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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STUDIES & EDUCATION

The Role of Transportation in Fostering Economic Mobility in Northeastern Pennsylvania

By Laura Ducceschi, President and Chief Executive Officer, Scranton Area Community Foundation, and Erin Mierzwa, Strategic Outreach and Engagement Officer, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

The Scranton Area Community Foundation (SACF), founded 63 years ago to promote change and growth in northeastern Pennsylvania, embarked on a series of community discussions more than a year ago to gather information about the region's opportunities for economic growth.

In nearly every discussion held by the SACF, access to reliable transportation was discussed as a necessary component of economic mobility and quality of life. Many residents in northeastern Pennsylvania — especially lower-income or elderly residents — couldn't access employment, were missing doctor's appointments, couldn't get their children to child care, and couldn't participate in social, religious, and cultural events, all as a result of the lack of transportation. Residents from the region who did not own a car were stuck — literally and figuratively — so the SACF and regional leaders and residents set out to address this problem together.

At the same time, members of the Philadelphia Fed's community development team heard similar reports that a lack of transportation was a barrier in northeastern Pennsylvania as well as several other parts of the Third Federal Reserve District. The team recognized that this topic would align directly with the Bank's newly launched Economic Growth & Mobility Project, and there was an opportunity to partner with the SACF to move the conversation forward.¹

Convening Regional Leaders

In January 2017, the Philadelphia Fed and the SACF

convened regional stakeholders to better understand the specific impediments to equitable access in current transportation systems and to explore opportunities to collaborate on a transportation strategy that would promote inclusive regional economic growth.

The group — now known as the Equitable Transit Planning Council — has met five times and has grown to more than 50 members. The council is intentionally diverse, representing stakeholders from many sectors — transportation, business, government, philanthropy, social services, and health care.

The council has worked to refine its mission and define short- and long-term goals. Its ultimate goal is to “enhance the quality of life for residents of the northeastern Pennsylvania community by improving equitable access to transportation.” The council's mission is “to advance the dialogue and actionable strategy around equitable transportation access in the northeastern Pennsylvania region through inclusive stakeholder engagement, building effective partnerships, leveraging additional resources, and seeking out and recognizing effective solutions.”

Why Focus on Equitability in Transit?

Equitability in transportation means ensuring that every person in a community — regardless of socioeconomic status or background — is able to access an affordable, safe, and reliable local transportation network and reach his or her full potential.

¹ More information about the Philadelphia Fed's Economic Growth & Mobility Project can be found at www.philadelphiafed.org/egmp.



The northeastern Pennsylvania community chose to focus on equitability because data and reported experiences demonstrated crucial links between transportation mobility and economic opportunity. Residents are unable to succeed when transportation barriers limit access to affordable housing, job opportunities, health care, education, and other services.

The Philadelphia Fed is interested in advancing research and engagement around transit and job accessibility. A lack of reliable and affordable transportation can be an instant barrier to employment. Without it, residents are unable to reach their full potential, and the region will not grow and thrive.² To this end, the Philadelphia Fed is providing quantitative and qualitative research

and sharing emerging strategies from other parts of the country. It has partnered with the Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development at Wilkes University to conduct focus groups of area residents to better understand the transportation challenges they face and to hear their ideas for solutions.

The SACF shares the Philadelphia Fed's commitment in building community capacity and promoting inclusive growth. The foundation believes that affordable, accessible transit is critical to a vibrant community, in which individuals are empowered with the necessary tools to improve their quality of life. As a community anchor institution, the foundation focuses on capacity building, including that of nonprofit organizations, as one of its key deliverables. Convening community leaders and residents of northeastern Pennsylvania around equitable transit is a way to focus on an issue that impacts inclusive growth across the region. Making equity a key component of that strategy falls in line with the foundation's priorities in the community.

Key Council Initiatives and Accomplishments

The Equitable Transit Planning Council, which has formed a number of working committees, has made notable progress in only a few months on several key initiatives:

- 1. Resource and asset mapping tool:** The Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) Alliance, the Wright Center, and the SACF have collaborated to create a mapping tool identifying the relative accessibility of medical institutions and social service providers via the public transportation network. Key employers and educational institutions are being added to the map, and art and cultural institutions will be added later. See <https://arcg.is/10bTX0>.
- 2. Geisinger Health transportation access platform:** Geisinger Health System, which is represented on the council and is working with the alternative transportation subcommittee, will soon pilot an online platform that uses technology for ride coordination and connects residents to the public transportation network and private alternatives.

² See "The Intrinsic Value of Inclusive Growth," a speech by Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia President Patrick Harker, which highlights the importance of transportation for economic mobility, available at www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/publications/speeches/harker/2017/06-02-17-the-intrinsic-value-of-inclusive-growth.pdf?la=en.

The pilot will have an urban (Scranton) and rural (Danville) rollout and, if successful, Geisinger will look to expand this effort across its system. The project also provides opportunities for shared learning on transit across different regions of the state. (It should be noted that Medicaid now covers nonemergency medical transportation costs; this provision has led health systems to consider ways in which they can support their patients' transportation needs. This federal regulation has already spurred private-sector transportation innovations that will be utilized as part of the pilot.)

3. NEPA Equitable Transit Summit:

A summit on October 17 will bring together national and regional experts to share emerging transportation strategies and best practices. Key topics include connecting communities to opportunity through transit, creating a comprehensive transportation system, building regional partnerships, and strengthening access to jobs and health care.

In addition, council members' networking has resulted in positive changes for the community and transit networks. Some regional leaders are finding an opportunity to work together for the first time. For example, Michael J. Hanley, chief executive officer of the United Neighborhood Centers (UNC) of Northeastern Pennsylvania, joined the mass transit subcommittee and developed a relationship with officials from the County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS). UNC's ability to obtain financing to redevelop a vacant property in Carbondale, PA, has been improved after COLTS agreed to provide bus service to the site when the development is completed.

Lessons Learned

Access to affordable and reliable transportation is an important aspect of economic mobility in northeast Pennsylvania and across the country. Through the community partnership model that has developed, the following lessons have been learned:

- **Cross-sector collaboration is critical to success.** A diverse group of stakeholders must be involved to make meaningful changes and implement lasting strategies in the transportation sector. Through council discussions, representatives from the different sectors are beginning to understand the respective sectors' priorities, terminology, and opportunities for potential funding sources. Bringing new voices and perspectives to the conversation will be important as the region begins the more challenging work of implementing identified solutions.



- **Complex issues require a long-term approach and ongoing commitment.** Transportation barriers and the creation of a more equitable system are complex challenges involving multiple systems and diverse groups of stakeholders. The solutions will take time to develop. Garnering initial successes and a few tangible "wins" will be key to sustaining momentum. The group will need to sustain its initial energy and use these new relationships to work together.
- **Solutions must emerge from and be led by the region.** The Philadelphia Fed and the SACF are the conveners or community quarterbacks of the initiative, but both organizations strongly believe that solutions must emerge from within the council. Ultimately, it will be up to regional leaders to decide what will have the greatest impact.

- **A combination of public transit networks and private-sector alternatives is needed to address residents' transportation needs.** Transportation solutions today look a lot different than they did even a decade ago. Online social networks and a greater acceptance of the so-called “shared economy” have led to new business models and alternative transportation models that do not necessarily require large infrastructure investments.³ In another important development, younger generations are more willing than their parents to forgo car ownership if public transit options are available. As northeastern Pennsylvania leaders discuss the future of regional transportation, solutions that may have seemed far-fetched a few years ago just might prove practical.

Next Steps

The NEPA Equitable Transit Summit on October 17, 2017, is a major milestone in the region's quest for transportation

arrangements that serve residents in better and more equitable ways. Shortly after the summit, the council will convene to determine the most effective way to implement its short- and long-term goals.

In addition, the council is beginning to explore how the community partnership model that has evolved in northeastern Pennsylvania can be replicated in other regions, especially those with small and medium-sized cities. The council plans to share its findings and experience for the benefit of other communities.

Further Information

For more information about the equitable transportation work underway in northeastern Pennsylvania, please contact Laura Ducceschi at ld@safdn.org, 570-347-6203, or at <http://www.safdn.org/>; or Erin Mierzwa at erin.mierzwa@phil.frb.org, 215-574-6641, or at <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/community-development>.

³ The shared economy includes shared-use mobility. The Shared-Use Mobility Center defines this focus as “transportation services that are shared among users, including public transit; taxis and limos; bikesharing; carsharing (round-trip, one-way, and personal vehicle sharing); ridesharing (carpooling, vanpooling); ridesourcing/ride-splitting; scooter sharing; shuttle services; neighborhood jitneys; and commercial delivery vehicles providing flexible goods movement.” See <http://sharedusemobilitycenter.org/>.



The Role of Equitable Transit-Oriented Development in Promoting Economic Opportunity - Cascade: No. 97, Fall 2017

By Brett Barkley, Senior Research Analyst, Community Development, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

Explore This Section

The Role of Equitable Transit-Oriented Development in Promoting Economic Opportunity*

Debate still exists in economics and other fields as to the impact of transit accessibility on finding and maintaining a good-paying job. This article provides an overview of equitable transit-oriented development (TOD), its effects on economic outcomes for low-skilled workers, and a brief discussion of policy solutions for practitioners to consider.

What Is Equitable TOD?

Equitable TOD is an economic development strategy that incentivizes mixed-income residential development and commercial development along existing or new transit corridors to promote several important policy goals such as access to employment opportunities, essential services, and a safe environment for other modes of transportation like walking and biking.

A common approach to equitable TOD is the preservation or creation of affordable housing in developments near transit. For example, this approach has been pursued in coastal and mountain metropolitan areas (metros) where extensive transit systems already exist (e.g., Boston and Washington, D.C.) or are feasible to build or expand (e.g., Denver and Seattle), and where transit-rich, walkable neighborhoods near growing job centers are at risk of gentrification. The challenges, however, are different in many Sun Belt and Rust Belt metros and nonmetro areas where transit is either less robust and/or jobs have moved away from the transit network during decades of suburbanization (e.g., Orlando and Detroit). In these places, it is often difficult to connect residents in low-income urban neighborhoods to large suburban job centers, attract jobs back to the urban core along existing transit corridors, or build workforce housing in job-rich suburbs with restrictive zoning codes while balancing other TOD objectives.



Rainier Vista, one of Seattle’s first public housing developments, was redeveloped in the early 2000s under the HOPE VI program and in coordination with the building of Sound Transit’s Link light rail. It now includes a mix of public housing, other affordable rental housing, affordable for-sale housing, and market-rate housing.

Photo Credit: Tonkin Architecture.

Academic researchers often refer to the sets of challenges targeted by equitable TOD as the *spatial mismatch* hypothesis, which was first posited by John Kain.¹ The spatial mismatch hypothesis was originally an attempt to explain high unemployment levels in low-income black neighborhoods due to the movement of jobs away from city centers and the inability of black households to relocate to suburban areas owing to housing discrimination. A large body of literature around the spatial mismatch hypothesis has emerged during the past 50 years and provides considerable evidence that poor job accessibility does, in part, contribute to poor labor market outcomes — particularly for low-skilled workers — but significant debate still exists in economics and other fields about the magnitude of the effect and the policies that should be pursued to improve economic prospects for vulnerable populations.² Policy solutions have generally been grouped into three categories:³

Mobility strategy: improving transportation options

Urban development strategy: moving jobs closer to workers

Desegregation strategy: moving workers closer to jobs

A review of the recent literature focused on how a mobility strategy impacts economic success can offer insights helpful to the work of community and economic development practitioners — as a way to reassess the aspirations of equitable TOD and to guide more effective approaches to achieve its policy goals.

Transit Accessibility Can Improve Economic Outcomes

Even if there were no racial discrimination in the labor market, and white and minority workers initially lived on average the same distance to jobs, Gautier and Zenou showed that wealth differences between white and minority workers — which disproportionately impact the transportation options of minority workers (e.g., the ability to purchase a car) and thus their search area for available jobs — would be expected to result in higher unemployment rates, longer unemployment spells, lower wages, and longer commute times for minorities, even when traveling fewer miles to work.⁴ They maintain that improving public transportation or increasing car ownership among minorities should lead to a greater geographic job search, although perhaps by varying degrees, and thereby improve labor market outcomes. They cited discrimination in the automobile insurance and credit markets as possible barriers to implementing policies focused on car ownership. There is a large body of research demonstrating the positive impact of car ownership on the employment outcomes of low-income adults.⁵

Fredrik Andersson et al. overcame major methodological challenges in testing the spatial mismatch hypothesis by using administrative data that employers report as part of unemployment insurance filings and compiled by the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program.⁶ The authors' sample included around 247,000 low-skilled jobseekers across nine metro areas,⁷ and they used a job accessibility measure that was weighted by a jobseeker's likelihood of commuting by car or transit. They found that better job accessibility significantly decreases unemployment spells and leads to better-paying jobs. More specifically, an increase from the 25th to the 75th percentile of job accessibility reduced the search duration by 4.2 percent for any job and 7.0 percent for finding a job that paid at least 90 percent of prior earnings. All jobseekers were sensitive to job accessibility, but black people, women, and older jobseekers experienced the largest gains in labor market outcomes when job accessibility improved. The improved job accessibility could have been due to better transit service, access to an automobile, or the distribution of jobs across or within the different metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), but the authors were unable to distinguish these nuances in their results.

David Phillips evaluated a program coordinated by a nonprofit employment agency in Washington, D.C., that offered transit subsidies to a randomly selected group of clients in addition to standard

employment services offered to all jobseekers.⁸ By providing a modest transit subsidy of \$50 at the beginning of the job search, results showed that a jobseeker's search intensity (a measure of the number, timing, and location of job applications and interviews) increased 19 percent within the first 14 days of the three-month study period — the effect roughly doubled to around 40 percent for jobseekers living the furthest from job opportunities (i.e., on average more than 9 miles to a job). Although statistically less precise than the effects on job search, labor market outcomes also improved. Jobseekers with a transit subsidy were 9 percentage points more likely than those without a subsidy to find employment within the first 40 days of the study period; over the entire 90-day study period, differences were still positive but not statistically significant. The average unemployment duration of jobseekers receiving the transit subsidy was 13 days shorter compared with jobseekers without a transit subsidy, and those receiving the subsidy earned \$575 more on average during the three-month study period.

Evelyn Blumenberg and Gregory Pierce evaluated the impact of transit accessibility on labor market outcomes for participants in the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration, the most prominent example of a desegregation strategy to date that intended to help low-income families in five metro areas move out of high-poverty neighborhoods.⁹ MTO did not include any kind of transportation assistance to households, and the authors seek to assess how this may have limited participants' economic outcomes by comparing the employment status of household heads at the start of the program (October 1994–May 1996) and their status at the interim evaluation (four to seven years later). Their results show that the probability of maintaining employment during the study period relative to being unemployed during the entire period was 16 times higher for participants who moved to a neighborhood with better transit.¹⁰ However, improved transit access was not associated with job gains, i.e., participants who were initially unemployed and moved to a neighborhood with improved transit, were no more likely to find employment than initially unemployed participants who did not move to a neighborhood with improved transit. Access to a car was found to be important for both job gains (by a factor of two) and maintaining employment (by a factor of four).

Justin Tyndall estimated the impact of transit access on employment outcomes in New York City following an unexpected service reduction due to Hurricane Sandy, which resulted in the suspension of subway service connecting Brooklyn and Manhattan between August 2013 and September 2014.¹¹ Overall, results show that the unemployment rate among labor force participants in the affected neighborhoods increased 1.4 percentage points following the subway closure. Among individuals without access to a car, unemployment increased 2.2 percentage points. Hispanics experienced the most adverse impacts, with a 3.4 percentage point increase in unemployment, whereas whites experienced the smallest impacts — but still a significant 0.7 percentage point increase. The unemployment rate in all other New York City neighborhoods fell by 1.4 percentage points during the same period.

The previously mentioned studies focused only on relatively large metro areas in their analyses. The few studies that have included smaller regions (e.g., fewer than 500,000 residents) find limited evidence that job access impacts employment outcomes, suggesting that spatial mismatch is primarily a problem of larger cities and their surrounding counties.¹² However, a recent study attempted to measure the impact of bus transit on employee turnover using data from 39 small metro or nonmetro counties with bus transit systems in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.¹³ The study found that every additional \$10 per capita investment in bus transit would reduce county-level employee turnover by a modest but not immaterial 0.29 percentage point. Accordingly, in counties currently served by public transportation, bus transit is estimated to reduce annual employee turnover costs by approximately \$6.1 million compared with otherwise similar counties without bus transit.

Effective Policies Anticipate the Future

Several recent studies have demonstrated the positive impact of transit accessibility on employment outcomes for low-skilled workers. Using better data and more robust methodologies than previous research, these studies extend the spatial mismatch literature to provide evidence that transit-oriented mobility strategies can achieve real economic gains. These studies, however, stress that any policy solution should be deeply aware of local context, because some strategies are more likely to succeed in certain places than others, and the best solutions for improving labor market outcomes are likely to be multipronged, because low-skilled workers living in neighborhoods isolated from economic opportunity often face multiple barriers to employment beyond just transportation challenges.

Forward-looking policies could seek a combination of solutions that break down barriers to automobile ownership but also leverage emerging transportation technologies in ways that are more complementary to equitable TOD.¹⁴ Traditional fixed-route transit, although obviously an essential component of equitable TOD, might not always be the optimal solution in terms of improving job access — especially in less densely populated places. Car ownership would certainly improve the ability of low-income jobseekers to find employment, likely more so than transit.¹⁵

Technology is rapidly changing the kind of transportation that is possible, with on-demand microtransit, ride-hailing, and/or carsharing programs more feasible now than in the 1990s and early 2000s, when reverse commuting vanpool strategies such as Bridges to Work and the Federal Transit Administration's Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program produced subpar results.¹⁶ As a result, reverse commute strategies that better leverage new technologies should not necessarily be discarded.

Transportation and the nation's cities and regions are changing, with residential and workplace

preferences shifting back to the urban core.¹⁷ Proper management of these changes could serve to improve job access for vulnerable populations. Thus, the challenge for community and economic development practitioners and policymakers is to craft solutions that do not merely react to problems of the 20th century, but anticipate the opportunities of the 21st.

Useful Resources for Practitioners and Policymakers

The following resources provide additional case studies or online tools to help practitioners better understand the extent of spatial mismatch in your region and policies that could improve job accessibility.

Transportation Is a Necessary Component of Housing Equity - Cascade: No. 97, Fall 2017

By Chris Sandvig, Director of Policy, Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group

Explore This Section

Transportation Is a Necessary Component of Housing Equity*

Those working in redevelopment have undoubtedly heard about transit-oriented development (TOD). In TOD, transit lines are the backbone of individual projects or entire centers built around a station area. TOD can reduce automobile dependency and make a community more amenable to walking and biking. More recently, equitable TOD (ETOD) has been advocated in response to the gentrification pressures that modern TODs often introduce, displacing the very people most reliant on transit out of the station area. Transportation equity is a relatively new concept to the affordable housing community. The importance of access to transportation has been acknowledged, but it has either been seen as an issue secondary in importance to housing availability or as too large and opaque to address. Recent research¹ has shown that transportation equity can no longer be ignored and should receive nearly equal consideration as the availability of affordable housing. Fortunately, ETOD can be demystified, and success can be achieved in communities large and small, urban and suburban.

After housing costs, getting to and from one's home is the second-largest household expense.² Depending on the location, transportation costs can vary widely, perhaps more widely than housing costs themselves, for those in subsidized housing. Harvard's landmark Equality of Opportunity Project, designed to determine the impact of economic mobility, determined that access to affordable, convenient transportation choices is the top determinant of a household's ability to escape poverty.³ Put simply, the longer it takes to reach life-improving opportunities, the worse the outcome. To reduce this gap, many are forced to buy a car because transit, if available, cannot be relied on, or life needs are too far away or too dangerous to walk to. This in turn increases a household's annual transportation costs by an average of \$8,400 per car (more in the Northeast),⁴ saddling low- and moderate-income households with transportation burdens that they can barely afford — or not afford at all. Data analysis can now visualize this graphically. The Center for Neighborhood Technology maintains the Housing and Transportation Index,⁵ which calculates the combined housing and transportation costs for most locations in the United States. In many locations, over half of a household's income is consumed by housing and transportation costs. The cost of getting to and from a home for some low- and middle-income (LMI) renters and homeowners now rivals the cost of the

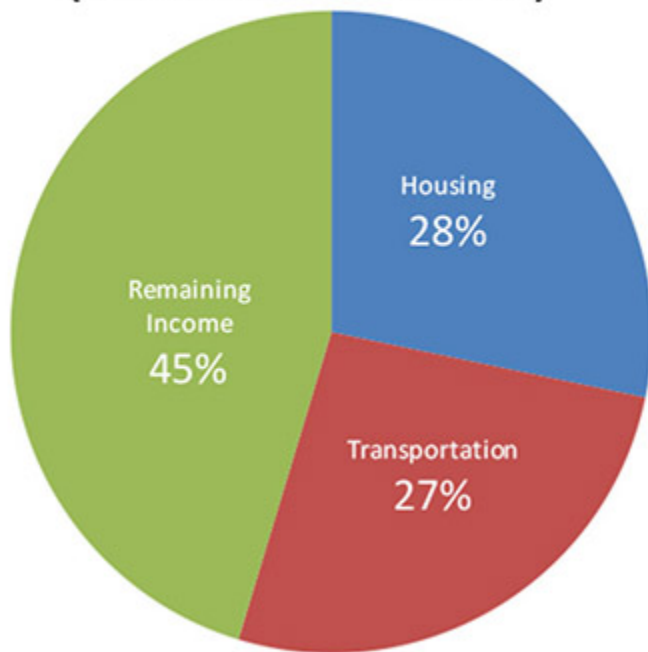
home itself, especially in medium-sized and small cities, putting homeownership in jeopardy.⁶

Transportation and Housing Affordability

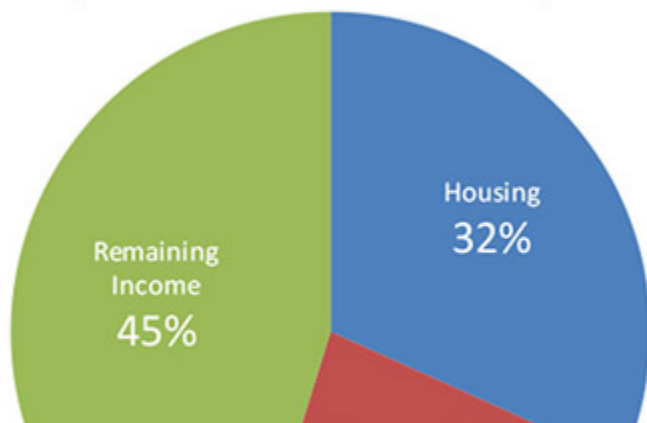
Transportation costs significantly affect housing affordability. The [Center for Neighborhood Technology](#) (CNT), which assists communities in implementing transit-oriented development strategies and addressing other community development needs, has developed data tools and analyses that calculate communities' transportation costs and transit performance scores (TPS). Each TPS indicates public transit access and frequency, distance traveled, and walkability.

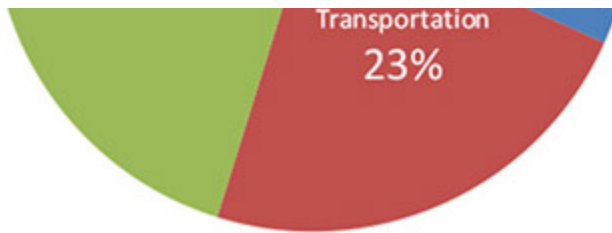
The following pie charts use transportation costs from CNT's [Housing and Transportation Affordability Index](#) and TPS data from CNT's [AllTransit tool](#).⁷

Transit Performance Score < 1 (43% of U.S. Households)

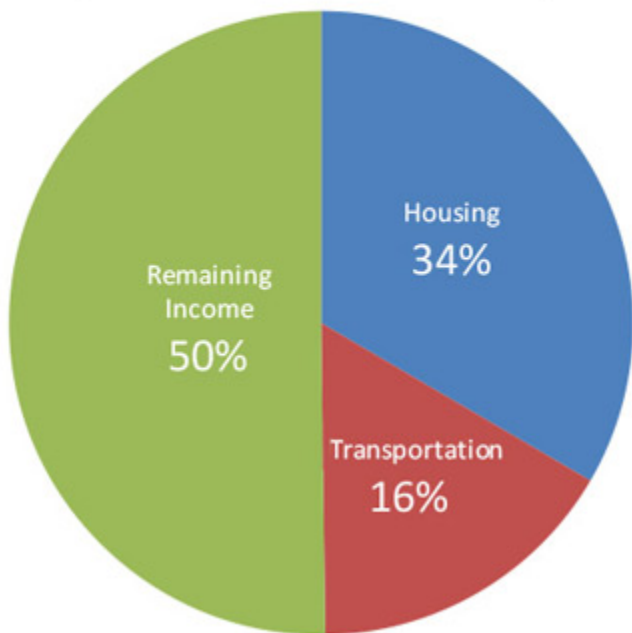


Transit Performance Score 1 - 8 (45% of U.S. Households)





**Transit Performance Score 8 - 10
(12% of U.S. Households)**




The pie charts highlight several points:

- In the first, 50 million households have a Transit Performance Score (TPS) of less than 1 on a scale of 1–10, and they spend an average of 27 percent of household income on transportation.
- In the second, 53 million households have a TPS of between 1 and 8, and they spend an average of 23 percent of income on transportation.
- In the third, 14 million households have a TPS of between 8 and 10, and they spend 16 percent of income on transportation.

CNT also analyzed data to determine how many U.S. households on average spend less than 10 percent of income on transportation. Only 2,089 block groups met this criteria — roughly 1 percent of all block groups in the U.S., or 1.45 million households.

In the Third Federal Reserve District, CNT highlighted the costs and scores for several example cities:

	Average Annual Transportation Costs	Transit Performance Score
Allentown, PA	\$10,631	5.7
Philadelphia	\$9,520	9.0
Princeton, NJ	\$13,297	4.6
Wilmington, DE	\$10,072	7.2

For further information, contact Scott Bernstein, Founder and Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer, Center for Neighborhood Technology, at 773-269-4035 or scott@cnt.org; www.cnt.org. 

Replacing transit with transportation when discussing ETOD opens the discussion beyond big systems in large cities, bringing in aspects like on-street bus service, paratransit, sidewalks, biking, and compact development in all places, big and small. Transit equity and true home affordability require city housing and planning officials and developers to take this wider approach to ETOD and to rethink affordable housing delivery and siting, prioritizing its creation in such locations. Street design and the way streets connect to various amenities become more important as part of ETOD, emphasizing the ease and speed at which one can travel without a car on those streets to school, health care, the store, and other necessities. Understanding how the transit system works — where it goes, how frequently, and for what duration of the day — is critical to direct development at locations where these criteria best enable residents to access daily living needs. Further, ETOD efforts should consider the experience of getting to and from the bus and waiting for it, and unrealistic parking requirements should be removed from affordable housing developments in favor of transit access.

Although these considerations add another layer of effort, the goals are achievable, and the outcome for tenants can be significant. Expanding ETOD’s definition makes delivering services easier, especially for smaller communities. Marrying transportation equity with affordable housing is more manageable there than in larger areas.

Like affordable housing, implementing transportation equity requires the formation of partnerships and the education of stakeholders, both public and private. Developers and communities wishing to marry transportation equity with home affordability should begin asking new questions of the cities and towns with which they work. These could include questions like how does the city works with its transit agency? Where are the major destinations, and does transit go there? If not, are they accessible by foot? Does the city have a transportation plan, and what tools do officials use to make sure the streets are walkable? If we build in walkable, transit-rich areas, can we reduce our parking requirements? Much of this investigation will result in applying existing techniques to a different set of problems and solutions. Earnest attempts should be made to introduce mixed-use development by

marrying housing goals to a city's economic development goals and collaborating to make streets safer and more appealing for people to use them for walking, biking, or getting to buses or train stations. The local transit authority, if one exists, could be an ally in understanding what routes are most successful and sustainable. Fostering partnerships between the transit agency and regional planning boards, known as metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) or rural planning organizations (RPOs), can help advance these goals. This process leads to projects that are more transit accessible, but also more walkable and less auto reliant.

Beyond the transit agency, partnerships with regional institutions like hospitals and universities could create benefits as well. Getting familiar with the state department of transportation regional office, regional planning body, and the broader transportation engineering community can help change projects and mindsets. This familiarity could be particularly important because, among other things, it can open up new sources of funding to support goals. Additionally, the federal government and state departments of transportation have programs that provide funding for improving nonauto transportation access.

In Pennsylvania, several smaller communities are already implementing principles of ETOD. Greensburg, a city of about 14,000 residents 30 miles outside Pittsburgh, has created what it terms a health care overlay district that is anchored by a regional hospital, several higher education institutions, a bus depot, and an Amtrak station. Community leaders have developed pedestrian and bicycle plans, made zoning changes, and created an affordable housing fund that is part of a tax abatement program. Since 2008, over \$80 million has been invested in the city, including new housing and businesses. Although not an intentional attempt to achieve ETOD, planning and partnerships have helped a city in which 13 percent of the population is below the poverty line to provide affordable housing and to have a balance of transportation options.



Twenty-eight housing units were developed across the street from the Greensburg, PA, train station in the city's downtown arts district. The Greensburg Community Development Corporation secured options on five parcels and transferred the parcels to Greensburg Property Partners, LLC. The units were constructed in 2015 and occupied in early 2016 by students and professionals.

Photo Credit: Greensburg Property Partners, LLC.

In State College, PA, in Centre County, the Centre Area Transit Authority (CATA)[8](#) has built a network of consulting engineers, municipal staffs, planning commission members, and local elected officials that jointly review network development proposals with the goal of preserving or improving access to transit. CATA shares the cost of a transportation planner with the regional planning body, the Centre County MPO. CATA has sought improvements for pedestrians and integration of transit facilities with other amenities, and even without special zoning, the authority has succeeded.

Although ETOD was not formally at the core of their goals, Greensburg and Centre County have demonstrated what is possible when taking an approach to development that is more location focused and not car based. A more comprehensive, equitable housing development strategy that includes transit and a broad range of transportation alternatives best serves LMI residents.

Equitable Transportation Tools and Publications - Cascade: No. 97, Fall 2017

By Nathaniel Borek, Outreach and Administrative Analyst

Explore This Section


Equitable Transportation Tools and Publications*

The following tools enable users to understand and analyze transportation trends and issues, with an emphasis on equity. The publications provide resources and strategies used in the equitable transportation field. All of these resources have been selected for their broad geographic scope or applicability.


Equitable Transportation Tools

All five of the following tools are hosted by the Center for Neighborhood Technology.


AllTransit's Metrics and Maps & Analysis

Users can search by location for data from over 800 transit agencies on more than 500,000 stop locations and 15,000 routes. The database provides information on jobs, the economy, health care, transit equity, transit quality, and mobility in many small, rural areas in addition to larger metro areas. The database also provides mapping features and graphs comparing the searched location with neighboring areas, census regions, and legislative districts. See <http://alltransit.cnt.org/metrics/>. 


The National Transit-Oriented Development Database

The database provides demographic and economic information on medium to large cities “at three geographic levels: the transit zone (the half-mile or quarter-mile buffer around the individual station), the transit shed (the aggregate of transit zones), and lastly, the transit region (aligns with the metropolitan statistical area boundary).” It uses aggregated public data and includes existing and planned transit routes, stops, and stations. See <http://www.cnt.org/tools/tod-database>. 


The Housing and Transportation (H+T®) Affordability Index

The index provides information on the cost of transportation and housing in metropolitan areas and micropolitan areas covering 94 percent of the United States population. Given its geographic coverage, this index is useful for practitioners in small, medium, and large cities. See <http://www.cnt.org/tools/housing-and-transportation-affordability-index>. 


Total Driving Costs


The tool calculates total costs of car ownership, maintenance, and gasoline expenses at the city, township, or borough level, making it valuable for practitioners in cities of any size and in rural areas. The tool includes regional and national benchmark figures to contextualize local metrics. See <http://www.cnt.org/tools/total-driving-costs>. 


eTOD Social Impact Calculator

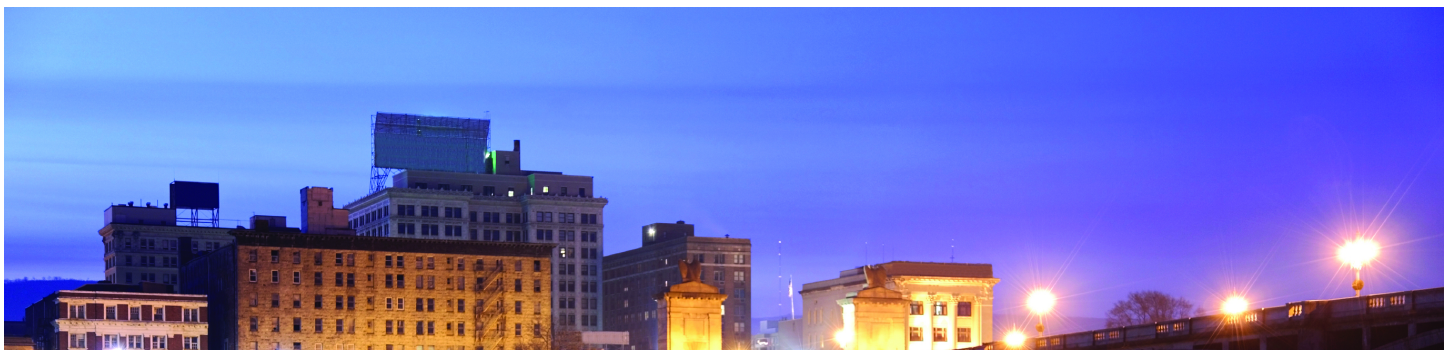
The calculator provides information for predevelopment planning and the projected impact of potential affordable housing in Cook County, IL. Despite being limited to Cook County, the calculator is a useful tool as a proxy or example of the potential impact of equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD). The data are at the parcel level and include metrics on labor markets, transportation, and the environmental impact of potential housing. See <http://www.cnt.org/tools/etod-social-impact-calculator>. 

Equitable Transportation Publications

Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.’s “Equitable Transit-Oriented Development” is a brief policy overview with links to additional resources for practitioners considering ETOD projects. This overview defines ETOD, describes the impact of ETOD, explains the reasoning behind ETOD, and details Enterprise’s work in funding, building capacity, and offering technical assistance for ETOD projects. See <http://www.enterprisecommunity.org/solutions-and-innovation/equitable-transit-oriented-development>. 


Reconnecting America’s “Mixed-Income Housing Near Transit” details the benefits of mixed-income neighborhoods and strategies for transit-oriented development (TOD) in these neighborhoods. This booklet concisely describes the dynamic relationship between affordable housing and transit. See <http://reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/091030ra201mixedhousefinal.pdf>. 

The Transit Center’s “All Transportation Is Local: A Field Guide for City Leaders” provides actionable advice and evidence about best practices from research and case studies. This guide touches on strategies for effective governance, partnerships, infrastructure utilization, and economic growth policies. See <http://transitcenter.org/publications/atil/>. 





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The Shared-Use Mobility Center’s “Reference Guide” offers brief and detailed definitions of shared-use transportation services, which broadly encompass bikesharing, carsharing, “smart” shuttles, and carpooling, among others. It reports on benefits to communities, opportunities and challenges for local governments, and equity and policy considerations. See http://sharedusemobilitycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SharedUseMobility_ReferenceGuide_09.25.2015.pdf. 

Melinda Pollack and Brian Prater’s “Filling the Financing Gap for Equitable Transit-Oriented Development” details and explains existing financing tools for ETOD by examining regional examples from Atlanta, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and the San Francisco Bay Area. The paper points out opportunities to fill funding gaps and suggests potential policy solutions and sources of capital. Despite the focus on these larger cities and regions, the paper identifies partnerships and strategies that small and midsize cities can adapt or adopt. See <http://www.liifund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/TOD-Report-03-26-13-FINAL.pdf>. 

The Center for Transit-Oriented Development’s “CDFIs and Transit-Oriented Development” describes the state of interest and investment from community development financial institutions (CDFIs) in TOD. The report lays out the common ground between CDFIs and TOD and presents opportunities and challenges. See http://ctod.org/portal/sites/default/files/201010_cdfi_transit_oriented_design.pdf. 

Reconnecting America and the Community Transportation Association’s “Putting Transit to Work in Main Street America” reports on transit efforts in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas. The paper contextualizes transit issues in smaller cities and rural areas and then details case studies on bus networks, circulator systems, intermodal transit centers, and intercity transit systems. See <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/resource-center/books-and-reports/2012/putting-transit-to-work-in-main-street-america-how-smaller-cities-and-rural-places-are-using-transit-and-mobility->

[investments-to-strengthen-their-economies-and-communities/](#). 