Public Transit, Access, and Racial Inequality

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Public Transit, Access, and Racial Inequality

1. Households without access to cars are at a significant disadvantage.

2. For households without cars—disproportionately poor and non-white—transit can be a lifeline.

3. There are long-term racial inequities in public transit, many of them aggravated by the current crisis.
In cities built around automobiles, households without access to cars are at a significant disadvantage.
Cars Provide Greater Access to Jobs than Public Transit

Ratio of Jobs Accessible in 60 Minutes by Auto Relative to Transit (10 Transit-Rich U.S. MSAs)

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- San Francisco: 5.8
- Washington: 7.1
- Seattle: 7.7
- Boston: 8.2
- Chicago: 8.8
- Denver: 9.0
- San Jose: 10.7
- Philadelphia: 12.4
- Los Angeles: 13.2

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Other Benefits of Automobiles

- Ease the making of trips to multiple destinations on a single tour (balance home and work responsibilities)
- Convenience (e.g. door-to-door, carry packages, travel with children, protected in bad weather)
- Safe (at night, socially distance)
- Provide shelter
- Pleasure
- Status
A growing body of research shows that automobiles are associated with a number of positive outcomes.
Benefits of Automobiles

- Employment, earnings
- Living in higher-quality neighborhoods
- Intergenerational economic outcomes
- Health care services
- Education
COVID Testing
Food Donations
Food
Worship
Jobs
Work Space
Homeless Housing
DRIVE THRU
WIFI Access
Entertainment
COVID AND DRIVE-THRU ACTIVITIES
Income and Racial Disparities in Automobile Access
% 0-vehicle Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>NH White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$25,000</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>$25,000+</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# of Zero-Vehicle Households by Income and Race/Ethnicity

- 10.5 million U.S. households do not have cars
- 50% of households without cars are non-white
- 61% of households without cars have incomes below $25,000

For households without cars—who are disproportionately non-white and low-income—transit can be a lifeline.
Transit Mode Share by Income and Trip Purpose

- Most low-income and non-white travelers use cars.
- Low-income and non-white travelers rely on public transit more than higher-income households.
- The disparities in transit use are greatest for non-work travel.

Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey
Transit Mode Share by Race and Trip Purpose

Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.
Use of Public Transportation to Reduce the Financial Burden of Travel by Race/Ethnicity

Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.
Use of Public Transportation to Reduce the Financial Burden of Travel by Income

Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.
Carless Households Tend to Live in Transit-Rich Neighborhoods

Jobs within 30 minutes by Public Transit (am peak)

Los Angeles
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA

San Francisco
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA

Use of Transit for COVID Purposes

• Travel for essential workers
  • TransitCenter Report: 2.8 Million U.S. Essential Workers Ride Transit to Their Jobs (about 1/3 of Pre-COVID transit riders)

• Maintenance of lines to schools that provide free lunches
  • Example: Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) in the Columbus-area

• Shelter for the homeless
There are long-term racial inequities in public transit, many of them aggravated by the current crisis.
Transit and Racial Inequality

1. **Access to jobs is declining, widening the gap between the benefits of cars and public transit.**

2. Many transit-dependent and choice riders experience separate and unequal transit services.

3. Declining transit ridership will likely have negative effects on an increasingly low-income and non-white ridership.

4. Access by public transit is predicated on safety – getting to and traveling on buses and trains.
Continued Dispersion of Households and Jobs

Decline in Job Proximity from 2000 to 2012 by Race, Ethnicity and Poverty

Job proximity: The number of jobs within a typical commute distance, which is defined as the typical median commute distance in the metropolitan area.
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Composition of Transit Riders by Transit Mode and Race/Ethnicity

Source: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.
Composition of Transit Riders by Transit Mode and Income

Data: 2017 National Household Travel Survey.
Distribution of Transportation Expenditures by Transit Mode

Expenditures on quality public transit networks
United States, 2010–2019

- Arterial rapid transit: 271 miles, $0.8 b
- Commuter rail: 145 miles, $2.5 b
- Bus rapid transit: 354 miles, $2.8 b
- Regional rail: 181 miles, $5.9 b
- Metro: 26 miles, $13.4 b
- Light rail: 191 miles, $20.1 b
- Streetcar: 37 miles, $1.9 b

Total expenditure: $47.5 billion in expanded transit services

* Costs inflated to 2019 $, based on estimated mid point of construction period.

Source: Freemark, Yonah (2020). “Too Little, Too Late? A Decade of Transit Investment in the U.S., Streetsblog USA
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Significant Decline in Transit Trips Per Capita

Data source: National Transit Database; American Community Survey; U.S. Census.
Change in U.S. Apple Routing Requests by Mode since January 13, 2020

Data: Apple Mobility Reports
COVID: Transit riders are poorer and a greater share are people of color

Source: Transit App Users
Reduced transit service—particularly bus service—due to lost revenue will disproportionately hurt poor and non-white travelers.

APTA: 60% or more of all transit agencies expect to make service cuts if no additional emergency funds are provided.
Reduced Transit Service Due to Lost Revenue will Disproportionately Hurt the Poor and People of Color


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Safety

- Discriminatory policing
- Sexual harassment
- Real and perceived safety risks associated with COVID – on streets/sidewalks, on buses and trains
Planning, Public Transit, and the Automobile

- **Car-based planning**: Planners and engineers have for decades helped create autocentric cities (e.g. infrastructure investments, automobile-oriented land use, free parking, etc.)

- **Moving beyond car-based planning**: For transit to better meet the needs of travelers – all travelers – we need to better manage the automobile and driving. Otherwise, inequities in access between higher-income white travelers and non-white travelers will remain.