

place matters



community engagement | criminal justice | economics | education | housing | land use + transportation

## Land Use and Transportation Policy Workgroup: Background Information

## **Land Use and Transportation Vision Statements**

*This vision statement was created using the data from our needs assessment, as well as the information presented by the organizations, agencies, and other groups we have talked to thus far.*

1. All residents can easily access a world class public transportation system that is clean, safe, affordable, and reliable. These services are equitably distributed, with particular attention paid to transit-dependent communities, and are connected to a safe walking and biking infrastructure to reduce the dependence on automobiles. Communities and the environment are protected from the negative impacts of goods movement.
2. Neighborhoods have clean air, soil, and water. All residents have access to quality jobs, food, affordable housing and transit, open spaces and other goods and services people need to be healthy. Communities are violence free and designed to promote social interaction and neighborhood identity. Communities are free from a high concentration of businesses and industry that harm health and risk factors are reduced.

## **Land Use and Transportation Problem Statements**

*These problem statements were created using the data from our needs assessment, as well as the information presented by the organizations, agencies, and other groups we have talked to thus far.*

### **1. Access to Affordable and Reliable Transport**

#### ***Problem Statement***

Low-income residents in Oakland struggle to secure safe, affordable, and reliable transportation. Low-income communities of color in Oakland are more likely to be transit dependent and impacted by transit cuts.

#### ***Narrative***

Transportation is less affordable and a greater cost burden to low income communities. In Alameda County, low-income households dedicate a larger share of their income to transportation costs than those with higher incomes. Nationally, transportation costs are increasing at a faster rate for low-income households than for higher-income households.

Transportation options may be limited for low income residents. Low income households and communities of color are more likely to be transit dependent (i.e., not have a vehicle in the home). In Oakland, 20% of households are transit dependent, compared to 11% in Alameda County. In Oakland, nearly one in four African American and one in five Latino households are transit dependent. The majority of transit dependent households in Oakland are African American (51%) or Latino (21%). Low-income households (at or below the Federal Poverty Level) comprise 38% of the transit dependent in Oakland. This makes these groups more dependent on public transportation.

Transit dependent communities are more likely to be served by low-subsidized, unreliable transportation. Of the two major public transit providers serving Alameda County—AC Transit and BART—AC Transit serves more transit dependent people than BART (61% versus 16% respectively). AC Transit also serves the largest proportion of riders who use public transportation on a daily basis. Furthermore, AC Transit riders are almost three times as likely to

be low-income as BART riders (38% versus 13% respectively). Of all the transit operators in the Bay Area, AC Transit has the highest percentage of riders who are people of color. Despite its comparatively high percentage of transit dependent riders and low-income riders, AC Transit receives a smaller subsidy per passenger than BART. Moreover, there is a disparity in service level across transit agencies. Between 1986 and 2004, AC Transit has cut its overall level of service while BART has increased its level of service, even though all East Bay transit providers experienced similar declines in ridership over the same years.

Government subsidies have a direct impact on level of service available to transit dependent communities. Moreover, service cuts can decrease the reliability of transit to these communities. AC Transit—which serves the largest proportion of low-income, minority, and transit dependent riders—is the least reliable large transit operator in the Bay Area. A third of all AC Transit buses are either early or more than five minutes late. Service cuts and unreliable transit options have a significant impact on low-income transit dependent communities through increased travel expenses, income losses, and added travel time. This in turn impacts people’s ability to access essential goods and services, and employment in these communities.

### ***Example of health implications related to transportation***

- People in low-income communities spend a high percentage of their income on transportation, which leaves less money for basic needs, such as medical care, preventive care, or buying healthy food.

## **2. Designing Neighborhoods for Healthy Communities**

### ***Problem Statement***

Low-income communities of color in Oakland have greater difficulty accessing thriving business districts, healthy food outlets, parks, community spaces, and other goods and services in their neighborhoods as compared to more affluent Oakland neighborhoods. These communities also have greater exposure to risk factors such as alcohol, tobacco, unhealthy food outlets, sources of environmental pollution, violence, and a lack of safe opportunities to walk, bike, and play.

### ***Narrative***

The characteristics of the built environment that contribute to positive health outcomes are high density, high land-use mix, good connectivity and low dependence on automobiles. Neighborhoods designed with stores, theaters, and other destinations within walking distance of home and work have the potential to promote physical activity. Neighborhoods that have facilities for active recreation such as nearby parks, multiuse trails, and appealing sidewalks or public spaces for walks may also promote recreational activity. Physical environments designed to facilitate commuting by foot, bicycle, or public transit help promote physical activity by incorporating walking or biking into people’s daily routine.

Research has shown that limited access to parks, playgrounds, and lack of space to exercise—all of which limit people from being physically active—are often distinctive characteristics of low-income urban neighborhoods. Perceived availability and access to places for physical activity in a neighborhood is associated with physical activity level in communities. People are more likely to get out and be active in places that are attractive and aesthetically appealing or where others are doing the same—features that are often lacking in poorer neighborhoods. Crime and fear of crime are a reality in many low-income communities. Crime erodes community trust and

marginalizes residents. Fear of crime is likely to keep people indoors, particularly the old and the young, and discourage physical activity.

In Alameda County, neighborhood conditions strongly influence opportunities for physical activity among residents. Adults from low-income households are less likely to have a place to walk/exercise near their home than those from high-income households. Availability of a space for physical activity in the neighborhood increases with higher income. In the county, adults from high-income households are more likely to describe their neighborhood as being safe to walk/exercise outdoors than those from low-income households. Availability of space to walk or exercise in the neighborhood and safety are strongly associated with physical activity level among adults in the county. Adults with no access to a place near home to walk or exercise are over twice as likely to be physically inactive than those with access to a space for physical activity. Adults who perceive their neighborhood as unsafe to walk or exercise are 60% more likely to be physically inactive than those who feel their neighborhood is safe for physical activity.

Residents in low-income neighborhoods are more likely to be exposed to unsafe traffic conditions, e.g., dense traffic, lack of sidewalks or cross walks, fewer bike lanes. Studies show that low-income communities and communities of color bear a higher burden of transportation-related injury. In Alameda County, rates of pedestrian injury are higher in neighborhoods with higher poverty. The pedestrian injury and death in the highest poverty areas is over six times that in the lowest poverty areas. In Oakland, the majority of cycling-motorized vehicle collision victims are African American; African American and Latino pedestrians are also at the greatest risk of pedestrian injury from collision with a vehicle. Such unsafe conditions can discourage physical activity, leading to adverse health outcomes.

Research suggests that low income neighborhoods are less likely to have access to healthy foods (e.g., fresh produce) and are more likely to have unhealthy food outlets (e.g., fast food and convenience stores) than high income neighborhoods. A recent study in California found that there are over four times the number of fast food restaurants and convenience stores compared to grocery stores and produce vendors in Alameda County. In Oakland, there are fewer stores with a variety of healthy food options than in the county. Decreasing the number of unhealthy food outlets and increasing access to healthy food vendors is critical to improve local food environments that put residents and neighborhoods at increased risk of obesity and diabetes.

Besides an overabundance of unhealthy food outlets and too few grocery stores, certain neighborhoods in Alameda County also suffer from a high concentration of liquor stores. The density of off-sale liquor licenses (liquor stores and other retail outlets that sell liquor for consumption off the premises) in the lowest poverty areas is double that in the highest poverty areas of the county. Higher concentration of liquor stores in low-income neighborhoods is a significant contributor to crime in these communities.

Low income residents in Alameda County and Oakland are disproportionately exposed to harmful environmental pollutants, placing them at risk of negative health outcomes. In Alameda County, significantly more African Americans and Latinos live in close proximity (within 500 feet) of freeways compared to other race and ethnic groups, exposing them to major sources of pollution. Additionally, seven of ten schools in the county situated in close proximity of a freeway are in the Oakland Unified School District, exposing children to unacceptably high levels of air pollution. Higher levels of toxic air contaminants have been shown for schools near busy roadways; children attending these schools are more likely than other children to have asthma symptoms.

Other research shows that West Oakland residents breathe air with at least three times more diesel particles in it than the rest of the Bay Area. Air pollution exposure of this magnitude translates to a 2.5 greater lifetime risk of cancer compared to that in the Bay Area. This higher risk is predominantly due to diesel trucks transporting goods on freeways around the area as well as into and out of the Port of Oakland and the Union Pacific Rail Yard.

***Examples of health implications related to land use***

- People in low-income communities are less likely to be physically active, which puts them at greater risk of obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes.
- In low-income communities, local food environments lacking in healthy food outlets can result in food insecurity and put residents at risk for chronic diseases.
- High density of liquor in low-income communities may significantly contribute to injuries, crime, and violence.
- Exposure to extreme levels of environmental pollution in low-income neighborhoods is associated with greater risk of cancer and asthma.

## **List of “Experts” and Relevant Reports**

*In addition to reviewing the local data on the economic conditions in Oakland and the research on the pathways by which health and economic conditions are linked, we spoke with “experts” in the field. We defined “experts” as people who have experience in the area of economics, through personal experience, academic research, job focus or any other way that gave them exposure to economic issues. We also reviewed local reports and policy agendas that included policy recommendations related to economics. This list covers both.*

### **“Experts” we spoke with:**

- Public Health Law & Policy, Planning for Health Places – *Heather Wooten & Robert Ogilvie*
- TransForm – *Carli Paine & Joel Ramos*
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission – *Doug Johnson*
- Alameda County Congestion Management Agency – *Diane Stark & Beth Walukas*
- Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority – *Tess Lengyel*
- West Oakland Indicators Project – *Allen Edson*
- Urban Habitat – *Will Dominie*
- The Pacific Institute – *Eli Moore*
- City of Oakland, Bike Pedestrian Program – *Jason Patton*
- City of Oakland, Bike Pedestrian Advisory Committee – *Jonathan Bair*
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District

### **Local reports we referenced:**

- Dellums Task Force Report
- Oakland General Plan/Land Use and Transportation Element 1998
- Oakland Bike Master Plan 2007
- Oakland Pedestrian Master Plan 2002
- Oil Independent Oakland Task Force Action Plan 2008
- Draft Oakland Energy and Climate Action Plan 2010
- Life and Death from Unnatural Causes

### **Agendas we referenced:**

- HOPE Collaborative
- ACCE (formerly ACORN)
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Oakland Climate Action Coalition
- TransForm
- Urban Habitat

