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Response to The Road Not Yet Traveled: Making Transportation Work for Everyone

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As a carless millennial living in Washington, DC, I have a day-to-day lived experience of how non-driving transportation options impact my ability to get from home to work and my other daily needs. I am among the nearly 200,000 households in the region without a vehicle.¹

When I walk out of my front door and prepare to cross one of DC's busy north-south roadways, I wonder how many cars will pass through the intersection before I can safely cross the street. I wait for the arrival of a bus, hoping that it is on time, and that if it is running late, it is only three or four minutes behind schedule and not 20 to 30 minutes. If I take a trip on the weekend to a part of the city where transit options are limited, I often try to catch a ride with a friend, or sometimes I pick up a car-sharing vehicle, or leave an extra half-hour for walking from the nearest transit stop to my destination.

Time, safety, and choice are concerns that are shared by all Americans regardless of age. However, millions of Americans live in communities where transportation options are unreliable, unsafe, or nonexistent. Several national trends point to this issue:

- Over 7.5 million U.S. households have no access to a vehicle, and nearly 700,000 of those households lack access to transit.²
- Nearly two-thirds of all residents of small towns and rural communities have few if any transportation alternatives to driving—41 percent have no access to transit, and another 25 percent live in areas with below-average transit services.³
- Fifty percent of older people who do not drive in the United States stay home on a given day because they lack transportation options.⁴
- Nearly 20 percent of African American households, 14 percent of Latino households, and 13 percent of Asian households do not have a car.⁵
- Older adults and people of color have significantly higher pedestrian fatality rates than middle-aged, non-Hispanic whites.⁶

These trends demonstrate that our nation needs smart, equitable approaches to enhancing mobility for all of us, regardless of age, income, race, or physical ability. As Corless argues, these trends should compel us to find ways to provide dedicated levels of robust funding for transportation in general, and public transportation in particular. As a nation, we must invest in our roads, bridges, buses, light rail lines, and sidewalks to meet the current mobility needs of our population.

And as the introduction to this report makes clear, that population is changing. The younger generation is increasingly racially diverse, while the older generation is predominantly white. That transformation points to an even greater need to make sure that transportation works for everyone, including the large proportion of millennials who are people of color.

One way to create a system that works for all is to focus on those most in need of affordable travel options, particularly public transportation. As Corless points out, millennials and older adults fall into that category. Many of them do not have access to a vehicle and are increasingly demanding homes located in walkable, transit-rich communities. The meeting of these two different but related trends opens up an opportunity for a smart, equitable approach to transportation policy that could benefit people of all ages.

But what makes a policy equitable? There are three critical questions that should guide us as we focus our efforts:

- Who benefits?
- Who pays?
- Who decides?

Who Benefits? - Using Analysis to Make Sure No One Is Left Behind

Across the nation, communities are finding that while millions of dollars are spent on transportation projects to connect people to jobs, childcare, grocery stores, and

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other daily needs, many people remain disconnected. For example, nearly two-thirds of jobs in a given U.S. region are not accessible via a 90-minute transit trip.⁷ In New York City, 500,000 workers travel over 60 minutes each way to and from jobs that pay less than \$35,000 a year.⁸ These working individuals face dual transportation burdens of costs and time.

Given the significant disparate impact that transportation funding can have on low-income households, older adults, youth, communities of color, and other populations that rely upon public transportation, transportation policies must see around the corner to ensure that no communities are left behind when new bus routes, street, or sidewalk improvements are built or innovative transportation technologies are put in place.

To this end, transportation decision-makers should apply a race, age, and income lens to every transportation decision. The U.S. Department of Transportation's 2012 Environmental Justice Strategy⁹ and 2012 civil rights guidance for transit projects¹⁰ are steps in the right direction because they require transportation planners to analyze how policy changes and proposed projects will impact low-income people, communities of color, transit-dependent populations, and other vulnerable populations. Such analysis can ensure that new transportation investments at minimum do not have adverse distributional outcomes, and at best benefit those who need them most.

Improvement is achievable. New York's transit agency has proposed adding 25 new bus rapid transit routes that can slash travel times for transit riders by providing

Good News Garage

Imagine living in a sparsely populated area and not having a car to get around. Or suppose you work a low-wage job that depends on your ability to get to and from work – but work is miles away and you have no public transportation system to rely on. Or what if you happen to be a city dweller but getting to work means two bus changes and a ride on the subway – adding up to a very expensive and very long commute?

Those are the sort of dilemmas facing millions of lower-income folks who worry day-to-day whether they will get to work on time and keep a roof over their heads. They've learned the hard way that not having a car can mean putting their job in jeopardy, being unable to get their kids to childcare or a doctor's appointment, or not being able to get to a grocery store that offers fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods.

Fortunately, there are alternatives. One of the most successful is the Good News Garage (GNG). A program of Lutheran Social Services, GNG operates in New England and is one of the first nonprofit social enterprise car donation programs in the United States.

GNG's mission is to create economic opportunity by providing affordable and reliable transportation options

for people in need. Since its founding in Burlington, Vermont, in 1996, GNG has awarded more than 4,000 reliable vehicles to individuals and families in need.

Good News Garage polls its clients more than six months after receiving their car and found that:

- 89% of clients have experienced increased economic opportunity
- 86% of clients have experienced an improved quality of life
- 83% of clients consider their car, more than 12 months after receiving it, to be safe and reliable.

The organization also offers other services, such as its Ready To Go program in Vermont. Ready To Go drivers use donated minivans and schedule rides for clients to access essential life activities, including jobs, training and childcare. Ready To Go provides more than 30,000 rides annually across the state of Vermont and works in partnership with the Vermont Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division to provide this service. In a survey of clients, the program found that 91% of Ready To Go riders report satisfaction with their rides.

For more information visit the Good News Garage website at <http://www.goodnewsgarage.org>.

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dedicated travel lanes for buses and traffic-signal prioritization for transit vehicles. This proposal was driven largely by the efforts of Communities United for Transportation Equity, a coalition of faith-based, economic justice, and community development organizations, and the Pratt Center on Community Development to encourage the local transit agency to focus transit expansion resources on bus rapid transit to provide a faster, more affordable means of travel, particularly for low-wage workers living in communities that lack frequent, reliable transit service.

Who Pays? - Linking Goals To Local Needs

Today, many households are struggling to keep up with transportation costs. Between 2000 and 2010, median household incomes in the 25 largest metropolitan areas grew by 25 percent while transportation costs grew by 33 percent.¹¹ Moreover, moderate-income households, those making less than \$45,000 annually, spent a greater share of their income on transportation than high-income households.¹² As the price of gas and public transit fares increase, we must consider the impact these costs will have on the ability of low- and moderate-income workers of all ages to afford basic needs including food, health care, housing, and utilities. In San Francisco, for example, a 2012 survey of transit riders found that nearly half of those surveyed could not afford a rise in transit fares.¹³

Making improvements to public transportation and walking infrastructure is one of the most effective ways to provide affordable transportation options. However, these investments should be targeted to the people and communities that are most in need of those options. We must set ambitious goals for transportation projects that reduce disparities across race and income. The current federal transportation law requires that local and state transportation decision makers set forth performance goals for the transportation system. As these decision makers seek to fulfill this mandate, they should consider:

- lowering annual transportation costs to no more than 20 percent of the household budget for low- and moderate-income families;
- targeting zero pedestrian deaths; and
- making 100 percent of low- and middle-skill jobs in a region accessible via a 60-minute one-way transit trip.

*Making Bikesharing Available to **Everyone***

Bicycle sharing has become popular in communities across the country from New York to Los Angeles. When done right, this low-cost option provides additional mobility to many residents. However, when such plans fail to adequately consider their target population they can potentially leave behind the individuals that stand to benefit most.

In Washington, DC, the Capital Bikeshare program was touted as a low-cost option that could serve the District residents who lack access to a vehicle. A portion of these residents without a vehicle are young people of color with low incomes, so there was hope that Capital Bikeshare would serve such people. However, the program required a credit card in order to borrow a bicycle—and in DC, as many as one in five residents do not have bank accounts. By partnering with Bank on DC, a collaborative effort between district government, financial institutions, and non-profits to provide access to financial services and products to unbanked and under-banked households in the DC Metro Area, Capital Bikeshare implemented a program to help would-be Bikeshare users without a bank account get signed up for an account.

*For more information on Capital Bikeshare visit
www.capitalbikeshare.com and for Bank on DC visit
www.bankondc.org*

Some communities are already setting ambitious goals. Washington, DC, has set a goal that 50 percent of all travel happens on bus, light rail, or subway by 2032. Chicago has set a goal of zero pedestrian deaths in 2013. Achieving these goals would have multiple benefits, from providing greater accessibility and affordability for all residents to improving the climate. Federal funding should be directed toward those states, cities, and regions that prioritize making such improvements in the communities where the disparity in safety and access is greatest.

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Who Decides? - Cultivating Local Leaders to Drive Equitable Decision Making

A third important element is determining who has influence on how transportation priorities are determined for a community.

In the middle of the 20th century, Rondo, a low-income community of color in Saint Paul, Minnesota, was split apart by highway construction, resulting in significant loss of history, culture, and community cohesion. In 2009, almost two generations later, a billion dollar, eleven-mile light rail project was proposed to connect Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Local transportation planners initially designed the light rail to bypass the Rondo community, even though its residents were more transit-dependent than other residents in other communities along the planned rail line. As a result of the advocacy of local equity advocates, the Rondo residents won a transit stop in their community.¹⁴ What's more, they engaged in a community-driven transportation and land use planning process¹⁵ to ensure that the light rail construction brings benefits to all residents of Rondo and connects them to the opportunities within the region.

Corless notes that in many parts of the nation, transportation agencies still "bear the hallmarks of a mid-twentieth century approach" to problem solving. We need only to look at the Rondo community to see that one of the hallmarks of the outdated approach is failing to listen to the voice of the community.

We must promote community engagement and leadership from local communities. To date, the federal government has taken a small step in this direction. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Initiative requires that cities and regions that apply for a grant provide a strategy for engaging traditionally marginalized communities, and also that grantees dedicate 10 percent of their project budget to carry out community engagement activities.

Moreover, equity advocates have taken on the charge of bringing the wisdom of local leaders to the transportation process and have developed an approach to building regional, multi-generational, multi-ethnic leadership. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Boards and

*Leveraging Transit to Make Housing More **Affordable***

In the early 2000s, lower-income residents in the Logan Circle community in Washington, DC, recognized that affordable housing was quickly becoming scarce in their newly-revitalizing, transit-rich neighborhood. Residents utilized a land trust to stabilize the housing costs for families over the long term, so that households with modest incomes and no vehicle access could have an affordable home. In addition, local equity leaders in the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, won a citywide inclusionary zoning policy, which set aside newly built affordable housing in transit-rich neighborhoods across DC.

At the encouragement of equity advocates, federal transportation policymakers have adopted this approach. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Transportation created a new framework for its transit expansion grants that incentivizes communities to adopt policies that create and preserve affordable housing near planned new transit projects. Such policies are key to realizing more inclusive communities where millennials and older adults alike have access to a range of affordable transportation choices.

More information can be found on the Logan Circle initiative at http://www.shelterforce.org/article/sidebar/2516/r_street_apartments_transit-oriented_affordable_housing_goes_green/ and on the D.C. wide campaign at <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/149/winningcampaign.html>.

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Commissions Leadership Institute¹⁶ utilizes a robust curriculum to equip local leaders with the context and knowledge they need to serve on one of the region's decision-making/advisory bodies, including several transportation-related commissions. To date, all graduates of the program have been placed on a local/regional board or commission. The U.S. Department of Transportation could require that recipients of federal funds (i.e., regional transit authorities and metropolitan planning organizations) adopt a similar approach to support deep engagement of community leaders in transportation decision-making.

Given the demographic changes ahead and the important role transportation plays in linking people to opportunity, we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. The United States must make a significant investment in transportation to benefit key members of our population, and make those investments in the places and for the benefit of the people who need them the most.

Disruptive Policy Ideas

Require transportation planners to apply a race, age, and income lens to every federally funded transportation project and encourage every locally funded transportation decision to do the same. This would include analyzing how policy changes and proposed projects will impact low-income people, communities of color, transit-dependent populations, and other vulnerable populations.

Set ambitious goals for transportation projects that reduce disparities across race and income such as zero pedestrian deaths or making 100 percent of low- and middle-skill jobs in a region accessible via a 60-minute one-way transit trip.

Promote community engagement and leadership from local communities by requiring input from those impacted. Affirm and strengthen federal approaches that require that cities and regions to provide a strategy for engaging traditionally marginalized communities. Promote models that equip local leaders with the context and knowledge they need to serve on transportation commissions and other decision-making/advisory bodies.

Recommendations

1. Require transportation planners to apply a race, age, and income lens to every federally funded transportation project and encourage every locally funded transportation decision to do the same.
2. Set ambitious goals for transportation projects that reduce disparities across race and income.
3. Promote community engagement and leadership from local communities by requiring input from those impacted.

¹ Brookings Institution. Transit Access and Zero-Vehicle Households. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2011. Downloaded from <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/08/18-transportation-tomer-puentes>.

² Ibid.

³ American Public Transportation Association. Mobility for America's Small Urban and Rural Communities. Washington, DC: American Public Transportation Association. Downloaded from <http://www.apta.com/gap/policyresearch/Documents/rural.pdf>.

⁴ Smart Growth America. Complete Streets Improve Mobility for Older Americans. Washington, DC: Smart Growth America. Downloaded from: <http://www.smart-growthamerica.org/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-older.pdf>.

⁵ Brookings Institution and UC-Berkeley. Socioeconomic Differences in Household Automobile Ownership Rates. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2006.

⁶ Transportation for America. Dangerous by Design. Washington, DC: Transportation for America, 2011. Downloaded from: <http://t4america.org/docs/dbd2011/Dangerous-by-Design-2011.pdf>.

⁷ Brookings Institution. Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2011. Downloaded from: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2011/05/12-jobs-and-transit>.

⁸ Testimony by Elena Conte, Organizer for Public Policy, Pratt Center for Community Development at a hearing of the New York City Council's Transportation Committee, "Addressing Public Transit Needs Outside Manhattan

⁹ Testimony". June 19, 2012. Downloaded from: <http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/205219/c0afd9c743/1464586969/d49872ec22/>.

¹⁰ More information on the USDOT's Environmental Justice Strategy can be found at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/ej_at_dot/ej_strategy/index.cfm.

¹¹ More information about USDOT's recent civil rights guidance can be found at: <http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12328.html>.

¹² Center for Housing Policy and Center for Neighborhood Technology. Losing Ground. Washington, DC: Center for Housing Policy, 2012. Downloaded from: <http://prattcenter.net/2012/07/18/transit-access-greatest-need-new-yorkers>.

¹³ Center for Housing Policy and Center for Neighborhood Technology. Losing Ground. Washington, DC: Center for Housing Policy, 2012. Downloaded from: <http://prattcenter.net/2012/07/18/transit-access-greatest-need-new-yorkers>.

¹⁴ POWER, DataCenter and Urban Habitat. Next Stop: Justice - Race and Environment at the Center of Transit Planning. Oakland, CA: POWER, DataCenter and Urban Habitat, 2012. Downloaded from, http://www.datacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/POWER_NextStop_Eng_midrez.pdf

¹⁵ More information about the advocacy related to the transit stop campaign can be found at: http://www.metrostability.org/campaigns/article.php?sid=Stops_for_Us.

¹⁶ More information about the community-driven planning process can be found at: http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.7841971/k.7BB/The_Healthy_Corridor_for_All_Health_Impact_Assessment.htm. For more information see, <http://urbanhabitat.org/uh/bcli>.

