

PROJECT DESCRIPTION & TERMINOLOGY

Project Description

Transportation in all forms is an integral part of every community. **Transportation investment decisions have numerous social, economic and land use impacts.** People who cannot or do not utilize an automobile for transportation – generally about one-third of the population – are likely to be at a disadvantage for safe and efficient access to employment, school, health care, shopping, civic activities and recreational opportunities. Traditionally transportation-disadvantaged populations include elders and children, low-income citizens, minority groups, and the physically and mentally disabled.

The fundamental purpose of this project is to address Civil Rights Act **non-discrimination laws** and Environmental Justice regulations in the context of rural region transportation planning. Agencies receiving federal funds are required to ensure that their programs do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age and that adverse human health or environmental effects do not fall disproportionately upon low-income and minority individuals and communities. Many smaller local and regional governments, however, do not have specific planning strategies to address non-discrimination requirements.

This is an effort to determine how small governments can address these regulations efficiently, effectively and proactively in a way that has as many benefits to the community and other planning disciplines as possible. The project team seeks to **establish a strategy for incorporating health, economic and land use factors into transportation planning efforts** as a means to programmatically address transportation equity.

Additionally, there is a rapidly growing recognition that there is a need for a more **balanced, ‘multi-modal’ perspective** in transportation planning – an equitable consideration of non-motorized and transit projects within the traditional focus of planning primarily for motorized modes of transportation. This balance will provide a wider range of mobility options for all travelers, improve the health and economic well-being of communities, and alleviate transportation conflicts with changing land uses. Special consideration is needed to help develop multi-modal transportation systems in rural areas where resources are limited and destinations dispersed.

The project team sees a need for:

- Consideration of Civil Rights Act Title VI non-discrimination goals during the transportation project **prioritization process, before projects are selected and planned** – and not solely in the traditional sense of race, gender or class, but in a broader sense of considering the needs of various social groups that will be impacted by transportation planning decisions;
- A strategy to **incorporate health, economic and land use factors into transportation planning efforts** as a means to provide a more equitable and integrated foundation for decision-making;
- A process that ensures **non-automobile project elements** do not ‘fall off’ of under-funded or overspent projects before implementation is complete;
- Achievement of improved **transportation investment equity**; and
- **Practical tools for helping governments of limited means** achieve all of the above and for helping interest groups know how best to constructively support these efforts.

The primary goal of this project is to develop a model for healthy, equitable and integrated community transportation planning. The model will continue to **evolve** throughout the life of the project. The project will come to a close in 2006. This project information is also available on the web at <http://www.rcaa.org/nrs/hrr>.

Project Terminology

Accessibility – a characteristic which permits individuals to reach desired goods, services and activities.

Active living – an individual or community lifestyle that incorporates physical activity into daily programs and routines.

Active transportation – means of travel that require some level of physical activity, such as walking and cycling.

Context-sensitive design – a land use and transportation planning process that incorporates site- or region-specific circumstances to meet the needs of users, surrounding communities and the environment.

**Economic development* – the process of expanding economic activity in an area to provide more jobs and income to area residents.

**Environmental Justice* – a public policy effort to ensure that adverse human health or environmental effects of governmental activities do not fall disproportionately upon low-income and minority individuals and communities.

Equitable transportation – the ability of a transportation system to serve the transportation and/or mobility needs of everyone in the community in a balanced and impartial way.

Equity – an impartial distribution of benefits and burdens from transportation or other planning projects among population groups.

Health and safety – a state of physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Healthy communities – attractive and safe environments that provide and promote active access to nutritious food, employment, school, health care, civic activities, recreational opportunities and a variety of transportation options, and that promote a high degree of social interaction and cultural awareness among residents.

Key decision-makers – government planners and elected officials.

Land use – the way land is developed and used in terms of the types of activities allowed (agriculture, residences, industries, etc...) and the size and density of buildings and structures permitted.

Mobility – public ability to use various transportation modes to move between origins and destinations.

Mode – mechanism of travel, such as walking, cycling, driving, or riding a bus.

Multi-modal access – ability of people to access various forms of transportation.

Non-automobile transportation – modes of travel that include public transit systems (e.g. bus, rail, and so forth) and non-motorized means (e.g. walking, cycling, wheelchair use).

Non-motorized transportation – modes of travel that include walking, cycling, wheelchairs, small-wheeled transport, horses and other human-powered forms.

Programmatic planning – determination of goals and objectives for a broad spectrum of efforts, usually over a period of years; includes many project-level efforts to reach overall ‘programmatic’ goals.

Project-level planning – determination of goals, objectives and designs for specific endeavors to produce a product or service.

**Protected population* – groups of people defined by age, disability, gender, religion, class, race, low-income, limited English proficiency and national origin.

Rural – regions with planning circumstances particular to non-metropolitan governments, culture, landscape, and financial resources.

^*Social equity* – equal opportunity and access for all members of society to such things as nutritious food, health care, civic activities, recreational facilities, schools, and jobs.

Stakeholder groups – people who are affected by or could possibly affect activities and strategies related to planning efforts.

Title VI – Civil Rights Act legislation that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in programs receiving federal assistance.

^*Transit* – multi-passenger vehicles that transport people along fixed or on-demand routes; include buses, rail, and other forms of transportation.

**Transportation disadvantaged* – people who face significant unmet transportation needs; contributing factors generally include low-income, minority, limited English proficiency, non-drivers, elders, youth, disabilities, and physical isolation.

Transportation equity – an inclusive, proactive planning strategy that serves to provide equal access to social and economic opportunities by providing an equitable distribution of transportation investments to all transport modes.

Transportation investment – a capital improvement or rehabilitation project that supports any or all forms of mobility

Walkability – the ability of people to walk to school, jobs, health care, nutritious food other destinations, while being in a safe environment.

* Definitions from (Transportation Research Board) “NCHRP Report 532: Effective Methods for Environmental Justice Assessment”

^ Definitions from “Can’t Get There From Here: The Declining Independent Mobility of California’s Children and Youth”