

The Route to Transportation Equity:  
A Critical Evaluation of the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program and  
Strategies to Implement First-Class Public Transportation Systems

## **Dedication**

For my mom and my dad, who told me I could go wherever I wanted to go- even on public transportation- and taught me accordingly.

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## **Executive Summary**

This report is an evaluation of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program, a federal grant program that aims to support flexible, innovative transportation alternatives to fill gaps in transportation services specifically for low-income individuals and welfare recipients who are transitioning into the work force. The two program objectives for the Job Access and Reverse Commute program are to: 1) provide transportation services in urban, suburban and rural areas to assist the ability of welfare recipients and low-income individuals to access employment opportunities; and 2) increase collaboration among the transportation providers, human service agencies, employers, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), states, and affected communities and individuals. In addition to evaluating whether the JARC program successfully meets its program objectives, this report also aims to examine the JARC program through a transportation equity lens. Transportation equity calls for equality in mobility and accessibility for all constituencies, with particular attention paid to urban, low-income communities and communities of color that are traditionally disenfranchised and disempowered by transportation policies. Transportation equity is premised on the principles of environmental justice that call for equal access to social and economic opportunities, meaningful community involvement in the decision-making process and minimization of disproportionately adverse human health and environmental effects. This evaluation of the JARC program, therefore,

people to jobs and forging collaboration among a variety of agencies and organizations. This study surveys a considerable number of evaluations and assessments of the program that have been administered by diversified entities. These evaluations and assessments include legally-mandated reports by government agencies such as the Federal Transit Administration and the General Accounting Office and a 2002 study conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago. Additionally, interviews were conducted with individuals who are directly linked to the JARC program- for example, the chief of staff to Representative Danny Davis of Illinois, who moved to amend the JARC legislation to increase annual funding, and Sue Masselink and Gregory Brown, who, as part of the Federal Transit Administration's Office of Program Management, manage the JARC program at the federal level. In examining whether the JARC program is successfully connecting welfare participants and low-income individuals to job opportunities, this study assesses JARC's institutionalization of the transportation equity principle of equal access to social and economic benefits.

This study also analyzes the Job Access and Reverse Commute program's promotion of other key aspects of transportation equity, namely meaningful community involvement and minimization of public health and environmental effects. Profiles of organizations and agencies that considered and incorporated either meaningful community involvement or public health and environmental impact analysis into their transportation projects are included in this report. Interviews with representatives of these organizations were also conducted and incorporated into this study.

This study finds that the Job Access and Reverse Commute program promotes and institutionalizes one key aspect of transportation equity, but not all. The JARC

program directly responds to the social and economic benefits issue of spatial mismatch between job growth centers and low-income residential communities. However, JARC does not institutionalize in its program two other key aspects of transportation: meaningful community involvement and minimization of public health and environmental effects. However, there are ways in which these elements of transportation equity could be strengthened and further promoted by the JARC program.

Firstly, in order to ensure community involvement and maintain the integrity of the JARC program, Congressional earmarking must be limited, and the competitive selection process must be reinstated in some form. Whatever form the competitive selection process takes, it must not compromise the integrity of the JARC program and its public involvement element. Congress and the Federal Transit Administration must commit to using JARC grants to only fund projects that qualify as JARC projects as outlined in TEA-21 legislation.

Secondly, meaningful community involvement should be made an eligibility criterion for JARC projects. The public and potentially impacted communities should be consulted *at least* during the planning stages of a JARC proposal. Promoting meaningful community involvement in transportation planning should thus be institutionalized as a goal of the JARC program.

Third, the JARC program should reward projects that undertake initiatives and efforts to minimize and mitigate potential public health and environmental pollution that stem from additional transportation services. Diesel alternatives and many other environmentally-sustainable options are often more expensive. The JARC program must be committed to funding these types of projects and not reject or penalize proposals that

incorporate environmentally-sustainable alternatives on the basis that they are more expensive. Overall funding for the Job Access and Reverse Commute program must be increased in order to adequately fund environmentally-sustainable efforts.

Unequivocally, this report argues for the continuation of the JARC program. Studies and evaluations have shown that the program has been successful in meeting the needs of welfare recipients and those who are low-income and/or transit-dependent. The JARC program breaks the mold of traditional transportation policies by addressing and responding to the needs of those conventionally neglected by transportation policymakers. Furthermore, there are ways to strengthen and incorporate elem



## **Preface**

The first time I ever traveled on public transportation was when I was less than two years old. I was riding a Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) bus in Boston with my mother, and we were going to meet with our social worker. That particular trip was difficult for my mom, a recent immigrant to the United States and could neither read signs written in English nor communicate to the bus driver about where she needed to go. As I have no memory of this, according to my mom, we stayed and rode the bus to the very last stop, at which point the bus driver turned around to announce that we needed to get off the bus. I don't know if we ever made it to our social worker that day. However, for the rest of my life, public transportation played the same role it did in that first episode- it was the primary vehicle that I depended on to get me to where I needed to go because I had no other options. I relied on public transportation to connect me to virtually everything: school, jobs, trainings, volunteer opportunities, friends, relatives, public libraries, social gatherings, cultural events, supermarkets, churches, public parks, health clinics and hospitals.

I was no longer transit-dependent after I moved to Los Angeles to attend Occidental College. One of the first myths I heard about Los Angeles was that there is no public transportation. There is, in fact, a public transportation system in Los Angeles called the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The truth in that myth is two-



discriminatory, separate and unequal, two-tier conditions of this mass transit system are made clear when one considers the racial and class makeup of rail ridership, which is far more heavily white and middle class than that of buses.<sup>7</sup>

While it is easy for me to romanticize about the accessibility of public transportation system in Boston, I know that the MBTA also operates an inequitable, two-tier mass transit system.<sup>8</sup> The first tier is rail-based, which speedily transports the predominantly white and wealthy commuters and tourists to and from downtown. Commuters traveling from the wealthy suburb of Wellesley are able to arrive in downtown Boston within half an hour. The second tier is a system of dirty diesel buses that are often late and overcrowded. From parts of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan, neighborhoods that are only a matter of a few miles from downtown Boston, riders must take one or two buses plus a subway train to get to downtown. This trip is known to take an hour and a half. Furthermore, the emissions from these diesel buses are hazardous to individual and community health and have been known to trigger asthma attacks and cause cancer. Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan and other areas predominantly served by these diesel buses are low-income communities of color, where the most transit-dependent of our region reside. I have always wondered why buses that serve wealthier and white neighborhoods almost always carried privileged amenities, such as working air conditioning systems and cushioned seats, whereas buses that serve poor communities of color were often occupied to capacity and did not offer air conditioning. Commuter rail lines that carry white suburbanites in and out of the city disrupt and divide poor neighborhoods of color. To add insult to injury, these lines do not offer stops in these neighborhoods to pick people up for the ride downtown.

I undertook this study of transportation equity because I personally understand the connection between public transportation and the quality of life of both individuals and communities. For many people, public transportation is their literal and physical connection to resources and people vital to their well-being and happiness- jobs, education, healthcare, friends and family. Ultimately, environmentally-sustainable and high-quality public transportation should be a right afforded to all, and especially the transit-dependent.

## Chapter One: Transportation Equity

### Transportation *Inequity*

In order to comprehensively define transportation equity, perhaps it is best first to examine and gain an understanding of transportation *inequities*. Historically and presently, transportation systems in the United States are not created equal. Some communities benefit from transportation development projects, while other communities pay the costs with their personal and community health. One can say that transportation policies have traditionally favored highway development over public transportation. However, a more in-depth analysis of transportation policies in the United States will reveal that they have always favored whites over people of color, middle class over the poor and working class, suburbia over the urban core. Transportation policies often intersect with race, poverty and geography.<sup>9</sup>

The US Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* encapsulates the history of transportation inequity in the United States. Many remember *Plessy v. Ferguson* for its “separate but equal” doctrine that legally sanctioned racial segregation in the United States. Although the “separate but equal” doctrine was wide-reaching and applied to all public arenas, *Plessy*, at its core, was “the legal codification of apartheid on transportation facilities.”<sup>10</sup> *Plessy v. Ferguson* was a civil rights legal battle that began in 1892 when Plessy, a black shoemaker, was arrested for sitting in the “white” car of the East Louisiana Railroad. In 1896, the Supreme Court upheld Louisiana’s Separate Car Act that segregated “white” and “colored” seating on railroad cars and refuted Plessy’s argument that the Act violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. It was not until 58 years later, in 1954, that the Supreme Court reversed

*Plessy* in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. *Plessy* may have been overturned 51 years ago, but separate and unequal transportation systems exist today.

*Plessy* represents a microcosm of the historic and present practices and policies that construct and maintain separate and unequal transportation systems in the United States. Separate and unequal transportation systems are omnipresent and they dichotomize along the lines of race, class and geography. Government on all levels- federal, state and local- prioritize the construction of suburban-serving freeways; it is thus arguably responsible for the obsessive A(s)Tj12 0 0 12tni



encompasses many things. One may find it easier to identify what is NOT transportation equity or transportation *inequity*, as I have done above, since examples are abound.

Therefore, a national transportation equity agenda must provide “choices to people who



decision-making process; and 3) To avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.<sup>27</sup> On the same token, the Environmental Protection Agency Office of Environmental Justice defines environmental justice as:

“The fair treatments and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment m

benefits, community decision-making at various levels and environmental and health quality.

### **Social and Economic Benefits**

The environmental justice principle that calls for the prevention of the denial of benefits by people of color or low-income populations demands that these populations “have reliable and affordable access to good jobs, education and job training, affordable housing, childcare and other services and opportunities throughout metropolitan areas.”<sup>30</sup> Inequitable transportation policies have limited the access of low-income communities and communities of color to social and economic opportunities.<sup>31</sup> Sanchez, Stolz and Ma define this denial of access as social exclusion. They argue that “addressing social exclusion includes addressing problems such as lack of access to jobs, education, and training; low levels of access to public transportation at particular times of the day, which has an impact on persons without cars working late and early-morning shifts; and limited access to public and private spaces because of unsafe conditions and design.”<sup>32</sup> In connecting people, particularly those who are low-income and of color, to economic and social opportunities and benefits, transportation plays a vital role in creating and sustaining healthy communities.

discusses the consequences of spatial mismatch, and thus our transportation policies: “Job decentralization, the relocation of many jobs once located in central cities, and the movement of new retail, service, and information-sector jobs to suburbs further outside the urban core has a direct effect on employment levels, opportunities and income of inner city residents...This spatial mismatch has profound economic and environmental justice implications for people living in central cities.”<sup>34</sup> In 1968, economist John Kain was the first to advance the Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis (SMH). Kain examined the residential locations of African Americans in two cities and trends in the location of employment opportunities in both regions. In his study, Kain argued that high unemployment rates of inner-city African Americans were partially attributable to job decentralization and the failure of public transit to connect inner-city residents with suburban job locations.<sup>35</sup> Kain’s study concluded that spatial segregation drives black

approach; instead transportation policies are decided and influenced mainly by the mirror of “the power arrangements of the dominant society and its institutions,”<sup>37</sup> or the predominantly white elite groups, and their “decisions have played an important role in creating and sustaining the inequities of current transportation policies.”<sup>38</sup> Without meaningful public involvement by those who have been profoundly impacted by transportation policies, our mass transit systems have suffered and auto and highway culture have reached a point at which it can no longer be sustained without compromising the health and lives of many people.

With the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, the traditional model of transportation decision-making began to shift to a model that provided initial opportunities to include decision-making powers from traditionally disempowered communities who are nonetheless impacted by transportation policies. ISTEA required community participation and input throughout the planning process and provided local control of federal transportation funds by designating Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) as the body primarily responsible for planning, receiving and allocating federal transportation funding. ISTEA expired in 1998 and its renewal legislation, TEA-21, which was passed in the same year, retained the public participation provision of ISTEA. State Departments of Transportation and MPOs are required to “seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems including but not limited to low-income and minority households”<sup>39</sup>





exposed to higher levels of diesel exhaust- such as those who work in the rail and trucking industries- to be at higher risk of developing lung cancer.<sup>54</sup> Alternatives to diesel must be considered, especially since the same populations who suffer disproportionately from the negative health effects of an auto-oriented society are also the transit-dependent.

This examination of transportation equity will better inform us about the significance and implications of a transportation program such as the Job Access and Reverse Commute program. It is most apparent that the program directly addresses an inequity created by unjust transportation policies. Therefore, JARC attempts to “right” a wrong. However, I hope to show in this report that creating equitable public transportation systems is not limited to reversing transportation inequities. It is possible for programs like JARC to build these systems by laying principles of justice, equity and fairness at their foundations.

## **Chapter Two: Job Access and Reverse Commute Program**

### **Creation of the JARC Program**

On June 6, 1998, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), a reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. TEA-21 continued ISTEA's authorizations for federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and mass transportation for another 6 year period from 1998-2003. Amended into the ISTEA reauthorization was the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program, which provided \$750 million from FY 1999 through FY 2003 in competitive grants to transit agencies, local human service agencies and others to increase the transportation options of low-income workers. The JARC aimed to support flexible, innovative transportation alternatives to fill gaps in transportation services specifically for welfare recipients who were transitioning into the work force and other low-income individuals. TEA-21 authorized \$150 million annually for the JARC program.

The language of the Act identifies the establishment of the JARC program based on nine findings: 1) two-thirds of all new jobs were located in the suburbs, while three-quarters of all welfare recipients lived in rural or central cities; 2) even in metropolitan areas with excellent public transit systems, less than half of the jobs were accessible by transit; 3) the median price of a new car was equivalent to 25 weeks of salary for the average worker, and considerably more for the low-income worker; 4) at least 9 million households and 10 million Americans who were of driving age did not own cars; 5) 94 percent of welfare recipients did not own cars; 6) nearly 40 percent of workers with annual incomes below \$10,000 did not commute by car; 7) two million Americans





income residential communities in metropolitan areas around the country that ultimately lead to a lack of economic opportunity in poor neighborhoods. As Thomas Sanchez asserts, “A major fact underlying the spatial mismatch hypothesis is the deconcentration of jobs from U.S. central cities.”<sup>59</sup> The spatial mismatch hypothesis (SMH) was first advanced in 1968 by Harvard economist John Kain, who examined the residential locations of African Americans in Detroit and Chicago and trends of employment opportunities in both regions. Based on the findings of his study, Kain argued that high unemployment rates of inner-city African Am

support the spatial mismatch hypothesis. Holzer made several conclusions based on his review: 1) population and manufacturing are declining in the cities; 2) residential segregation has been declining slowly for blacks; 3) black residents of the inner city have less access to employment than either blacks or whites in the suburbs and; 4) there seems to be a decline in earnings for blacks with job decentralization.<sup>64</sup> A more recent literature review was published by Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist in 1998. They reviewed 28 spatial mismatch studies that appeared in the 1990s, and concluded that, although these studies often employed different data, different methods, and even different concepts of mismatch, there was ov

and maintaining employment, there is a consensus among policy experts that "transportation provides a more accessible policy lever."<sup>68</sup> Politically, transportation fixes are more easily achievable than, for example, eliminating housing discrimination, and practically, there are resources available to make policy changes in transportation and develop programs that could yield positive results.<sup>69</sup>

Clearly, there is not a lack of spatial mismatch literature. However, there *is* a lack of research that specifically focuses on how labor participation is affected by increases in public transportation availability. This relative absence of research is significant given that policy experts and makers have a tendency to recommend improvements and increased expenditures of public transportation systems to address inner-city mobility problems. The JARC program is an example of such a recommendation.

Does public transportation represent an efficient means to overcome employment accessibility or mobility problems of central city workers? Although there is inadequate research addressing this policy question, there are a few studies that have attempted to measure the degree to which public transportation affects inner-city mobility. Three of these studies will be highlighted in this chapter. It is important to note that all three studies reviewed transportation systems that did not include any targeted programs that sought to address inner-city mobility problems.

Thomas Sanchez of the Center of Urban Studies at Portland State University attempted to examine whether transit is effectively linking the residential location of workers with job locations in Portland, Oregon and Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>70</sup> Sanchez compared labor participation rates for workers within walking distance of transit routes to labor participation rates of wo

and Atlanta as case study cities because he argued that they provided what could be "best case" scenarios for transit related studies. According to Sanchez, both cities provide high levels of transit service. In both cities, 77 to 86 percent of workers have good access to transit.

The analysis suggested that in general, transit access is potentially correlated with employment participation levels in Portland and Atlanta. The data analyzed in this study supported the hypothesis that if a lack of mobility or employment accessibility contributes to low labor participation rates, transit would at least provide a solution for a portion of low-income workers. Sanchez concluded that the results of his analysis partially supported policies that advocate for increased transit accessibility in addressing urban underemployment. Sanchez warned against concluding that public transportation can in itself overcome the job accessibility and mobility problems of urban workers and that the study results indicate a causal relationship between increased transit access and labor participation.

The second study was produced at the University of Wisconsin -Milwaukee Center for Economic Development, authored by Joel Rast, and was published in 2004.<sup>71</sup> The study examined how well public transit in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Waukesha and Washington counties of Wisconsin provide low-income residents of the 4-county region with access to job opportunities. The study attempted to address two questions: 1) Is there a spatial mismatch between low-income residential neighborhoods and locations of job opportunities in the 4-county Milwaukee region? and 2) How well does public transportation provide low-income residents with access to job opportunities in the 4-county region?

The study confirmed the presence of a spatial mismatch between low-income residential communities and job opportunities in the Milwaukee region. Furthermore, low-income people who live in the Milwaukee region rely heavily on public transportation. While most low-income families are located within walking distance of bus stops, it appeared that public transit is only partially effective in connecting inner-city

their residential location and commute mode. The study discovered that welfare recipients living in job-rich neighborhoods can reach a fair number of jobs using public transit. However, for those who live in job-poor neighborhoods, a reliance on public transit significantly reduces their access to employment. Similar to the findings of the study of Milwaukee, although 44 percent of welfare recipients of Los Angeles have access to high levels of public transit (able to easily walk to a bus stop), they would have to sustain long commutes in order to reach their destinations.

Blumenburg and Ong concluded that policies that seek to address the transportation needs of welfare recipients should be targeted to reflect the characteristics of the neighborhoods in which the welfare recipients live. Therefore, public transit improvements should be made only in job-rich neighborhoods to enhance the already-effective transit systems. However, Blumenburg and Ong argued that in job-poor neighborhoods improved fixed-route transportation service is unlikely to substantially increase employment access for welfare participants. For job-poor neighborhoods, Blumenburg and Ong advocated for policies that would increase auto ownership and improve alternate forms of non-fixed route transportation services such as employer-sponsored vanpools, shuttles or paratransit.

### **JARC and Transportation Equity**

While it is clear that the JARC program was created to address the perceived spatial mismatch between job growth centers in the suburbs and the residential locations of welfare recipients and low-income workers, it may not be obvious that the program promotes certain aspects of transportation equity and environmental justice. The previous chapter's discussion links transportation equity and environmental justice to social and

economic benefits made accessible by transportation, such as access to jobs, education, job training and other services. In focusing on connecting low-income people to jobs and activities related to their employment, the JARC program is facilitating the availability of social and economic benefits by communities and populations previously denied these opportunities.

This study of the Job Access and Reverse Commute program is an extension of the three studies highlighted above that examined whether the existing public transportation systems effectively linked inner-city workers with job opportunities in their respective regions. While the next chapter discusses what the JARC program has accomplished thus far, chapter four attempts to determine whether public transit systems that have received JARC funding to specifically address the mobility problem of welfare participants and low-income workers succeed in connecting low-income workers to employment locations. I agree with the studies and reports that contend that the JARC is successfully connecting low-income workers to job centers through transportation. In doing so, JARC promotes and institutionalizes the transportation equity component of connecting low-income people and people of color with social and economic benefits.









The JARC program has not been without its fair share of controversy. One in particular centers on the way in which the grantees are selected. For FY 1999, all JARC grantees were competitively selected. However, while Congress also provided \$75 million for the program for FY 2000, the conference report that accompanied the Department of Transportation's appropriations act directed \$49.6 million of the \$75 million to be distributed to certain states, localities, and organizations.<sup>77</sup> For FY 2000, the Department of Transportation solicited proposals and competitively awarded about \$29.6 million, which included \$25.4 million provided by the Congress for FY 2000 and about \$4.2 million carried over from FY 1999. For FY 2001, Congress provided \$100 million for the JARC program. Once again, the conference report that accompanied the appropriations act directed the distribution of a certain amount- this time, about \$75 million- to identified states, localities, and other organizations. The Federal Transit Administration allocated the remaining \$25 million to proposals submitted in FY 2000 under the competitive process that were not funded or only partially funded in that year. Therefore, the FTA did not solicit any proposals for competitive funding in FY 2001.<sup>78</sup>

In a December 2001 report to Congress, the General Accounting Office argued that there were detrimental effects to the noncompetitive selection of JARC grantees. The GAO pointed out that the administration of JARC funding to Congressional designations were not legally found. According to the GAO report, the conference reports that accompanied the appropriations acts “did not impose legally binding requirements and did not provide FTA with a legal basis to deviate from the requirements of selection of Job Access grantees in fiscal years 2000 and 2001.”<sup>79</sup> GAO asserted that since only \$50 million of the available \$175 million were available for competitive grants, FTA’s

capacity to "to fund projects that might have emerged from this process as the most promising in meeting the program's objectives" was compromised.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, according to FTA program officials and grantees, the decrease in funding for competitively selected projects during fiscal years 2000 and 2001 meant that about one-fifth of the FY 1999 Job Access projects did not receive continued funding.<sup>81</sup>

The Department of Transportation disagreed with GAO's assertion that it did not competitively select grantees in fiscal years 2000 and 2001 by allocating funding to Congressional designations. Federal Transit

implementation of the JARC program, expresses concern about the way in which the Congressional designations may have compromised the integrity of the program.<sup>86</sup> With the Congressional designations, it is more difficult to ensure that all JARC funding are directed towards assisting low-income people. Currently, as JARC and TEA-21 is up for renewal, the FTA has submitted a proposal to Congress that would reinstate the competitive grant selection process at the state level.<sup>87</sup>

Following this discussion of JARC objectives and empirical accomplishments, the next chapter examines whether the JARC has fulfilled its goals of connecting welfare participants and low-income individuals to jobs via transportation and forging successful collaboration at the local level. Is the JARC a successful welfare-to-work program? In the next chapter, I intend to argue and illustrate that JARC does successfully connects welfare and low-income individuals to job opportunities. Furthermore, in doing so, the JARC program addresses the transportation equity component of providing access to social and economic benefits through transportation. Chapter five is a further discussion about whether the program promotes and institutionalizes other key aspects of transportation equity.



the integrity of the program.<sup>89</sup> The Department of Transportation sponsored three assessments<sup>90</sup> of the JARC program and submitted a report to Congress in October of 2002. All of these evaluations and assessments form the basis of this report's comprehensive evaluation of the JARC program.

### **Connecting People to Jobs**

The number of new employment sites reached by JARC services constitutes one measure the Federal Transit Administration has substantially relied on in assessing whether the Job Access and Reverse Commute program is connecting people to jobs. The FTA requires JARC grantees to report the number of new employment sites reached by their projects. A new em



transportation prior to initiation of a JARC-funded service) and 6,000 were new time-sensitive employment sites (sites not serviced during certain times of the day).<sup>93</sup> If the number of new employment sites reached by JARC services is a sufficient measure of the success of the JARC program in connecting people to work, then the JARC program is meeting its goal of getting people to work via transportation.

However, the number of new employment sites may not be sufficient in measuring JARC's performance. In 2002, the General Accounting Office warned that "using a methodology that is based on this

individuals; 2) JARC-funded transit services reach the target audience; 3) JARC-funded services cater to mobility-limited individuals

The survey also found that JARC-funded services are perceived as very important by the riders. A majority of respondents- 93 percent- found the service was either “very important” or “important.” Sixty-six percent said they would not be able to access their destination without the provided service. Additionally, the JARC services are viewed as cost or tim

service agencies, employers, metropolitan planning organizations, states and affected communities and individuals is one of the two major goals of the JARC program. The JARC grant program rewards collaboration at the local level in any of the planning, financing and operation of service stages.

The General Accounting Office asserts that the Job Access and Reverse Commute program successfully met its goal of encouraging collaboration among transportation, human service, and other community-based agencies in Job Access service design, implementation, and financing.<sup>100</sup> Based on a survey of all applicants for the 194 projects selected for the Job Access and Reverse Commute program in fiscal year 1999 of which 89 percent of the grantees responded, 23 percent of the respondents agreed that the JARC program improved coordination among different organizations involved in getting people to work.<sup>101</sup> According to the GAO survey of grantees selected in fiscal years 1999 and 2000, almost 80 percent of the 152 grantees that responded indicated that the JARC program increased cooperation with other transit agencies, and 88 percent indicated that the program increased cooperation with human service agencies. Additionally, out of the nine transportation and welfare reform experts the GAO consulted, eight of them stated that this significant increase in collaboration at the grantee level was the most successful result of the JARC program.<sup>102</sup> Particularly in rural area grantees, where it is relatively easy for them to collaborate since virtually all of the grantees and their partners indicated they had already worked together on previous projects, grantees reported that JARC created even more communication among partners about what more could be done to successfully place people into jobs.<sup>103</sup>



## **Chapter Five: Models for Community Involvement and Minimizing Public Health and Environmental Effects**

In successfully connecting welfare participants and low-income individuals to job opportunities, the Job Access and Reverse Commute program promotes and institutionalizes one key aspect of transportation equity, but not all. The JARC program is a transportation equity program in that it directly responds to the social and economic benefits issue of spatial mismatch between job growth centers and low-income residential communities. However, JARC does not institutionalize in its program two other key aspects of transportation equity discussed in chapter one: meaningful community involvement and minimization of public health and environmental effects. While JARC does not entirely ignore these important components of transportation equity (as this chapter will illustrate), in the next chapter, I will argue the ways in which these elements could be strengthened and further promoted by the program. This chapter includes profiles of organizations and agencies that considered and incorporated either meaningful community involvement or public health and environmental impact analysis into their transportation projects. These organizations offer testimony to the possible ways in which the JARC program could develop more just and equitable transportation options for the transit-dependent.

The JARC program does not promote and institutionalize the transportation equity elements of meaningful community involvement and public health and minimization of environmental impacts, but it also does not completely disregard them. Indeed, the program encourages potential grantees to incorporate community involvement in their transportation projects and rewards those that do. When the FTA solicited JARC grant



consider the anti-diesel efforts<sup>109</sup> of Los Angeles' Bus Riders Union, the largest multi-racial transportation group in the United States. The BRU's



the JARC funds, CARTA was able to expand hours and days of operation on multiple fixed-route bus routes, add new stops to several routes in several communities, purchase vehicles for a new vanpool service, and contract demand-response van services for daycare facilities for children, among other accomplishments.<sup>111</sup> As of 2001, these new services enabled CARTA to: 1) create 271 new stops within ¼ mile of employment sites during times not previously served, such as late night and evening; 2) reach more than 2,000 employers and 20,000 entry-level jobs; 3) add 1,400 new stops within ¼ mile of residences of welfare recipients; and 5) reach 65 childcare facilities with capacity for 2,200 children within ¼ mile of new stops.<sup>112</sup>

CARTA relied heavily on local community residents to inform their planning process for the JARC grant application. In 1997, prompted by an awareness of the disparity in transportation services in low-income communities, CARTA and the Chattanooga Metropolitan Planning Organization hired consultants to study transportation models that focused on getting low-income people to work.<sup>113</sup> CARTA and the Chattanooga MPO supplemented that study with community research. CARTA purchased a Geographic Information System (GIS) that allowed them to collect data and cross-check where low-income workers lived, where jobs existed and where transportation services were being provided. CARTA's community research also incorporated a two-fold process that involved focus groups and one-on-one meetings.<sup>114</sup> The focus groups, which specifically targeted the populations to be served by new transportation services, allowed for input from neighborhood groups, community groups and general citizens. At these neighborhood meetings, local residents proposed new routes and stops that would better allow them to access service and jobs. CARTA also



ICARE continued to involve community members as they began planning and coordinating for transportation projects. After initial discussions with Jacksonville's MPO, the Jacksonville Transit Authority, and WorkSource, the local investment board, ICARE hosted a public meeting of approximately 700 community members at which they publicly asked representatives from the Jacksonville Transit Authority and the Jacksonville MPO to work with ICARE to address their communities' transportation needs. At this 1999 meeting, ICARE was able to convince the transit authority and the MPO that increasing ridership on public transportation was a priority. Both entities agreed to expand transportation for the Jacksonville community.

By the time ICARE applied for a JARC grant, the Jacksonville Transit Authority was already operating a direct bus line from the north to the south of the city that cut the commute time for riders on this route in half. Ridership along this new route increased by 300 additional people. ICARE coordinated the JARC grant application process with WorkSource, Jacksonville MPO, Goodwill Industries, Inc., the local housing authority, and other groups interested in access to jobs. WorkSource and the Jacksonville MPO provided the matching funds while the other groups provided technical input. ICARE was able to secure \$1 million for the Jacksonville area.

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Already people of color and low-income people are disproportionately exposed to high levels of emissions from diesel buses. Adding new transportation options may exacerbate those conditions. An equitable transportation system and an environmentally sound and sustainable system are not mutually exclusive. Transportation equity advocates do not necessarily need to choose either service or public health. The organizing work and victories of the Bus Riders Union of Los Angeles illustrate the falsity of that choice.

### **Bus Riders Union (BRU)**

In its fight for a first-class mass transit system for the entire population of Los Angeles, the Bus Riders Union (BRU) centers its organizing campaigns on the public health and environmental concerns of those who are already the most impacted by LA's air contaminants, namely, poor and working-class people and people of color. As previously discussed, economically disadvantaged communities and communities of color are disproportionately affected by public health problems that stem from unhealthy auto-produced air quality.<sup>117</sup> Los Angeles residents, especially inner-city residents, who are overwhelmingly Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander, are exposed to a toxic soup of airborne chemicals. This poor air quality is connected to three interrelated, transportation-based problems of high levels of gasoline-based emissions from autos, high levels of diesel-based emissions from trucks and buses and industrial emissions from factories and businesses.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, those who are the most impacted by the transportation-produced pollution are also more likely to be transit-dependent. Los Angeles County's transit-dependent are overwhelmingly poor people of color; 81 percent of the 500,000 monthly bus riders are overwhelmingly Latino, African American, Asian Pacific Islander and Native American and 60 percent of bus riders have family incomes



public transportation. Finally, the campaign will lead a widespread trilingual public health education campaign among the 400,000 daily LA County bus riders.<sup>123</sup>

Although the Bus Riders Union has been a strong proponent of clean fuel buses in Los Angeles, they warn that they are “careful about advocating new technologies before they are fully viable, especially in terms of long-term costly purchases.”<sup>124</sup> The BRU advocates for clean fuel Compressed Natural Gas buses for the reasons that it burns better and is a more desirable choice for public health than diesel and even “clean diesel.” However, the BRU also recognizes that clean fuel CNG is not necessarily better for global warming or indigenous communities where the contaminants of clean fuel are deposited.<sup>125</sup> The organization recognizes that while clean fuel CNG is advancement from diesel, it is not “the end all be all” energy source for public transportation.

The BRU recognizes that its demand for an affordable and efficient public transportation system must not exacerbate the already existing poor environmental conditions experienced by the transit-dependent. For the BRU, an equitable transportation system and an environmentally sound and sustainable system are not mutually exclusive. The BRU recognizes that reducing the number of auto vehicles on the road may significantly help mitigate air pollution, and that public transit has a role to play in reducing the overall number of auto vehicles. However, the BRU considers the environmental and health effects of public transit vehicles themselves.

CARTA, ICARE and the Bus Riders Union offer valuable lessons of transportation equity that may be applicable for other organizations and agencies that are undertaking the task of implementing equitable systems of mass transit. CARTA and ICARE demonstrate that it is both possible and often fitting to have a process in which

those who are to be served have a say in planning those services. The Bus Riders Union reminds us that we must consider the environmental and public health implications of the policies we are advocating. These organizations and agencies call attention to the fact that transportation equity is not one-dimensional. Advocates for transportation equity must strive to incorporate all of its principles. The next chapter concludes this report with policy recommendations for the Job Access and Reverse Commute program that are informed by these model organizations and agencies. I argue that the JARC program must institutionalize more aspects of transportation equity, particularly those of meaningful community involvement and environmental and public health impacts.

## **Chapter Six: Policy Recommendations**

In summary, both historically and in the present, transportation systems in the United States have not been created equal. Transportation policies in the United States have always favored highways over mass transit, whites over people of color, middle class over the poor and working class, and suburbia over the urban core. Transportation equity is defined as “fairness in mobility and accessibility levels across race, class, gender, and disability. The ultimate objective of transportation equity is to provide equal access to social and economic opportunity by providing equitable levels of access to all places.”<sup>126</sup> A national transportation equity agenda must, therefore, pay particular attention to those traditionally disenfranchised and disempowered by transportation.

Furthermore, transportation equity, based on the principles of environmental justice, calls for: 1) the prevention of the denial of social and economic benefits by people of color or low-income populations; 2) full and fair participation in the decision-making process by all those potentially affected by transp



institutionalizes one key aspect of transportation equity- that is, preventing the denial of social and economic benefits for people of color or low-income populations. However, the JARC program does not institutionalize two other key aspects of transportation equity discussed in chapter one: meaningful community involvem

process must be reinstated in some form. The Transportation Equity Network advocates eliminating earmarking program and requiring the Federal Transit Administration to rate projects based on clear criteria and submit recommendations on funding to Congress prior to appropriations decisions. Because TEA-21 (and therefore the JARC program) is currently up for reauthorization, the Federal Transit Administration submitted a proposal to Congress that recommends reinstating the competitive selection process at the state level.<sup>130</sup> Each state would be allocated a predetermined amount of JARC funding, and it would also have the authority to select projects for JARC funding.

Whatever form the competitive selection process takes, it must not compromise the integrity of the JARC program and its public involvement element. Congress and the Federal Transit Administration must commit to using JARC grants to only fund projects that qualify as JARC projects as outlined in TEA-21 legislation. To do so otherwise is to misuse and misappropriate JARC funds.

2. Community Involvement:

As studies have shown, JARC projects are especially successful in meeting its eligibility requirements (see chapter four). I propose that meaningful community involvement should be made an eligibility criterion for JARC projects. It cannot be stressed enough that it is important for the communities that are most impacted by transportation policies to have decision-making power in determining what those policies should be. The danger of NOT incorporating meaningful community involvement into transportation planning and policies is evident in our unequal public transportation systems. On the other hand, there are many benefits that are associated with and result from a strong commitment to community involvement, as illustrated in this study. In

matching their transportation planning to the realities of the “real world,” both CARTA and ICARE were able to successfully provide efficient and affordable service for their low-income and transit-dependent constituents.

The public and potentially impacted communities should be consulted at least during the planning stages of a JARC proposal. This consultation with the public and community should be made an eligibility criterion for JARC proposals. Promoting meaningful community involvement in transportation planning, therefore, should be an additional goal of the JARC program.

### 3. Mitigation of Public Health and Environmental Impacts

Although the Bus Riders Union and WE ACT establish for us the importance of anti-diesel work, I do not recommend institutionalizing an anti-diesel component as an eligibility criterion for the JARC program. I do recommend rewarding projects that undertake initiatives and efforts to minimize and mitigate potential public health and environmental pollution that stem from additional transportation services. The JARC program must also understand that diesel alternatives- and many other environmentally-sustainable options- are often more expensive. Therefore, the JARC program must be committed to funding these types of projects and not reject or penalize proposals that incorporate environmentally-sustainable alternatives on the basis that they are more expensive.

Indeed, overall funding for the Job Access and Reverse Commute program must be increased in order to adequately fund environmentally-sustainable efforts. Currently, as TEA-21 is up for reauthorization in Congress, the Transportation Equity Network is actively advocating for an increase in funding for public transportation to equitably



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### **Appendix 1 JARC Legislation**



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(i) subsidize the costs associated with adding reverse commute bus, train, carpool, van routes, or service from urban areas, urbanized areas, and areas other than urbanized areas, to suburban workplaces;

(ii) subsidize the purchase or lease by a nonprofit organization or public agency of a van or bus dedicated to shuttling employees from their residences to a suburban workplace; or

(iii) otherwise facilitate the provision of mass transportation services to suburban employment opportunities.

(3) Existing transportation service providers.-- The term "existing transportation service providers" means mass [\*\*389] transportation operators and governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations that receive assistance from Federal, State, or local sources for nonemergency transportation services.

(4) Qualified entity.-- The term "qualified entity" means--

(A) with respect to any proposed eligible project in an urbanized area with a population of at least 200,000, the applicant or applicants selected by the appropriate metropolitan planning organization that meets the requirements of this section, including the planning and coordination requirements in subsection (i), from among local governmental authorities and agencies and nonprofit organizations; and

(B) with respect to any proposed eligible project in an urbanized area with a population of at least 200,000, or an area other than an urbanized area, the applicant or applicants selected by the chief executive officer of the State in which the area is located that meets the requirements of this section, including the planning and coordination requirements in subsection (i), from among local governmental authorities and nonprofit organizations.

(5) Welfare recipient.-- The term "welfare recipient" means an individual who receives or received aid or assistance under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (whether in effect before or after the effective date of the amendments made by title I of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-193; 110 Stat. 2110)) at any time during the 3-year period before the date on which the applicant applies for a grant under this section.

(c) General Authority.--

(1) In general.-- The Secretary may make access to jobs grants and reverse commute grants under this section to assist qualified entities in financing eligib9 12 146.3243 226.02243o12 301.9798

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related activities under programs of other Federal departments and agencies.

(d) Applications.--Each qualified entity seeking to receive a grant under this section for an eligible project shall submit to the Secretary an application in such form and in accordance with such requirements as the Secretary shall establish.

(e) Prohibition.--Grants awarded under this section may not be used for planning or coordination activities.

(f) Factors for Consideration.--In awarding grants under this section to applicants under subsection (d), the Secretary shall consider--

(1) the percentage of the population in the area to be served by the applicant that are

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(8) in the case of an applicant seeking assistance to finance a reverse commute project, the need for additional services identified in a regional transportation plan to transport individuals to suburban employment opportunities, and the extent to which the proposed services will address those needs.

(g) Competitive Grant Selection.--The Secretary shall conduct a national solicitation for applications for grants under this section. Grantees shall be selected on a competitive basis.

(h) Cost Sharing.--

(1) Maximum amount.-- The amount of a grant under this section may not exceed 50 percent of the total project cost.

(2) Nongovernmental share.----

(A) In general.--The portion of the total cost of an eligible project that is not funded under this section--

(i) shall be provided in cash from sources other than revenues from providing mass transportation, but may include amounts received under a service agreement; and

(ii) may be derived from amounts appropriated to or made available to a department or agency of the Federal Government (other than the Department of Transportation) that are eligible to be expended for transportation.

(B) Inapplicability.--For purposes of subparagraph (A)(ii), the prohibitions on the use of funds for matching requirements under section 403(a)(5)(C)(ii) of the Social Security Act shall not apply to Federal or State funds to be used for transportation services.

(i) Planning Requirements.--

(1) In general.-- The requirements of sections 5303 through 5306 of title 49, United States Code, apply to any grant made under this section.

(2) Coordination.-- Each application for a grant under this section shall reflect coordination with and the approval of affected transit grant recipients. The eligible access to jobs [\*\*391] projects financed under this section shall be part of a coordinated public transit-human services transportation planning process.

(j) Grant Requirements.--A grant under this section shall be subject to--

(1) all of the terms and conditions to which a grant made under section 5307 of title 49, United States Code, is subject; and

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(2) such other terms and conditions as are determined by the Secretary.

(k) Program Evaluation.--

(1) Comptroller general.-- Beginning 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and every 6 months thereafter, the Comptroller General of the United States shall--

(A) conduct a study to evaluate the grant program authorized under this section; and

(B) submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate a report describing the results of each study under subparagraph (A).

(2) Department of transportation.-- Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall--

(A) conduct a study to evaluate the access to jobs grant program authorized under this section; and

(B) submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate a report describing the results of the study under subparagraph (A).

(l) Authorization and Allocation.--

(1) In general.----

(A) From the trust fund.--There shall be available from the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund to carry out this section--

(i) \$ 40,000,000 for fiscal year 1999;

(ii) \$ 60,000,000 for fiscal year 2000;

(iii) \$ 80,000,000 for fiscal year 2001;

(iv) \$ 100,000,000 for fiscal year 2002; and

(v) \$ 120,000,000 for fiscal year 2003.

(B) From the general fund.--In addition to amounts made available under subparagraph (A), there are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section--

(i) \$ 10,000,000 for fiscal year 1999;

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(ii) \$ 15,000,000 for fiscal year 2000;

(iii) \$ 20,000,000 for fiscal year 2001;

(iv) \$ 25,000,000 for fiscal year 2002; and

(v) \$ 30,000,000 for fiscal year 2003.

(C) Additional amounts from the general fund.--In addition to amounts made available under subparagraphs (A) and (B), there are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section--

(i) \$ 100,000,000 for fiscal year 1999;