabilities, minorities and low income individuals, public transit is the primary, and many times the sole, means of travel.

3. **Transit performs a vital economic service.** Nationally, the worktrip is the dominant trip by purpose, and most of these transit commuters, held low income jobs. Very simply, the economic stability and growth of many of our nation’s urban centers depend on mass transit’s ability to economically transport people to the workplace.

4. **The characteristics of transit riders vary significantly from community to community.** The profile of the

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**Figure 4**

National Ridership Profile and the General Population by Age

![Graph showing national ridership profile and general population by age](image-url)
average rider in large urban areas is much different from that in rural areas. This lends credence to the point that transit serves a broad range of economic and social needs across the geographic spectrum.

5. Transit demand should continue to increase well into the 21st century. The demographic projections of the U.S. population and the trend of increasing urbanization suggest that the number of people with transit-riding characteristics will continue to grow. Hence, demand for public transit services can also be expected to expand.

This is an edited version of a paper published by the American Public Transit Association, December 1992.

1 An urbanized area or UZA is a U.S. Bureau of Census-designated area consisting of a central city of 50,000 inhabitants or more, or two adjacent cities constituting for general social and economic purposes a single community with a population of at least 50,000, plus surrounding closely settled territory, but excluding the rural portion of cities. An urban place is a U.S. Bureau of the Census designated area consisting of incorporated political units or closely settled unincorporated areas outside an urbanized area.

2 A detailed explanation of the survey methodology and the statistical procedures is available from the American Public Transit Association, Research and Statistics Division.


4 Ibid., Table No. 12, p.14.

The Need for
Rural Public Transportation

By Steven Alexander

To better understand the need for rural public transportation it helps to examine statistics regarding the percent of our nation's population that lives in rural areas and especially, the percent who would likely be dependent upon some form of public transportation.

Based on the latest available census figures, 36 percent of Americans live in rural areas. Perhaps more importantly, however, is that 43 percent of the disabled, 39 percent of the elderly, 32 percent of the unemployed, and 39 percent of persons living below poverty level all dwell in rural areas.

As growing numbers of aging citizens retire to rural America, they bring with them new transportation challenges. All is rosy as long as they are able to drive, but normally healthy senior citizens encounter coordination, vision, or other problems that preclude their ability to drive. How then can they access health facilities and other basic services? Is the only solution for those people costly nursing home confinement simply because they can no longer drive?

Similar problems are confronted by unemployed people in rural areas. Farm mechanization, economic policies, and other events have left thousands without means to earn a living. The result is increased dependence on public assistance. The situation is a "catch 22." If they had a reliable car, they could travel to urban areas where jobs exist, but they can't afford the car.

What about disabled persons who live in rural areas? Without transportation how will they get to rehabilitative and treatment services or, for that matter, just basic human services? How can they get to potential jobs for which they are qualified if they cannot drive? There are excellent sheltered workshops that can be established in rural areas that provide not only employment for disabled persons, but also, badly needed opportunities for social interaction. Many workshop events have left thousands without means to earn a living. The result is increased dependence on public assistance. The situation is a "catch 22." If they had a reliable car, they could travel to urban areas where jobs exist, but they can't afford the car.
participants establish friendships and even spouses. The problem again is that without transportation, sheltered workshops cannot function and qualified disabled people cannot be hired. The consequences is that disabled persons who are unable to drive are isolated and denied benefits and privileges available to persons similarly afflicted who live in urban areas that have public transportation.

The most urgent need, however, for rural public transportation is in the area of health care. Lack of funds and need for efficiency has caused increasing numbers of rural hospitals to close. Similarly, it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract physicians to rural areas. So, how can rural Americans get pre-natal care, diagnostic services, preventative medicine, and special treatments for serious illnesses that those who dwell in urban areas take for granted? For those who are unable or cannot afford to drive, opportunities for health care are severely limited. Many rural areas have excellent health clinics that can efficiently provide many basic services, but for those who lack transportation they are worthless. Intercity bus service is almost nonexistent. Rural people who cannot drive must prevail on family or friends or, in some cases, risk unsafe, uninsured, jitney systems.

There are efficient and effective solutions to these problems. In a very limited number of rural areas, well managed demand responsive public transportation systems are providing cost effective transportation for dependent persons. Often they are financed through the FTA section 18 program and even include management of section 16b2 vehicles. They are also able to tap into other federal, state, and local governmental programs that provide funding for transportation which helps with matching and operating costs. It should be noted, however, that 40-50 percent of rural residents live in counties without any public transportation service.

The problem is that FTA section 18 and 16b2 funding is inadequate to establish and sustain systems in most of the rural areas that desperately need them. At the same time, motorists in rural areas are paying billions of dollars into the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund, but only 4 percent of the transit funding is coming back for rural area transit purposes.

It is easy to see that personal mobility problems exist in both urban and rural areas, but the existing funding distribution is disproportionate. What is being proposed is that a minimum of 10 percent of all federal funding for public transportation be set aside off the top for the section 18 and 16b2. This set aside would take place prior to any discretionary or other formula apportionments.

It should be noted that increased rural funding from the discretionary Section 3 Program is not the answer. It does not include necessary operating funds and the projects are "earmarked" in committee before they can be broadly allocated to meet national rural public transportation needs.

Urban areas would not necessarily have a net loss of money under this proposal. The additional funding required to provide the fixed percentage for rural public transportation may come from the new funding made available to the Mass Transit Account from the 2 1/2 cent fuel tax that was recently approved for the H.T.F. (It was originally passed in the 1991 Budget Reconciliation Act for deficit reduction purposes.) One half cent of this will go into the Mass Transit Account. A portion of this could be used to offset the additional rural spending.

Urban areas would benefit from this proposal because it would gain the support of rural states for a strong national public transit program. Large urban systems would still receive the lion's share of transit funding, but rural states would also receive an adequate amount to address their serious needs.

Steven Alexander works for the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department.

Farm mechanization, economic policies, and other events have left thousands without means to earn a living... The situation is a "catch 22." If they had a reliable car, they could travel to urban areas where jobs exist, but they can't afford the car.
By Bruce Colburn

For a number of years, I was a bus driver in Milwaukee. Then I was elected president of the union that represents transit workers throughout southeastern Wisconsin, and suddenly realized that improving mass transit is the key to rebuilding America, aiding our central cities, and cleaning up the environment, if not stopping wars in the Middle East. Even though we were half kidding, we have made a hell of an effort in Milwaukee to convince people that it is true.

Building mass transit can't just be the latest university-inspired plan or some pie-in-the-sky public policy idea. Mass transit is the people's transportation system for recreation, work, and shopping. This notion was the heart and soul of our coalition: building and fighting for public transit, not as the nice idea, but as a real movement for the people's transportation system of the future.

Eight years ago, Milwaukee had a transit system sinking deeper and deeper into a vicious cycle of decline, similar to the one that nearly killed mass transit when it was privately run two decades ago. First, our "wise leaders" raised the fares to meet money shortages. That meant fewer riders. Then they cut routes, which cost more riders. Then they raised fares again because there were fewer riders. You know the rest.

In 1985, our newly elected union leadership said enough. We reached out to every community-based organization in town to fight a ten-cent fare increase. We jammed hearings, collected 25,000 signatures, came up with slogans like "ten cents is no fare." The press loved our slogans, and they loved the whole controversy. Our media campaigns were crucial. We won. There was no fare increase in 1985.

The next year the politicians tried to outsmart us. They decided they would cut service instead of raising fares. The battle was on again. The highlight of that fight was our "Tour of Tragedy." We rented county buses and draped them in black crepe paper (it was close to Halloween), then loaded up the press and community groups and went to each stop where service cuts were planned. At every stop, area residents testified about what the loss of service would mean to them and their jobs. There were no service cuts that year.

Each succeeding year it's been a different campaign: for improved security, state transit funding -- the list goes on. Now we're pushing for light rail development.

But enough stories. The real question is what are the ingredients of an effective coalition? Each city will put them together differently, but there are certain rules or issues that have to be addressed.

First, someone has to lead the way. In our experience the transit workers were at the center. It only seems logical -- after all, they have the most to gain or lose based on the future of mass transit. Still, we had to convince our union membership to fight issues like a fare increase. The county said flat out that no fare increase meant no money for raises. Well, we sided with the community, and later they helped us get our raises when they saw that we had gone to bat for them. The center of a coalition has to be broadened and built over time.

It's not good enough just to beat a proposed ten-cent fare increase down to five cents. We want fares cut and service improved. To do that you need an organization, and the organization needs a plan: a short-term and long-term strategy. So for the last six years we've built an organization -- the Coalition for Mass Transit (CMT) -- with its own newsletter, its own stationary, and yes, even its own trademark.

So now we have a center -- a leadership group -- and an organization, the coalition. The next question is how do we build public transportation as a movement for the future? In Milwaukee, we've tried to tie transportation into every other movement and issue that's important. Believe me, the links are there.

Public transportation means jobs, whether it's worker access to jobs, a competitive edge for business, or, as is the case with our plans for $1 billion worth of light rail construc-

Building mass transit can't just be the latest university-inspired plan or some pie-in-the-sky public policy idea. Mass transit is the people's transportation system.
First, our "wise leaders" raised the fares to meet money shortages. That meant fewer riders. Then they cut routes, which cost more riders. Then they raised fares again because there were fewer riders. You know the rest.

We've even had demonstrations with environmental groups wearing gas masks at highway entrances. I had to talk the membership into that one. But if you're going to unite with different issue groups, you're going to have to support their causes.

We just had an international economic development expert in Milwaukee not particularly a transit advocate. He told us that in his estimation, any city in the world with a real future is now investing big money in public transportation.

With this new federal transportation act [the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991], our time can be now. I've talked about the key ingredients: developing the leadership, the core group, the organization, linking up to other movements and issues, building the coalition, forming temporary alliances and campaigns, and finally, being involved in transit planning and developing a transit philosophy. Still, nothing will happen unless we build that real citizens' movement for public transportation.

Bruce Colburn was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO in March, 1991. Prior to that he headed the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 998 for six years, representing public- and private-sector transit workers in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Kenosha, and Sheboygan, as well as some employees at the Wisconsin Electric Power Company.

This article was first printed by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, in a special issue of The Neighborhood Works, called "Transportation for Sustainable Communities," 1992.
Traditionally, labor unions and environmentalists have fought over issues such as urban development vs. growth management, or natural resource extraction vs. preservation. But the lean and mean 90s, which are becoming characterized by a growing tendency to privatize public services and roll back environmental protections, makes this a decade to recast our alliances.

For the past two years, I have been participating in exploratory meetings between the Coordinating Council of Bay Area Transit Workers Unions (Coordinating Council) and some of the Bay Area’s environmental organizations. Besides the Urban Habitat Program (with whom I work), other participants in these meetings have included Greenpeace, Sierra Club, Greenbelt Alliance, and Urban Ecology. The Coordinating Council represents San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni, TWU-250A), Santa Clara Transit (ATU-265), Greyhound (ATU-1225), AC Transit - Alameda Couty (ATU-192), Golden Gate Transit - Marin County (ATU-1575), Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART, ATU-1555), San Mateo Transit (Samtrans, ATU-1574), UPE-790, UTU-23, UTU-1741, SEIU-707 (Scope), and ATU-1605.

Mike Miller of the Organize Training Center has also been involved acting as a mediator and convenor for the meetings. While labor unions and environmentalists have been reluctant to work together in the past, both agree there is a natural convergence of interests between them; both want to improve transit in the Bay Area.

The environmental organizations work is inspired by an ecological perspective, and in a social context, by the vision of sustainable communities. They are willing to share these ideas and act on them. There was a general consensus among the environmental organizations that reform of unsustainable transportation patterns by advancing transit is an integral element in moving towards creating an environmentally sustainable Bay Area. They point out that an increasing reliance on automobiles for basic transportation needs has fueled the demand for more roadways to accommodate travel to and from increasingly further outlying suburban areas. They argue that a well designed mass transit system could meet the majority of urban, suburban, and regional travel needs with less energy consumption, less vehicle miles traveled, and less utilization of land space now going to accommodate automobiles and sprawling inefficient suburban infrastructure.

The Urban Habitat Program (a multi-cultural social justice and environmental organization), argues that conventional development patterns which have encouraged suburbanization have broader socio-economic impacts, such as stratifying regions by income and race. We also believe that many past and present transportation investments have and are reinforcing this stratification in terms of roadway projects that disrupt and marginalize communities of color, low-income communities, and the needs of the elderly and disabled. For example, with significant political and financial support, highway construction has caused many communities of color to be bordered by major freeways; at the same time they are left with little public transit service. This does a disservice to these communities as congestion-related pollution increases, and as quality of service for transit riders declines.

After observing many of these meetings I found that despite some differences, all the environmentalists tended to agree that from both a natural resource conservation and an urban development perspective, focusing on transportation reform is key to addressing people’s economic and social needs and protecting and restoring the region’s natural environment.

The transit workers unions bring another valuable perspective to the meetings. They note that public transit is continuing to lose financial support for operating expenses despite the enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Under ISTEA there is more flexibility in federal funding for new buses and rail, yet the equally important operating funds have been decreasing. In the past, much of the operating costs for mass transit has been subsidized. However, as subsidies wane, the costs of operating mass transit remain. Consequently, municipalities, counties, and transit agencies are becoming more financially squeezed between a declining supply of local, state, and federal operating funds and stable yet insufficient fare box receipts. In many instances, elected officials find it politically unpopular to raise taxes or find other funding sources. More often than not, this means transit agencies have to raise fares and cutback service to meet their operating budgets. This leads to a downward cycle of declining service and...
increasing fares that only continue to deter riders from using public transit. Meanwhile, those riders with options become more reliant on their cars for routine trips. Many of the unions feel that on a national level, environmentalist's support for ISTEA was blind to the pressing problem of insufficient federal transit operating authorizations.

A likely sticking point is that unions continue to take a lot of the unfair blame for high operating costs because they have collective bargaining rights that allow them to negotiate contracts which include cost-of-living wage increases and vital health benefits packages. While unions are sometimes characterized as expensive and wasteful, compared to employment of non-union labor, they do provide quality employment opportunities. Thus, the public comments that some environmental staff have made about privatizing bus services is particularly harmful. These attitudes are seen as a direct threat by the transit unions. While most of the meetings were not adversarial, difficult points like these were characterized by openness and reconciliation.

Overall, the group found that there were many opportunities to work together and good reason to move forward. One of the first projects for the group was a jointly crafted vision statement on public transportation. Based on the vision statement the group has begun to identify strategic areas of reform and some general objectives for addressing those targets. These include:

1) While ISTEA is attempting to level the transportation funding playing field, public transit operating funds are still scarce. Objective: Identify sources, and advocate for increased operating funds.

2) Inner city and lower income people have a right to accessible, reliable, and safe transportation. Objective: Link communities which are dependent on public transportation with jobs, schools, hospitals, markets, and recreational areas.

3) Public transportation is a public service. Objective: Prevent privatization of public transit.

4) Public transit should be linked to affordable housing. Objective: Create affordable housing at sites near major public transportation services.

5) Transportation should not be detrimental to environmental quality or personal health. Objective: Develop regional alternatives to dependency on automobile transportation and environmental degradation caused by over-reliance on motor vehicles.

While the group has not yet jelled into a formal coalition, it seems the participants welcome a chance to advance unified efforts based on the opportunities identified. For instance, in 1993 the group did a letter-writing campaign that helped defeat SB 199, a bill in the California legislature, which would have exempted transit service cutbacks from public environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). While working on an informal basis is fine for a one-time letter-writing campaign, all the participants realize that the real challenge is to create something that can sustain long-term pro-active campaigns that will achieve real results in reforming the metropolitan region’s transportation system.

Luz De Verano Cervantes is a Transportation Project Associate with the Urban Habitat Program.
S.F. Bay Area Regional Social and Ecological Justice Transportation Vision

**Public Mass Transit**

Transportation in the San Francisco Bay Area is a significant element in the formation of regional vitality and solidarity. One important aspect of transportation, regardless of its mode, is its capacity to unify or fragmentize communities through accessibility. The existing and future public transportation system must provide that access, and by its nature it must play an integral part in the building of sustainable communities in the S.F. Bay Area. Public mass transit is a critical link to reducing wasteful suburban sprawl, increasing socially just urban infill development, reducing reliance on automobiles, improving energy efficiency in transportation and otherwise improving the social, economic and environmental quality of life of Bay Area communities.

Public transportation is the system that provides mobility to those travelling for whom distance proves a hardship and whom have no other transportation options. Public transportation is not an isolated system; in fact, its primary function depends on people, on riders. The public transportation "system" begins with people and affects local community and regional economic opportunities, affordable housing, land use development patterns and environmental quality. The importance of the public transportation system requires that broad-based coalition be involved in the design of a "public transportation vision."

Transit workers are the frontline of the public transportation system, and work within it on a daily basis. They must be principal partners in creating a regional transportation vision and in implementing steps to improve or otherwise change the public transportation system.

This preliminary "vision" of a public transportation system reflects a significant step towards realizing a San Francisco Bay Area region that is socially just and ecologically sustainable. We believe all regional or local public transportation "visions" should include and address the following elements and considerations:

**Labor**

• The transit operators are the frontline of the public transportation system.
• The operation and maintenance of a public mass transportation system requires the involvement of skilled labor; public transportation should be operated and maintained by union transit workers
• More emphasis on mass transit and transportation alternatives can promote job creation, economic opportunity, and environmental protection.
• The public needs to understand the health, safety, and security issues of transit workers.
• Public and local government support is needed to operate and maintain the highest quality public mass transportation systems.
• Public transit workers must be participants in decisions that affect their work; and the public transit workers must have a central role in shaping decisions that affect the public transportation systems.
• Public transit workers must be informed about financial public transportation support mechanisms created by federal, state, regional, and local government.
• Public mass transit is an essential public service (like fire and police) and should not be "contracted out" or privatized.

**Economic Opportunities**

• There are two very important observations to be made about the intersection of public transportation with employment and economic opportunities:
  1. Public transportation carries riders to and from their residences and places of employment.
  2. Public transportation invites economic activity to a community because of increased accessibility.
• Public transportation can improve the diversity of employment and economic opportunity by increasing accessibility and encouraging multi-purpose land uses that meet larger community needs.
• Some of the mechanisms that achieve these elements are:
  1. Commercial/residential/office/recreation/open space mixed-use land use development patterns.
  2. Locating needed services and housing near worksites.
  3. Orienting neighborhoods around distances that one can walk or bike.
  4. Coordinated broad-based community involvement in transportation, land use and economic development planning.

**Access**

• Equitable access to efficient and affordable public mass transit systems serve all regional communities.
• Transportation access must also consider the location of needs and services for all. It has a particular obligation to first serve those communities which are least likely to have access to motor vehicles, including the socially and economically disadvantaged, communities of color, low income and working communities, youth and seniors, and the physically disabled.
• Transportation systems need to be designed so that jobs, child care services, health services, shopping, and recreation, are easily accessible and in close proximity to one another.
• Public transportation systems must be "user-friendly" to non-English speaking people and serve the multicultural communities that make up the Bay Area.

**Environmental Quality**

• Public transportation is related to environmental quality. Public mass transit as an alternative to motor vehicle does the following:
  1. Reduces traffic congestion.
  2. Improves air quality by reducing air toxins produced by auto exhaust and smog.
  3. Improves water quality by reducing urban runoff (water from city streets and sewers carrying oil and scot from motor vehicle emissions, leaking fluids, battery acids, tires and other motor vehicle parts containing poisonous substances).
  4. Provides for variety in land use decisions, including open space, urban core development, reduction in suburban sprawl.
  5. Reduces the area of land being designated for vehicle use, such as road expansions, addittions and parking lots.
  6. Utilizes energy resources more efficiently and cost effectively.
• Within new and existing communities we need to affirm pedestrian accessibility and reduce reliance on personal automobile use by promoting and creating safe, fun, and ecologically sustainable pedestrian walkways and bikeways.
• Transportation and land use planning must be integrated.

**Safety**

• The public transportation system has an obligation to be safe, secure, and healthy for all - transit workers and the public alike.
• Additional security needs to be implemented where necessary in order to prevent crimes directed toward transit workers and riders. This security needs to be accountable to transit workers and the public.
• Environmental health risks associated with transit operation (i.e. exposure to airborne lead, carbon monoxide, etc.) must be reduced.
• Ways must be found to reduce hypertension and stress among transit operators.
Statement on Urban Public Transit
By the Coordinating Council of Bay Area Transit Unions

WE DECLARE that all citizens have a right to an acceptable and attractive standard of public transit services at a price they can afford for access to work and to commercial, educational and societal activities;

BELIEVE that the overriding objective of urban transit is to provide a service to the public and that the cost of providing this service must be valued in terms of the overall benefits accruing to urban communities, due account being taken of the contribution urban transit makes to reducing accidents and congestion, to conserving energy and to protecting the environment;

NOTE that the majority of urban transit systems are at present in public ownership under the control of democratically elected national, state, regional or municipal authorities:

NOTE ALSO that profit making sections of the urban transit system help to subsidize sections which, though financially unprofitable, are socially essential;

REJECT the notion that any profits to be earned from urban transit operations should accrue to private interests while losses are borne by the public;

OPPOSE the growing tendency by public authorities to avoid their public responsibilities by involving private undertakings in the supply of transit services within cities and regions by means of:
   a) the direct sale of publicly-owned systems and equipment to the private sector;
   b) the transfer of services to subsidiaries which are no longer subject to public supervision;
   c) contracting-out of certain services or operations presently performed by publicly owned systems and/or
   d) facilitating greater, and often unfair, competition through deregulation;

STATE that where operations are entrusted to private companies they must be closely supervised by public authorities to ensure that they maintain standards of service and do not impose inferior rates of pay and working conditions on their employees;

DECLARE that technology should be applied for the purpose of improving the quality of services to the public and the working conditions of employees, not to reduce or destroy employment opportunities. In particular, adequate employees must be retained and properly trained to ensure efficient operation and to provide assistance to and safety of passengers.

SUPPORT constructive action by the responsible authorities to develop programs whereby improvements in the use of resources and the quality of service would be achieved through co-operation between Labor and Management. In developing such programs the following are being recommended:

a) The level of investment shall provide for regular renewal of equipment and improvements in the quality of rolling stock, and workplaces;
   b) There shall be a guarantee of employee participation, through their unions, in decision making policies;
   c) The level of services, in particular with respect to frequency and punctuality, should be sufficient to attract users of private means of transportation;
   d) Account should be taken of the contribution that public transit makes to protecting the environment in assessing the costs and benefits of providing services.

The members of the Coordinating Council will therefore campaign, in co-operation with other sympathetic organizations, to publicize the benefits of public transit and to persuade the responsible authorities to improve the level and quality of services provided for the public.

Adopted February 14, 1986
Mexico City, September 10, 1995
To the Working People of the United States
Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The 12,000 workers of the Ruta-100 bus drivers’ union [Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de Autotransportes Urbanos de Pasajeros Ruta-100] have been faced with a dramatic situation since: April 8 of this year.

At 2 p.m. on April 8 – without any prior notification and with the use of special police units (granaderos) – thousands of members of our union were forcefully removed from their jobs at 27 worksites in Mexico City. On that day, the Mexican government declared that the Ruta-100 public bus company was “in bankruptcy.” This was done on the basis of private jurisprudence, in violation of public law and the decree that established this public enterprise in August 1981.

Almost immediately, five top officers of our union were apprehended, and the following day, April 9, one of our legal advisors, Ricardo Barco López, was also detained on trumped-up charges.

On April 10, numerous judicial bodies decided to “freeze” our union’s savings and checking funds. Soon after, the authorities set the bail for the five detained unionists at 16 billion old pesos [US$120,000] – in open violation of the Mexican Constitution. Indeed, the Ministry of Finances unleashed fiscal terrorism against our union and its leading officers.

Members of our union are constantly harassed and pursued by the authorities. Our union headquarters and the law offices of our legal advisors have been ransacked. To make things even worse, on June 13 – in open violation of the Mexican Constitution – five members of our union who had immunity against arrest (amparo) were arrested on charges that previously had been dismissed by a Superior Court judge. We now must pay 196 billion old pesos [US$1.5 million] to release them from jail on bail.

The mass TV media (Televisa, TV Azteca) and many of the newspapers have waged a systematic campaign of slander against us. They lie, distort the truth, and often just make up stories to attack us. They are intent on defending the interests of the children of TV anchor and producer Jacobo Zabludovsky, who is a major stockholder in M.A.S.A., a private bus assembly corporation, and Carlos Hank Gonzalez, who has the concession for Mercedes Benz. These wealthy individuals are out to modify the structure of bus transportation in Mexico City by forcing the owners of the “microbuses” to exchange two of their buses for one new one.

The repression against our members by the government is unrelenting; our members are being evicted from their homes, unable to pay back small debts, and the ISSSTE (the Mexican Institute of Healthcare and Social Security) refuses to attend to our members. In addition, long term treatment of members by the ISSSTE has been suspended, and the pregnant wives of our members are not admitted to the hospital. Our personal finances are so bad that we will not be able to afford sending our children to school in September.

All this is in stark contradiction to the pledge by Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon that he will uphold the Constitution and a democratic state.

But there is a reason we are being attacked. For more than 13 years we have espoused independent trade unionism; we have also remained closely attached to the people. This has angered the government. We have also been outspoken in our criticisms of the neoliberal policies pursued by [former President] Salinas de Gortari and continued by Zedillo Ponce de Leon. These have ruthlessly impoverished the Mexican people, creating 10 million unemployed and leaving an additional 10 million homeless and dispossessed. This is why the government wants to silence us. It wants to send a message to all those who speak out against its policies.

But after five months of struggle we can tell you loud and clear: THEY HAVEN’T DEFEATED US! THEY WILL NOT DEFEAT US!

We have appealed to all the courts and government channels to seek redress of our grievances – but to no avail. We are convinced our struggle is just. Our democratically organized mass assemblies have insisted that we must continue the fight until victory. We are short on funds and supplies, but we are continuously nourished by the pride and dignity of a valiant people, whose fightback spirit is rooted in the best traditions of the Mexican resistance struggle.

We ask for your support and for the support of working people the world over. Specifically, we need your financial donations to enable our members to buy clothing, food, school uniforms and supplies for the children, etc. Please send your contributions to: SUTAUR 100, Calle Laredo No. 5, Col. Ex-Hipodromo Condesa, Mexico D.F., México. Make checks payable to Emilio Krieger or Jesús Gonzalez. Do not make checks payable to SUTAUR-100. The government has frozen our bank assets; we would not be able to deposit those checks. Money may also be sent or wired to account No. 760878-5, Banamex, Surcursal 566, payable to Emilio Krieger or Jesús Gonzalez Schmal.

WE WILL NOT RETREAT!
WE KNOW THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE!
IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH
TO PURSUE THE FIGHT TILL VICTORY!

In Solidarity,
JORGÉ CUELLAR VALDEZ
National Recording Secretary, S.U.T.A.U.R.-100
As pedestrians, we have given so much ground to automobiles in our cities that we have forgotten what it is like to hold the street. Irreverent jaywalkers still have that sense of entitlement to the street, sometimes at great risk. The rest of us cool our heels at traffic lights, step lively at the green, and wonder at the brave or foolhardy souls that take to the street between crosswalks.

There’s a powerful glee in holding the street; we experience it occasionally when traffic is halted for a street fair, parade or demonstration. In those moments, feet planted on the yellow line, the buildings are a vast amphitheater, and we are centerstage. We have given over this vista to automobiles. It is a defeat we rarely notice, because it has been a generation or two since we could cross a city street without haste. This loss of ground has profound implications for the shape and experience of our cities.

It does something to self esteem to wait at the curb for a long traffic light; it’s hard to walk tall in a crosswalk with a car nipping your heels. Our time and even safety is second to the vital business of traffic flow. Does the city exist for people, or for motorcars?

My education about how completely we gave over the street to automobiles began with an amazing clip of motion picture film, taken from a moving streetcar on Market street about 1910. A rich mix of streetcars, autos, trucks and even horse drawn carts plied the street at a stately pace. The entire procession was like a ballet, but it was the pedestrians that were the principals. They traversed the street from all angles, timing their walk to glide through the slowly moving traffic. Occasionally a head would turn to judge the speed of an oncoming vehicle, but the pedestrian would not give way. People occupied streetcar stops in the center of the street, boarding and alighting into the mix of traffic. Men in top hats, women with parasols passed so close to the camera that you could see whiskers and lace. The pace held the whole procession together, everything moved at pedestrian speed.

Today, two intersections on Market Street are the city’s most dangerous for pedestrians. San Francisco trails only New York and Boston in pedestrian accidents per capita. Traffic engineers warn pedestrians to look sharp, and not to attempt a cross on a green light that is not absolutely fresh.

How did we get here? Was it merely the increase in the number of autos? The battle for streetspace reached a peak in the 1920s, in the downtown business districts of major cities where transit lines converged, where pedestrian peaks at rush hour could easily overflow sidewalks and take to the streets. Traffic policemen, often on horseback, were unable to cite the many transgressors (Barrett, 1978). In the 1920s, autos entered this mix in increasing proportion and several cities, Los Angeles among them, tried banning downtown parking to control traffic congestion.

One significant fact that held the street for pedestrians was the practice of boarding streetcars in the middle of the street. As automobile traffic increased these center street trolley stops were raised, even fenced, at the expense of the private streetcar companies, because motorists tended to simply drive right through them.

The 1920s was also the beginning of the campaign to convert streetcar lines to bus. A heavily advertised feature of the new buses was their ability to move to the curb to pick up passengers. The first large scale urban streetcar abandonments were orchestrated by General Motors in 1925 when it purchased the country’s largest bus manufacturer, and half a dozen street rail lines in Manhattan. By the mid 1930s, these lines were motorized, and General Motors advertised in trade journals: "The motorization of Manhattan is the most significant event of 1936." General Motors went on to bankroll National City Lines, which began buying up streetcar companies and with Standard Oil of California (Chevron), Phillips Petroleum, Firestone Tire and Mack Truck tore out the tracks in eighty-five American cities. In 1949, when General Motors and its co-conspirators were convicted for anti-trust violations in a Chicago federal court, these streetcar conversions were proceeding apace.

These bus conversions chased riders away in droves and were grossly inefficient on highly traveled lines. It was the beginning of the post World War II decline in transit use all over the country. National City Lines was generally the only available buyer for these privately held transit properties, their ready money lured city officials into postponing the inevitable public investment. Once National City Lines was through converting the rail transit to bus, the systems were sold back to the city (often at enormous private profit) minus the rolling stock, rails, private right-of-ways, and riders.

The effect of these curb loading buses was to remove
pedestrians from their last stand in the center of the street. Once the safety islands were gone, there were fewer pedestrians and fewer impediments. Streets became the sole preserve of motor vehicles. Without the streetcars, traffic engineers were free to experiment with one way streets, which were the solution of choice for traffic congestion in the 1950s. Jaywalking enforcement also peaked in the 1950s, again pioneered by Los Angeles. Street widening was another congestion solution. Even in central business districts, sidewalks were narrowed to increase traffic lanes (Barrett, 1978). By the end of the 1950s most of the ground in the battle for street space had been lost.

The extent of the automobile's victory is illustrated by the federal implementation of the "right turn on red" light law in 1977. The Federal Highway Administration, concerned about fuel consumption and pollution from idling cars, mandated a right turn law. The projected increase in accidents with the new law was a "relatively insignificant" 11,200 accidents per year. The actual increase was 20,000 more accidents each year, many involving pedestrians (Pedestrian Research, 1984). But the law stayed.

Today, the front lines of this battle for streetspace are held by some unlikely allies. Bicyclists are pedestrian allies for streetspace are held by some unlikely stayed.

when they vie for streetspace. They do increase was 20,000 more accidents each year. The actual increase was 20,000 more accidents per year. The actual increase was 20,000 more accidents each year, many involving pedestrians (Pedestrian Research, 1984). But the law stayed.

Traffic engineers tell us that the people most often injured in pedestrian accidents are the very old and the very young — people who cannot move across the street quickly enough in the space of a green “walk” signal. Despite this, the Yellow Book, the federal bible of traffic regulation, allows only a second and a half of green light for every four feet of crosswalk. The traffic engineers, who indirectly create the risk, answer to departments primarily concerned with traffic flow. How many neighborhoods have argued for a stop sign, a traffic signal, or slower speeds, only to be defeated because their proposal doesn't comply with the Yellow Book or it will stop traffic flow? Does the city exist for people, or for motorcars?

In some places the tide may be turning back toward pedestrians. A few US cities are experimenting with traffic calming, a concept that has been developing in Europe and Australia for several years. These simple devices, speed bumps, narrower streets, and selective through streets have contributed to a 50% reduction in pedestrian-vehicle accidents in Europe. Some citizens in Canada have imported a Danish program, Safe Routes To Schools, identifying streets used by children, installing traffic calming to slow speeds on those streets and reducing accidents by 85%. Examples of successful traffic calming are growing and give weight to a citizen's request for pedestrian friendly streets.

San Francisco is experimenting with a new program in which traffic offenders can work off their citations as crossing guards at intersections notorious for pedestrian accidents. The speeders and the red light runners can spend a few hours helping seniors across the street, feeling the breeze on the back of their neck as the cars whiz by.

It is a full circle, placing those who put pedestrians directly at risk in charge of the safety of those who incur the most. Maybe — out there with their STOP sign held aloft like a lance to the oncoming traffic — those drivers will begin to shift their allegiance in the struggle for streetspace.

SOURCES
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Martha Olson is co-producer of Red Car Mysteries, a documentary for public television about our automobile centered transportation policy. The film investigates the auto/oil/tire industries' campaign to dismantle streetcar lines in many American Cities, drawing upon testimony from transit operators who watched the rail lines torn out, from city attorneys who worked behind the scenes to avert the rail abandonments and from the written record of citizen protest against the loss of their transit systems in countless American cities.

Red Car Mysteries also looks at the auto industry's efforts to shape our highway policy; the 1939 New York World's Fair vision of cities bisected by highways, auto executives stepping into government to implement the Interstate Highway Program in 1956 and the push today for computer assisted steering and roadway devices to increase the capacity of highways. Red Car Mysteries looks at the ways the highway industry has shaped our policy, our cities, our lives.

Funded by the Independent Television and Video Service, a Corporation for Public Broadcasting supported agency, Red Car Mysteries will be offered for national public television broadcast in 1996. The film will be available to transit, environmental and community groups for fundraising screenings. Contact this publication for more information.
Bicycle Planning: Growing Up or Growing Old?

By Bruce Epperson

This article asserts that bicycle planning, a twenty year old profession, now advances the interest of an elite minority of cyclists ignoring the needs of the majority — the young, the old, and especially the poor. It has adopted positions that have left it open to charges of racism, sexism, and classism. Worst, bicycle planning is considered irrelevant by the majority of municipal residents. Captive of special interests, it is no longer able to capture the imagination or stimulate the enthusiasm of the average tax-payer. In a time of increasing financial stress for cities and states, it may not survive the decade.


The widespread demand for bicycle planning was brought about by the great bike boom of 1970-74. From 1970 to 1973 the sales of bicycles doubled in the United States. Most of this growth resulted from an increase in sales of adult, multi-geard bicycles costing up to five hundred dollars.

Although the great bike boom collapsed in 1975, the number of new adult riders had a definite impact on government policy, both federal and local. During this five-year period, bicycle planning emphasized the development of separate bicycle facilities — bike paths and bike lanes. The belief was that since most people didn’t like to bike in traffic and weren’t very good at it, there was a need for separate facilities if large numbers were to be expected to ride. By 1974, an estimated 117 million dollars had been spent on bicycle facilities by all levels of government (Corgel and Floyd, 1979).

Starting in 1975, this policy was attacked from an unexpected quarter — the cyclists already out there. These cyclists, predominantly experienced, recreational bikers, argued that at the speeds they and their European-built, multi-geard bicycles traveled, it was much safer to travel on roads as part of the traffic flow. Not only were paths and lanes “dangerous,” they gave non-cyclists the impression that bicyclists did not belong on the road. The only safe way to promote cycling, the club of cyclists maintained, was to train bicyclists until they achieved a level of proficiency roughly equal to that of the club cyclists themselves.

Such proficiency did not come easily. John Forester (1984), a California industrial engineer who was a leading proponent of this line of thought, estimated that on one’s own, achieving a satisfactory level of competence would require ten years or 50,000 miles of riding. By the middle of the 1970s, Forester had developed an educational course, called Effective Cycling which required 35 hours with an additional five to ten hours of homework, an “amount of cycling [that] is just as much as I believe the students’ bodies can stand” (Forester, 1984).

As opposition to bikeways spread through the American club cycling structure, it became difficult to gain user input into the planning and design process.

Eventually, the organized cycling groups expanded their opposition from the construction of specialized bicycle facilities to any sort of government activity in the area of bicycle safety. By the early 1980s, direct government involvement in the promotion of bicycling or bicycle facilities was out of favor with professionals. Most planners and engineers were emphasizing Effective Cycling-type educational classes combined with spot road improvement programs that allowed lightweight, multi-geard bicycles to be operated at speeds up to 25 or 30 miles per hour.

Ideology & Money: Anatomy of a Planning Failure

The rapid domination of the bicycle planning profession by the anti-planning advocates has led more than one planner to wonder how and why this came to be. There was, after all, more than adequate data available pointing out the sharp difference between club cyclists and the general riding public. A study done in Davis, California found that the addition of bicycle lanes to a roadway acted as “significant attraction in route choice” (Lott, et. al., 1978).

There are two reasons why the anti-planning cyclists prevailed. First, as we have seen, the experienced club cyclists tended to dominate the traditional public-involvement channels. These cyclists were typically well educated, upper-middle income or wealthy, suburban whites. As sociologist Paul Mohai (1988) has documented, such demographic factors are more important than political persuasion or the strength of one’s ideological beliefs in predicting an individual’s chance of successfully influencing the political process. These groups have a greater awareness of how the political process functions and an increased ability to communicate with political decision-makers in the common idiom shared by members of the social and economic elite.

A second reason is more direct: transportation professionals and political decision-makers adopted the view of the anti-planning cyclists because to do so posed less of a threat to the existing order of mutual technical/political interests in the transportation field. Starting in 1970 the total public investment in infrastructure as a percentage of all capital investment reversed a twenty-year growth trend and started to decline. Municipal and state transportation officials, feeling the budget squeeze, reacted to demands to become more involved in bicycling by adopting the club cyclists’ anti-bikeways program. This was not because it was the best alternative, but because it was the cheapest. Thus, in the end it was money more than ideology that shaped the nature of bicycle planning.

Bicycle Planning Since 1981: Legacy of Neglect

In 1974, economist Michael Everett performed an econometric analysis of bicycle transportation in an attempt to
estimate the potential market for bicycle commuting. Based upon several alternative value-of-travel time assumptions, Everett concluded that the bicycle is a utility-maximizing form of travel in only three cases: where travel distance is very short (under about one kilometer); if the income of the user is very low; or where the user received enjoyment from the operation of the bicycle, and did not care about its more extended travel time.

Since the average trip length in urban areas is over one mile (Pisarski, 1987), Everett in essence predicted the existence of two distinct groups of bicycle users: voluntary and involuntary cyclists. The former elect to ride rather than drive because they want to, the later ride because they have to—they are either too poor to own or operate an automobile or they lack the status to acquire acceptable parking.

After 1981, the policy of most planners and engineers to exclusively adopt a non-planning approach to bicycle transportation favored the desires of voluntary cyclists over the needs of involuntary users. Voluntary cyclists were primarily white, upper-middle-class or wealthy suburban professionals who had the free time to devote several hours per week to recreational riding.

Everett (1974) predicted that policy prescriptions targeted at voluntary cyclists would probably have limited effectiveness and that the provision of bicycle facilities should be targeted at involuntary cyclists. Throughout the 1980s, his predictions proved correct.

For the bicycling industry, stressing the transportation uses of the bicycle was a way of legitimizing what amounted to a recreational activity carried out on public thoroughfares. In an effort to achieve legitimacy, the industry sponsored national bicycling clubs, conferences, and lobbyists.

The drive for legitimacy was based on an appeal to environmentalism. The inclusion of bicycling in both the 1980 and 1990 strategic planning documents of the Federal Department of Transportation was done in sections dealing with air quality improvement and energy conservation (USDOT, 1980; 1990). The American environmental movement was particularly well suited to this task.

Unlike European environmental movements, the movement in the U.S. downplayed the role of social justice in favor of programs concerned with leisure and recreation, resource and land conservation, and pollution abatement. In America, environmentalists not only tended to come from the middle-class, they supported programs under which the benefits of environmental protection accrued to fellow middle-class environmentalists at the expense of nonenvironmentalists in a system of regressive distributional impacts (Bullard, 1991).

Predictably, the use of an environmental appeal to motivate voluntary bicycle users to leave their cars in the garage and ride to work proved successful in only a few cities — those with a large percentage of young wealthy, well-educated citizens: Seattle, Washington; Palo Alto, San Diego, and Davis California; Boulder, Colorado; Eugene and Portland Oregon and Madison Wisconsin (Martin, 1991).

Fortunately, there are some signs that the twenty year somnolence of bicycle planning is coming to an end. To a large extent, this change results from a new awareness of the role of social justice in the environmental movement. Social justice organizations, often the descendants of civil rights groups are creating an independent environmental movement that stresses the quality of the urban environment, the spatial location of polluting facilities, and a breaking of the environment-or-jobs chain (Gottlieb and Ingram, 1988).

Such groups increasingly point to examples of systematic racial or class prejudice in transportation planning decisions, including the disproportionate impact of freeway expansion on the air quality of inner city neighborhoods and the tendency of new high-speed rail systems and the express-bus services to benefit the flow of suburban whites to and from down-towns, while doing nothing to increase the accessibility of suburban job sites to core-area residents (Anderson, 1989. Bullard,1991). This awareness is also beginning to work its way into bicycle planning. A Lew Harris poll commissioned by the nation’s largest consumer-oriented bicycle magazine indicated that the rate of bicycle commuting among individuals with a household income of less than $15,000 was almost double that of individuals belong to households with a household income of over $35,000 (Pena, 1991). A study undertaken in a suburban south Florida municipality revealed that median income was a more significant and reliable estimator of the per capita rate of involvement in bicycle/motor vehicle accidents within neighborhoods than was age (Epperson, 1992). Age has long been considered the definitive predictor of at-risk populations by bicycle planners (Cross, 1978).

There are two reasons for this shift: the changing economics of the automobile and the changing geography of cities. Despite the long standing fear of a coming fuel shortages, gasoline prices, in real terms, are now lower than anytime since the early 1960s (Yergin, 1991). It is the fixed costs of automobile ownership that has rapidly increased.

At the same time, jobs — and increasingly, affordable family housing — have migrated to low density suburbs. Traditional line-haul bus services are not cost effective to operate in such dispersed locations. For this reason, an increasing number of workers are relying upon bicycles as a means to get to their place of employment.

Frequently, these commuters view their bicycle use as an unpleasant and temporary expedient to tide them over until they are able to purchase an automobile. Because it is seen as a temporary measure, most of these cyclists are unwilling to invest in the time and equipment necessary to achieve an Effective Cycling level of proficiency. The victims of serious bicycle accidents are shifting from children and teens to young, male (often minority) workers from low or lower middle income households.

REVITALIZING BICYCLE PLANNING

If bicycle planning is to change its slide into irrelevancy and obscurity, it must shift its focus and the assumptions under which it operates. The four steps outlined below are not a blueprint for improving the profession; they are the minimum alterations necessary to survive as a functioning discipline.
1) Bicycle planners must relinquish the long-held goal of achieving consensus within the cycling community and work as advocates for those whose needs are greatest and for whom traditional governmental processes have failed.

Doing so will require planners to turn their backs on the traditional sources of support and funds for bicycle planning. Doing so will not be popular with bicycle clubs, environmental groups, or a bicycle industry obsessed with the profitability inherent in a high-fashion, high-consumption business. It will mean pointing out, time and again, that the "bicycling public" is split into those who bicycle because they want to, and those who bicycle because they have to. It will mean pointing out that these groups often have little in common. Most importantly, it will mean pointing out that the scarce resources of time and money must go to those whose needs are greatest and options are fewest.

2) Bicycle planning must explicitly take into account race, class, and gender.

The lesson of the past in planning, however, has been that important social issues such as race and class can not be side-stepped. Although it is difficult to gain support for a direct approach, without such directness no significant reduction in class or race inequalities will occur (Davidoff, 1975).

Admitting that the future of bicycle transportation lies with the poor and the powerless seems tantamount to admitting that the future of environmentalism lies in providing counseling to those too deprived to avail themselves of the American dream of unlimited consumption. This does not have to be the case. Increasingly, the environmental movement itself is shifting its focus from conservation and regulation to equity, the quality of the human environment and what has been termed "environmental discrimination."

An environmental researcher has described the focus of this new emphasis:

Disadvantaged people are largely the victims of middle and upper-class pollution because they usually live closest to the sources of pollution – power plants, industrial installations, and in central cities where vehicle travel is heaviest. Usually they have no choice. Discrimination created the situation, and those with wealth and influence have the political power to keep polluting facilities away from their homes. Living in poverty is bad enough. High pollution makes it worse (Kourant 1989).

3) Bicycle organizations and the bicycle industry have been the traditional source of public involvement in the formation of bicycle policy. Planners must increasingly circumvent them and go directly to those groups whose interests are in social justice, neighborhood quality, transportation, children's safety and the needs of the poor and people of color and educate them as to why they should be interested in the subject of bicycle transportation.

4) Bicycle planning must return to an emphasis on specialized bicycle facilities. Only specialized facilities, separated from the flow of motor traffic, can accommodate the needs and wishes of those who bicycle because it is the only feasible method for them to increase their personal mobility. Safe and comfortable bicycle transportation (and yes, recreation) will only be achieved when the overall transportation system accommodates cyclists of all abilities and strengths.

Bicycle planning is increasingly perceived by the average citizen and taxpayer as a fringe, elitist program which takes their income and gives nothing in return – simply another pork barrel for the benefit of an entrenched interest group. We must begin to promote bicycle planning as the least expensive and most efficient way of solving pressing transportation problems. The decision that the profession must make is less one of bicycle planning for the few versus bicycle planning for the many than it is one between bicycle planning for the many and no bicycle planning at all.

Bruce Epperson is senior transportation planner for the Miami Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. This article was edited from the original published in Bicycle Forum #35, January, 1994.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Women, Transport and Poverty:
The Role of Non-Motorized Transport

By Julia A. Philpott assisted by Jeff Mullin

The transport scenario of women in developing countries clearly demonstrates the importance of transportation resources for alleviating poverty. Access to transportation is a vital element of every healthy economy and is crucial to any strategy that addresses poverty. Women, who comprise the majority of the poor, play a fundamental transport role.

In most developing countries, significant divisions of labor between men and women exist within households. The transport role is reserved primarily for women. Study after study (McCall, Curtis, Barwell) has identified trips for collecting water and firewood, or trips related to agricultural production and marketing, as the main transport activities of women. The majority of women's labor time in household production is dedicated to transport. Women and girls bear most of the transport burden for the household in terms of both time and volume transported. For example, women and girls are responsible for approximately 79 percent of the total time spent on household transport in the Makete District of Tanzania, and carry 90 percent of the total volume.

Because of the important transport role that women play, it is imperative that their transport needs and requirements be considered in the process of transport project and policy design. Without access to transport resources appropriate to their needs, women are less able to contribute to development projects such as those aimed at increasing food production, improving health, or producing and selling goods to increase family incomes.

Nevertheless, women's transport needs are too often unaddressed. Investments made in the transportation sector tend to be for the development of infrastructure that benefits those who contribute to the gross national product. The majority of women working within the household do not receive remuneration for their labor. Because of their indirect contribution to the economy and their marginal involvement in the planning process, the transportation needs of women are overlooked.

What are some of the issues to be considered, and what are some of the findings to date regarding women, transport and poverty?

Women's Transport Responsibility: Basic Characteristics

Based on data collected from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy's (ITDP) Bikes for Africa (BFA) project in Beira, Mozambique, women spend 28 percent of their time transporting agricultural materials and produce in a typical 12-hour day. Almost 30 percent of their time is dedicated to transporting water and firewood for the household.

Data from a study conducted in Tanzania by the International Labor Organization indicates that the average woman spends the following amounts of transport time on foot in one year:

- 510 hours to transport water;
- 302 hours to transport firewood;
- 537 hours to transport agricultural materials and products;
- 160 hours to access health services;
- 74 hours travelling to village centers.

The total annual time a woman spends on transport is 1,648 hours, compared to a man who spends 531 transport hours contributing to the same tasks. Children (mostly girls) average 296 transport hours per year carrying water, firewood and agricultural products. Women make trips related to household needs more frequently than men. The average woman makes three to four trips per day. She spends over four hours solely on transport and moves approximately 50 kg per day. The average man, by contrast, makes one household-related trip per day, devoting less than two hours to transport activities. On average he moves six kg per day. A study from Burkina Faso concludes that the amount of time girls between the ages of 11 and 17 spend on transport is three times higher than boys of the same age.

Trips for transporting water and firewood, or trips related to agriculture are usually done without the use of carrying equipment and frequently involve working in difficult conditions. Among the most frequent methods of transporting heavy loads are headloading and the use of a headstrap, both of which are known to cause considerable discomfort and countless injuries. A woman often carries 40 kg by headloading and commonly carries a child on her back as well. Despite the harmful physical effects, headloading and the headstrap remain prevalent due to their zero or near-zero investment cost.

Some Socio-Economic Dynamics

Labor is the most important productive asset of poor households. When individuals lack transport resources to assist in their labors, they must spend more time accomplishing daily tasks and reaching destinations than if their transport resources meet their needs. The result of this extra time spent on transport can be decreased productivity.

A survey discussed by McCall reflects that up to 50 percent of the average African farmer's (usually a woman) working day is devoted to walking to and from fields, often with a load on the head or back. In northern Nigeria, women may spend as many as seven hours per day travelling to and from the fields.
Other studies confirm that transport activities involving walking and headloading by women consume up to 20 percent of their total household labor time. Because headloading goods uses labor that might otherwise be devoted to agricultural production, Thampil Pankaj of the World Bank observes that the opportunity cost of headloading makes it about eight to twelve times more expensive than any other method of transport. Productivity and income are not the only important considerations for attacking poverty and encouraging economic development. Strategies for improving the lives of the poor must also reflect other dimensions of welfare such as health, education, and overall quality of life. Inadequate transport has severe ramifications for each of these areas. Reducing the burden of carrying heavy loads can improve women's general health. In many countries headloading is a means of transport used almost exclusively by women; as a result, many women suffer cervical spondylosis and a higher incidence of spinal deformities. Women who carry heavy loads on their backs with a head strap often have a marked cranial depression. Accidents from carrying heavy loads, such as slipped discs, paralysis, and broken backs occur frequently in poorer countries.

Far too often, the poor experience deficiencies in the food that provides them with the energy needed to carry loads over long distances. The heavy labor of transporting produce, water, and firewood requires considerable energy that poor women cannot necessarily spare. UNICEF's 1984 report "The State of the World's Children" discusses the plight of women:

"As important as a mother's time is her energy. The unequal standing of women... means that the mother is frequently ill and tired, devoid of the capacity for extra effort that a child's well being may demand." Lack of education is a major factor in perpetuating the poverty and low socioeconomic status of women. Transport can have a crucial influence on the supply of teaching materials, ability of teachers or instructors to reach remote locations, and school attendance. Increasing the educational level of girls and women has been associated with decreasing fertility rates, a measurement associated with reducing poverty. Unfortunately, girls are kept from school more often than boys so that they can perform work at home. Labor-saving transport could free time for young girls and women and allow them to receive educational benefits.

Easing the Burden
There are several ways in which the transport burden for women can be eased:
- reduce the frequency of trips and distance over which goods must be carried;
- improve the paths and tracks used;
- provide more efficient transport and load movement resources.

For example, the necessity for trip making would be reduced if a water pump were located closer to a family's homesite. Carrying aids for backloading and headloading are undeniably important forms of non-motorized transport because they are inexpensive and increase one's capacity to transport cargo. Still, head and backloading is arduous labor. In many circumstances bicycles and other pedal-driven vehicles would be of more benefit to the poor than carrying aids. The advantages of pedal-driven vehicles over carrying aids are clear: a person can travel about three times faster while moving heavier loads. Additionally, pedal driven vehicles use human energy about four times more efficiently than walking. Pedal-driven vehicles can be particularly beneficial for women. For example, if it takes a woman 15 minutes on foot to travel one kilometer but eight minutes by bicycle, with all other factors being equal, a bicycle would reduce a woman's annual transport time from 1,648 hours to 878 hours. The additional time available for other activities would amount to 770 hours per year, over two hours per day.

Bicycles also have greater load carrying capacities than pedestrians. Information from the BFA project in Beira, Mozambique indicates that the majority of cargo transported by head and backloading was agricultural materials and produce. The average weight of the cargo hauled prior to the purchase of a bicycle was approximately 17 kg. That amount increased by 26 kg after the acquisition of a bicycle. Load per volume per trip increased even more when an appropriate hauling device was used (although hauling larger loads may increase or decrease the total time saved). The BFA project demonstrated that one could comfortably carry 50 kg on a bicycle and that this capacity increased to 150 kg with the attachment of a trailer.

The BFA project also generated data revealing the income generating potential of bicycles for women. With the use of a bicycle, the beneficiaries of the project enjoyed on average a 4 percent monthly increase in income. Such increases in income could be used to purchase more nutritional food and more access to health and educational services thereby increasing overall quality of life.

Obstacles to Innovation
The main obstacles to the introduction of improved forms of transport are social acceptability and cost. In Beira, it
was found that cultural mores discourage women from using bicycles. Although both men and women agreed that load carrying bicycles would be beneficial to them in their agricultural endeavors and could contribute to income generation, a woman on a bicycle was viewed as “unladylike”. This situation underlines the importance of involving the community when designing any project and carefully analyzing the target group before introducing bicycles or any other technology.

In designing new technologies, consideration should be given to the fact that traditional methods of movement may be very inefficient, but that they are often available at zero or near-zero investment cost. This suggests that, in designing new technologies or improving upon those already in use, there should be an emphasis in the use of local materials and skills to enable the communities and individuals to address their transport needs themselves with minimum outside intervention. In addition to an emphasis on local materials and skills, strict attention must be paid to the physical requirements demanded of the user of the technology.

**Assessing Transport Need: Bringing Women into the Picture**

In assessing the transport needs of the poor in general, and women in particular, one should begin with an intrahousehold analysis – an assessment of required resources and how they flow between individuals within a household. This is vital to accurately determine the needs of the poor.

Relying upon the household as the only unit of observation assumes that the head of the household, often male, serves as an accurate proxy for the overall welfare of the household. In fact, the economic dynamics and distribution of resources within households are often more complicated than that assumption implies. An intrahousehold analysis, disaggregated by both gender and age, should include:

- household data in the means of transport, travel timelistance, travel volumefrequency, trip purpose and destination;
- an analysis of transport requirements, and the extent to which these transport requirements are currently being met, by what methods, and resources available;
- identification of constraints to meeting transport needs, including financial, attitudinal, and current available facilities for the manufacture and/or repair of low-cost vehicles;
- identification, in conjunction with the local people, of suitable, low-cost vehicles, available credit, and forms of ownership and operation.

One of the most important components of any effective intervention is affordability. A transport intervention may be technologically appropriate, but if it is not affordable it cannot be effective. Although bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles are comparatively low-cost, they are not always affordable to many of the poor, especially women. The issue of affordability is especially acute for women since many must give their income to the male head of household or they must get his consent to obtain credit. The provision of credit for individual women, therefore, should be a priority.

Without transportation, communities are isolated from the resources needed to combat poverty, illiteracy and disease. Equitable, affordable, and efficient transportation systems must be designed and incorporated into economic development and poverty alleviation strategies if those strategies are to succeed. Clearly, addressing women’s transport needs is crucial to this effort.

**Julia A. Philpott was the Policy Director of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy when she wrote this article. Julia now works for the International Institute for Energy Conservation, 750 1st Street NE, Suite 940, Washington, D.C. 20002; (202) 842-3388.**

**Notes:**

2. Ibid.
3. Pankaj, Thampi, World Bank, private communication (July 3, 1988)
Improving Access for the Poor In Urban Areas

By Michael Replogle and Walter Hook

Many Southern Hemisphere countries are implementing transportation systems which ignore or suppress the needs of non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians and, as Michael Replogle and Walter Hook explain, they are going to be locked into an expensive dependence on the automobile. Editor

Current transportation policy in much of the South is leading to ecological disaster and increasing inequality. Following the example of the United States which has locked itself into an expensive dependence on the private car, many cities in the South are increasingly spending their scarce resources on the expansion of roads and highways, while making little provision for non-motorized means of transport like cycling and walking. This car-focused transportation policy has been encouraged by technical assistance and funding from industrialized countries, either directly through bilateral aid, or indirectly through their influence over multilateral lending institutions. While in recent years these organizations have become more aware of the environmental implications of their lending policies and are expressing more interest in non-motorized transportation and other alternatives, the bulk of international funding is still directed towards encouraging motorization.

The displacement of high-density low-income residential areas of cities by urban highways and urban renewal; the large subsidies to infrastructure that supports private cars; the lack of sufficient support for alternatives such as cycling, walking, and mass transit; and the lack of land-use controls in urbanized areas, are all encouraging a sprawling transportation and land-use system which is highly destructive to the environment and is creating costly dependence on imported foreign oil and cars. These policies are unsustainable from both and economic and environmental [and social justice] point of view.

The South is responsible for 45 percent of the annual increases in the fuel emissions that are causing global warming and creating serious health problems. Much of this can be attributed to the growth of private car use. The current fleet of 500 million cars in the South can be attributed to the growth of private car use, and can be expected to double by the year 2010 if current policies are not altered.

Meanwhile, countries like Brazil, Turkey, India, and Kenya are spending from 30 to 50 percent of their foreign oil exchange on oil imports. Even in the U.S., roughly 20 percent of the trade deficit is from imported cars.

The Urban Poor

In the South, the levels of car ownership are far lower than in the U.S. Even in higher income countries like Mexico, only 8 percent of the population have access to a car, while in India, there is only one car for every 540 people. Nevertheless, some Southern urban planners, often encouraged by Northern technical advisors from the multilateral development banks and aid agencies, are borrowing their transportation planning methods from the U.S. and the more car-oriented countries of Europe, with disastrous consequences. Like the U.S., they ignore or consciously suppress non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians, despite the fact that in the South usually over 80 percent of the population can afford a bicycle, while only between 5 percent and 10 percent can afford a car. Mimicking the most discredited urban renewal practices in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s, low-income urban communities are frequently destroyed to clear rights of way for urban highways.

The links between access to transportation and welfare is increasingly clear, even in the U.S.. Recent studies by leading poverty researchers have concluded that continuous poverty in American cities is linked to the fact that most of the job growth has been in the suburban regions, which are inaccessible to people who cannot afford a car.

In the cities of the South most poor people live either in high-density areas within the city, such as the Peruvian favelas and kampungs of Jakarta, or on the periphery of the city. As use of the car increases and city center property values increase, these people tend to get pushed out of their communities to make way for highways or real estate development, just as occurred in the U.S. prior to the urban unrest of the 1960s. In Bangkok, for example, the Japanese development agency OECF (Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund) is spending U.S. $1.1 billion, or 70 percent of all Japanese foreign assistance to Thailand, on expanding the highway network during the next five years. Japan, of course, is interested in creating a market for its cars. Between 1984 and 1988, 70,000 people were relocated out of central Bangkok, and current plans for 1992-6 indicate that another 300,000 people will have to be relocated, mostly to peripheral areas.

As a result of this relocation, the distance that the majority of families will have to travel each day will increase drastically. Before the relocation, the average family spent about 100 baht a month on transportation, and spent 20 minutes per trip commuting. Most of their trips were made on foot or by non-motorized vehicle. After relocation the average family has to spend 740 baht a month and spends 90 minutes a trip commuting. To make matters worse, relocation has caused many people to lose their jobs. Had these communities been allowed to remain in more central areas there would be less need to build suburban highways, or for the country to import more cars and oil.

In Jakarta, roughly 200,000 low-income people used to make a living by driving the non-motorized bicycle trishaws called becaks. Becaks also provide the middle class and the poor with low-cost means of getting to and from their jobs, carrying groceries home from markets, etc.. More than half of the over 10 million people in Jakarta live in kampungs, and 60 percent of their trips are made by walking, and most of the rest by becak or bus, or some combination of these. Despite this
fact, there are practically no sidewalks on any of the major streets in Jakarta. To make matters worse, in 1988 the Governor of Jakarta decided to ban **becaks** in the city because they interfered with car traffic, despite the fact that only one person in a hundred can afford a car. The owners of the becaks were left without jobs, and many of them were pressed into relocation programmes which sent them to outer islands – to cut down rainforests no doubt!

Many researchers on the problems of urban poverty are coming to realize that the best chance of survival that many new migrants to urban areas have is in the informal sectors of the economy; jobs such as trishaw drivers and street vendors. The welfare of both trishaw drivers and street vendors is intimately tied to a tolerance of non-motorized transportation on city streets. It is time that the "informal sector" and the non-motorized vehicle users be thought of not as a "problem" for car drivers, but rather as part of the "solution" to the problems of underemployment, environmental degradation, and a lack of mobility.

**The Environment**

The combination of policies which encourage car dependence produce a gradual but appallingly sure degradation of environmental quality and community fabric. Currently, 17 percent of the global C02 emissions that are causing global warming can be attributed to motor vehicles. Private cars and trucks also account for up to 95 percent of airborne pollutants and one which inhibits mental development in children. Car emissions have much more serious health impacts in the South, where emissions and leaded fuel are not regulated, and where vehicle fleets tend to be much older and the engine less efficient. In Mexico City, the air can be so bad that a day of breathing is equivalent to smoking two packs of cigarettes. Air pollution levels there are often 3.5 times dirtier than the U.S. federal standard.

While the generators of this pollution tend to be upper-income residents, it is lower-income families who suffer the most from its effects. In Mexico City, for example, only 16 percent of the population has access to a car. Most car owners live in wealthier suburbs or in low-density urban neighborhoods surrounded by parks and green space, where air quality levels are considerably better. The roads they drive down bisect high-density lower-income neighborhoods where, because of the lack of green space and constant traffic congestion, air quality is the worst. The residents of these neighborhoods are too poor to afford cars, but they suffer the most from the air pollution.

While Mexico City’s pollution levels are exacerbated by its altitude, it is typical of many cities in the South. Bangkok, Calcutta, New Delhi, and Teheran all found their air quality falling below WHO [World Health Organization] standards on more than 200 days out of the year. More than a billion people live in cities where air quality does not meet WHO standards. According to recent studies, if the air quality was brought up to WHO standards, between 300,000 and 700,000 premature deaths could be averted.

Car-dependent transportation systems also use a tremendous amount of land which could be used for other purposes, such as housing or agriculture. Not only does one car take up the same amount of road space occupied by forty bus passengers or 12 cyclists, but each car takes up 25 square meters to park in an urban environment. This is more space than most people in the South have to live in. If China were to dedicate as much land to cars as has the U.S., it would have to give up the equivalent of 40 percent of the nation’s arable land.

**Sustainable Urban Transportation**

Not all countries have followed the U.S. model. Unlike the U.S., where not even a fraction of 1 percent of all transportation spending is spent on infrastructure support for bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles, in Holland 10 percent of the surface transportation budget is spent on bicycle facilities. Today more than 30 percent of all trips in the Netherlands, and 25 percent of trips to train stations, are by bicycle. Currently there are plans to increase the taxation levels on cars and fuels by nearly 50 percent, while increasing subsidies to public transportation by $7.5 billion a year. These measures are projected to reduce C02 emissions by 8 percent by the year 2000.

Denmark has implemented similar measures. In Denmark, car owners pay a 200 percent sales tax when purchasing a car, and nearly $1000 in annual registration fees, while gasoline taxes have driven up the cost of fuel to $1 per liter, or nearly $3.79 a gallon. These funds are used to subsidize public transportation and pay for infrastructure for bicycles and nonmotorized transportation. Thanks to such policies and the continued expansion of a network of arterial ‘bikeways’, currently 30 percent of all trips in Copenhagen are by bicycle.

In Tokyo only 15 percent of the population commutes by car, while the vast majority commute by train, subway, and bicycle. Many Japanese people cycle to commuter train stations and shopping hubs, and sophisticated, computerized, secure bicycle parking facilities are becoming available at an increasing number of stations.

The advantages of this approach to the economy are clear. Japan spends only 9 percent of its GNP on transportation costs, and only 9.2 percent of personal expenditure is spent on transportation and telecommunications, whereas in the U.S. between 15 percent and 18 percent of GNP is spent on transportation, as is between 16 percent and 22 percent of personal consumption. The average U.S. urban resident consumes ten times as much gasoline per capita as a Japanese urban resident, and 45 times as much as in some European cities. These differences are driving up the costs of U.S. goods in international markets and are undermining the competitiveness of U.S. products.

The South needs to use appropriate models for the development of their transportation system, and to learn from each others’ experiences as well. In China, for example, all urban streets are divided roughly into thirds, with one third dedicated to pedestrians, one third to bicycles and carts, and one third to trucks, buses and cars. As a result, between 60 percent and 90 percent of all personal trips not made on foot are made...
by bicycle. As the economic liberalizations in China have made bicycles more readily available, the number of bicycle commuters has increased rapidly, crowding urban networks and leading to new investment in more sophisticated road designs for separate flows in saturated urban intersections.

Meanwhile, Cuba, by rapidly turning to non-motorized transportation, is projected to be able to save as much as $500 million per year by reducing the need for imported fuel. The most important aspect of sustainable transportation policy, and the one most often neglected, is the impact that it has on the everyday lives of men and women. For example, as a result of making non-motorized vehicles available to fishermen in Beira, Mozambique, families were able to double their income by bringing their goods to markets which were previously out of reach. Helping to make non-motorized vehicles available to most people in the South will increase their productivity and their standard of living, while the major beneficiaries of large road building projects are often the elites and foreign corporations who have created an expanding market for their cars.

As the transportation systems in the North are still the source of most transportation-related pollutants, and because the North has been providing the technical expertise and funding for pro-car lending policies in the South, Northern environmental and development organizations have a responsibility to push for a change in transportation policy at home, and to urge their representatives in aid agencies and multilateral lending institutions to change their lending policies. As a result of some initial efforts, many of the major multilateral development banks are now far more receptive to alternative transportation policies, but their lending practices remain substantially unaltered. Meanwhile, real change in the nature of lending by multilateral development banks will not occur until the South begins to ask for international funding for non-motorized transportation and other projects which address the basic mobility needs of the urban poor and working class. This in turn will not happen until Southern and international non-governmental organizations, and individuals, put sufficient political pressure on Southern governments to meet the basic mobility needs of their people in an environmentally sustainable way.

Michael Replogle is co-director of the Transportation Project of the Environmental Defense Fund, 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, 10th floor, Washington D.C. 20009, USA. Walter Hook is Adjunct Professor at Columbia University's School of Urban Planning and Director of the Institute For Transportation and Development Policy, 1787 Columbia Road NW, Washington, DC 20009, USA. This article was first printed in Appropriate Technology, vol.20 No.1.

RESOURCES

Articles, Essays and Reports

Transportation & Social Justice


Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT). Transportation for Sustainable Communities. Chicago: CNT, 1992. This book is based on material presented at a conference on Sustainable Transportation, held at Roosevelt University on December 13, 1991. This is a special issue of The Neighborhood Works, published by CNT, 2125 West North Ave., Chicago IL 60647, 31212278-4800.


Urban Habitat Program. Bayview Hunters Point Social and Ecological Justice Transportation Plan. San Francisco: February 1994. A transit plan alternative for the Bayshore Corridor in San Francisco's Bayview Hunters Point area that includes social justice, community economic development, energy efficiency, land use, and environmental quality evaluation criteria. Copies available for $15.00 from UHP, 300 Broadway, Ste. 28, San Francisco CA 94133, (415) 788-3666. Email: uhp@igc.apc.org
Urban Habitat Program. On the Right Track: The Bayview Hunters Point Third Street Light Rail Project. A handbook for transportation and land use planning, community action, and neighborhood revitalization. Available for $5 from UHP, 300 Broadway, Ste. 28, San Francisco CA 94113 (415) 788-3666. Email: uhp@igc.apc.org


General Transportation

Greenpeace. The Environmental Impact of the Car. Seattle: Greenpeace, 1992. This report explores the environmental and the social impacts that the car dominated transportation system has on cities. The report is available for $5.00 from: Greenpeace U.S., DC Office: 1436 U St, NW, Washington DC 20009, 202/462-1177.


Copies available for $6.00 from: The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, 611 Broadway, Room 616, New York NY, 10012, 212/260-8144.

Lowe, Marcia D. Alternatives to the Automobile: Transport for Livable Cities. Worldwatch Paper 98. Washington DC: Worldwatch Institute, October 1990. This report tracks how car dominance has caused major environmental impacts in countries across the world and lays out policy to correct these negative impacts.


Mackenzie, Jim, Rodger Dower, and Don Chen. The Going Rate: What it Really Costs to Drive. Washington DC: World Resources Institute, June 1992. An analysis of the costs of roads and cars in terms of physical, environmental and social costs. The authors suggest some policies to remedy these costs.


Books

Gordon, Deborah. Steering a New Course: Transportation, Energy and the Environment. Covelo: Island Press, 1991. This book gives background on transportation in the U.S. and its current environmental implications. The book also reviews widely considered innovative policies advocated to reduce these environmental impacts such as pay as you drive insurance and other pricing policies.


Periodicals

Access: The quarterly journal of the Mobility Partners program published by US EPA and STPP. For information contact: Mobility Partners, 1400 16th St., NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 20036, 202/939-3470.

Alt-Trans: Published by the Washington Coalition For Transportation Alternatives. Inside look at transportation advocacy in state of Washington. For information contact Alt-Trans, P.O. Box 2377 Olympia WA 98507.

Progress. Published by STPP. A bulletin on the happenings of transportation policy around the country. For more information contact: STPP, 1400 Sixteenth St., NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 20036, 202/939-3470.

Special Report: ISTEA Year Four. Published by STPP yearly, the report documents the successes of ISTEA around the country. For more information contact: STPP, 1400 Sixteenth St., NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 20036, 202/939-3470.

Sustainable Transport. Published by the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy. An international magazine dedicated to promoting non-motorized vehicle travel and encouraging sustainable transportation activities worldwide. For more information contact: ITDP, 611 Broadway, Room 616, New York NY 10012, 212/260-8144.

Transportopia Bulletin: Published by the Institute for Transportation and the Environment. A Northwestern mix of informative articles and updates on transit, transportation and the environment. For more information contact: Transportopia Bulletin, 85 E. Roanoke St., Seattle WA 98102.

The Tubular Times. Published by the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition. A look at bicycle advocacy issues in San Francisco and the Bay Area. Published every few months. SF Bicycle Coalition, 1095 Market St., #3215, San Francisco CA 94103, 415/431-BIKE.

Resources
Organizations

**MIDWEST**  
Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) and the Greenline Coalition: Since its founding in 1978, CNT has sought to define and create community scale programs which meet human needs by creating environmentally sound, long term investment opportunities that directly benefit lower-income communities. CNT has been instrumental in building the Greenline coalition to save an important transit rail line in Chicago.  
Contact: 2125 West North Avenue, Chicago IL 60647, 3121278-4800.

Citizens for Appropriate Rural Roads (CARR): Fights for sensible planning of roads in rural areas. Contact: P.O. Box 54, Stanford IN 47463, 8121825-9553

Neighborhood Transportation Network: 1906 Elliot, Minneapolis MN 55404, 612 340-7420.

**SOUTH**

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice: Xavier University, 7325 Palmetto St., New Orleans, LA 70125, 5041483-7340.

Disabled in Action, Inc.; P.O. Box 566 Atlanta GA 30301, 4041756-0583.

Environmental Justice Resource Center Clark Atlanta University, 223 Brawley Drive, Atlanta GA 30314, 4041880-6920.

**Fulton Atlanta Community Action:** Set up a youth Community Development Corporation to develop an alternative transportation plan. Contact: 75 Piedmont Ave, NE Ste. 1200 Atlanta GA 30303, 4041524-5717

Georgia Transportation Alliance: 704 Claven Court, McDonough GA 30253, 404914-7909.

PODER (People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources): PODER is an East Austin-based Latino environmental justice organization. PODER's “mission is to redefine environmental issues as social and economic justice issues, and collectively set our own agenda to address these concerns as basic human rights.” Contact: 55 N. IH 35, Ste. 205B, Austin TX 78702, 5121472-9921.

STAC Rural Bus: 830 West Moline, Malvern AR 72104, 5011332-6215.

Texas Network for Environmental Justice: 3927 Aransas, Dallas, TX 75212; 214638-8749.

**East**

Environmental Action: 6930 Carroll Ave. #600, Takoma Park MD 20912, 301/891-110

New York Environmental Justice Alliance. Links grassroots organizations concerned with the right of communities of color to a clean and safe environment. Contact: 271 W. 125th St. Rm. 303, New York NY 10027, 512/472-9921.

Tri-State Transportation Campaign: Formed in 1993 by 14 leading environmental and public interest organizations dedicated to restructuring transportation policy, infrastructure, and choices to promote environmental health and sustainability, economic efficiency and social equity in the 32-county region in and around New York City. Contact: 281 Park Ave. South, 2nd Floor, New York NY 10010, 212/777-8181.

West Harlem Environmental Action: 271 W. 125th St., New York, NY 10027, 212/961-1000.

**WEST/NORTHWEST**

1000 Friends of Oregon: Provides research on land use issues and legal services to citizens and non-profit organizations, and conduct public education campaigns. Their "Making the Land Use, Transportation, Air Quality Connection (LUTRAQ)" is a national demonstration project to develop methodologies for creating alternative suburban land use patterns, and to evaluate their impacts on travel behavior, air quality, and energy consumption. Contact: 300 Willamette Building, 534 SW Third, Portland OR 97204, 5031223-0073.

Alaska Citizen's Transportation Coalition: ACT works for a well maintained, economical, efficient and environmentally sound Alaskan transportation system, founded on broad public involvement. Contact: 519 West 8th Ave., Ste. 201, Anchorage AK 99501, 9071274-3621.

Gray Panthers of Berkeley: 1325 Grant St., Berkeley CA 94703-1107, 5101524-0882

**Labor/Community Strategy Center**

A multi-racial, grassroots social and economic justice organization focusing on the need for a more accessible, safe and ecological bus-centered mass transit system in Los Angeles. Contact: 3780 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 1200, Los Angeles CA 90010, 213/387-2800.

Spanish Speaking Unity Council: in Oakland works to make a BART public transit station a transit village with pedestrian friendly uses. Contact: 1900 Fruitvale Ave. #2A, Oakland CA 94601, 5101535-6905.

Tahana Whitecrow Advocacy Alliance: The alliance has fought to maintain transit access critical to Native American communities. Contact: P.O. Box 18181, Salem OR 97305, 5031585-0564.

Urban Habitat Program: 300 Broadway, Ste. 28, San Francisco CA 94133, 415788-3666.

**NATIONAL**

Alliance for a Paving Moratorium: A project of Fossil Fuels Policy Action Inst. Contact: P.O. Box 4348, Arcata CA, "Ecotopia" 95521, 7071826-7775.


Council of Minority Transportation Officials: Founded in 1971 at Howard University, the CMTO is the largest organization representing people of color in transportation. Contact: 1330 Connecticut Ave., NW Suite 320, Washington DC 20036, 202724-5002.


National Growth Management Leadership Project: A coalition of state and regional conservation and planning organizations advocating land use planning. Contact: 300 Willamette Bld.534 SW Third, Portland OR 97204, 5031223-0073.

Surfice Transportation Policy Project (STPP): A network of diverse organizations and coalitions, its goal is to develop a national transportation policy that better serves the environmental, social, and economic interests of the nation. Contact: 1400 Sixteenth St., NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 20036, 2021939-3470.

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, and Federal Aviation Administration. Contact: 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington DC 20590, 2021366-1111.