Connecting Housing, Transportation + Education to Expand Opportunity:

Living, Learning + Moving Together

National Policy Convening Summary November 2015

CENTER FOR CITIES+SCHOOLS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

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The **Center for Cities + Schools** at the University of California, Berkeley works to create opportunity-rich places where young people can be successful in and out of school. CC+S conducts policy research, engages youth in urban planning, and cultivates collaboration between city and school leaders to strengthen all communities by harnessing the potential of urban planning to close the opportunity gap and improve education.
citiesandschools.berkeley.edu

Enterprise Community Partners is a national nonprofit organization that helps communities and developers build and preserve affordable housing through the development of finance and policy tools. Enterprise's work ensures that quality affordable housing exists in close proximity to public transit so that residents have affordable access to employment, education, healthy food, health care, and community services. With ten offices around the country, the Denver office serves as the home of Enterprise's national staff working on Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
www.EnterpriseCommunity.org

Mile High Connects is a multi-sector collaborative working to ensure that the Metro Denver regional transit system fosters communities that offer all residents the opportunity for a high quality of life. The partnership formed in 2011 to ensure that FasTracks, the region's $7.8 million transit build-out, benefits low-income communities and communities of color by connecting them to affordable housing, healthy environments, quality education, and good-paying jobs.
milehighconnects.org

Formed in 1931, the nonprofit **National Housing Conference** is dedicated to helping ensure safe, decent and affordable housing for all in America. NHC's research division, the **Center for Housing Policy**, works to broaden understanding of America's affordable housing challenges and examine the impact of policies and programs developed to address these needs. Through evidence-based advocacy for the continuum of housing, NHC develops ideas, resources and policy solutions to shape an improved housing landscape.
www.nhc.org

The **Natural Resources Defense Council** is the nation's most effective environmental action group, combining the grassroots power of more than 2 million members and online activists with the courtroom clout and expertise of nearly 500 lawyers, scientists and other professionals. NRDC is dedicated to developing and advocating for sustainable solutions to the challenges facing our planet. NRDC's Urban Solutions program collaborates with national, state, and local leaders to find, finance and implement strategies for enhancing transportation and mobility choices, public health, green infrastructure, sustainable food systems, climate resilience, green and equitable neighborhoods, affordable housing and access to sustainable jobs.
www.nrdc.org

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THE CHALLENGE

In many parts of the United States it is difficult for families, particularly low- or moderate- income families, to be able to afford a suitable home in a transit rich neighborhood with good schools. Neighborhoods with all three elements are exceedingly rare. As a result, people often have to sacrifice one of three elements to make their lives work – a home that is within their means, access to quality public transit or access to good schools. This calculation creates a push-pull on placemaking in American cities where we still do not sufficiently design or plan the city with the quality of life services, necessities, or amenities necessary for families to stay and thrive.

Mile High Connects (MHC), the Center for Cities + Schools at the University of California-Berkeley (CC+S), National Housing Conference/ the Center for Housing Policy (NHC/ CHP), Enterprise Community Partners and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) gathered together local, state, and federal stakeholders from across the country to explore innovative policy and practice at the "H/T/E" Nexus – specifically, to discuss ways to change the above dynamic and increase opportunities for families with children to secure affordable housing in neighborhoods that offer good schools as well as good access to public transit (or otherwise allow for reduced car usage and transportation costs). This document is a synthesis of the key speeches, presentations, and critical conversations that emerged from this convening.

While housing, transportation and education are by no means the only drivers of neighborhood quality (and associated cost of living), they are often significant determinants of where households choose to live. However, school quality is just as important a consideration for households with children. Parents often are willing to commute longer distances to work to ensure that their children can attend quality schools that provide them with better opportunities. Even childless households analyze school quality, knowing that there is often a correlation between the education system and property value that creates geographical barriers for low- and moderate-income households.

> "We do not sufficiently design or programmatically emphasize the city as a place for families to stay and thrive."

Organizations and advocates for low - and moderate-income communities have long recognized the interconnected nature of the various factors that contribute to neighborhood quality, desirability and affordability. Yet too often we work apart. With the help of the H+T Affordability Index and other research in the past decade, policy organizations focused on affordable housing and transportation have increasingly begun to collaborate. This has yielded notable results, including federal policy changes designed to encourage the preservation and expansion of affordable housing near planned transit stations and incentives for transit proximity in the distribution of affordable housing funding.

Broad coordination between the housing and transportation sectors and the education field has been more limited. That being said, notable exceptions include the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods program and several localized pilots such as the East Lake Foundation's school-centered revitalization strategy in Atlanta and the Harlem Children's Zone (which inspired the Promise Neighborhoods program). However, there seems to be limited resources that examine or financially support these three issues simultaneously.

In most parts of the country, school, housing, and transportation officials make decisions in isolation. Affordable housing has, for a variety of social, political, and economic reasons, typically been placed in neighborhoods that have struggling schools. In other cases, there are strong schools but limited public transportation available. Transit systems cannot serve families who have to get in cars to attend good public schools. Educators lose the chance to gain allies in the quest to improve existing schools and systems when families flee to areas with good schools. We need to find ways for policymakers and practitioners in the housing, transportation, and education arenas to help one another better understand what it will take to make mixed-income neighborhoods with great schools and access to public transit and other automobile alternatives the norm in the U.S. rather than a precious rarity. We need to be creating communities that respond to the needs of all families.

"There is often a strong correlation between the education system and property value that creates geographical barriers for low- and moderate- income households."

Source: Mile High Connects

DRIVING QUESTIONS AT THE H/T/E NEXUS

Today's realities of metropolitan dynamism requires that stakeholders in the housing, transportation, and education fields work together to address the complex interrelationships of their fields and identify best practices.

Forum participants were asked to address key questions to create strong, mixed-income neighborhoods and great schools with access to public transit:

1. To what extent are public transit stations located in neighborhoods with low-performing schools? To what extent is affordable housing available near transit stations located near high performing schools?

2. Are there reasons to think that market forces will create new opportunities to bring transit, good schools, and affordable housing into alignment? In particular:

    a. Will the next wave of public transit extensions bring public transit into neighborhoods that offer stronger educational opportunities?

    b. To what extent will gentrification associated with projected increases in demand for urban living lead to improvements in school quality in the Denver area and other cities around the country?

3. What resources are available to local governments and community developers to address housing, transportation and education in an integrated manner?

4. What policy tools would be helpful in opening up access for low- and moderate-income households to communities with a low combined cost of housing and transportation, as well as high-quality schools?

5. What data are available and easily accessible to families looking to move that assist them in assessing these factors in an integrated fashion?

6. What resources could be produced that would be helpful to low- and moderate-income households trying to balance housing, transportation and education?

7. What research has been done on the educational and economic impact of locating good schools in mixed-income neighborhoods with low transportation costs?

> "How can we create mixed-income great neighborhoods and great schools with access to public transit?"

Denver is a timely location for this policy conversation. The regional transit agency is making a $7.8 billion public transit expansion investment and Mile High Connects, a multi-sector partnership, has formed to promote expanded housing affordability, increased transit access, good paying jobs and access to quality schools. Denver serves as a microcosm for national issues at the H/T/E nexus.

The convening's aim was to share national research on innovation and possible new models of collaboration between cities, school districts, affordable housing investors and developers, regional transportation districts, and state agencies that are working toward collaborative and comprehensive transit models for public school students. Our hope is that it better enables us to assess what we know and what we do not know while developing research and policy agendas to encourage alignment on these issues.

FRAMING THE H/T/E CHALLENGE:
Policy, Advocacy + Research

Amy Kenyon, Program Officer of the Metropolitan Opportunity Unit at the Ford Foundation, and Jeff Vincent and Deborah McKoy of UC Berkeley Center for Cities + Schools kicked off the convening with framing speeches. Amy Kenyon argued addressing the inequity of access to affordable housing, transportation, and high quality education is an economic necessity and the civil rights issue/moral imperative of our time. Kenyon argued it will take a "both-and" integrated approach to investment in housing, transportation, and education to create thriving regional economies and opportunity rich communities. McKoy and Vincent build off Kenyon to illustrate the role cities play in structuring high quality education and academic achievement. McKoy and Vincent provide tangible actions to overcome obstacles and incentivize cross-sector collaboration:
7-steps to Align High-Quality Education with Innovations in City and Metropolitan Planning.

Source: Mile High Connects

The Imperative for Collaboration

***Amy Kenyon**, Program Officer,*
Metropolitan Opportunity Unit, Ford Foundation

Usually the conversations we participate in at the Ford Foundation are about transportation. Or about housing. Or education. In the Metropolitan Opportunity Unit at Ford, we consider it a success that the smart growth movement has taken hold and made it best practice for planning to consider housing and transportation together. And we think it's the right sign of progress that there is recognition of the importance of also including education in that mix.

Housing, education, and transportation were the key issues that animated the civil rights movement fifty years ago, and they remain our core civil rights challenges today. But it's impossible for us to solve for the achievement gap in the absence of addressing the unequal access to opportunity we see in our housing and transportation. These systems overlap in ways that create or limit people's access to opportunity throughout their lives, and together create the world we live in where a child's zip code determines their social mobility and life expectancy.

It is not only a moral imperative that we address inequality. This is also an economic necessity if we want to have thriving cities and regions in the decades to come. Inequality and segregation dampen a region's economic growth. Poverty and inequality are threatening the viability of our future workforce, and come with a huge cost to society right now, in terms of lower growth, poor public health, crime, lack of civic participation, and low social cohesion. The Ford Foundation's Metropolitan Opportunity Unit has been working in Denver and in 9 other metropolitan regions across the country to bridge across jurisdictions and sectors to re-think our urban development systems so that they do not limit anyone's access to opportunity and perpetuate the problems of concentrated poverty.

When advocates ask, should we invest in improving the schools and housing in low income urban neighborhoods that are transit rich…or should we invest in ensuring that higher income neighborhoods with good schools provide their fair share of affordable housing and transportation options, principles of systems thinking tells us this isn't an either/or question: the answer is we have to do both if we're going to create thriving regional economies and quality communities.

When we don't consider the interrelated nature of our housing, education and transportation policy, we create unintended consequences or externalities. For example, an investment in a transit network can make a region more attractive to employers, which may have the impact of ultimately creating more jobs in a region. The same transit investment may raise the value of property around a station area – great for landowners and developers who can capture this value. But on the other hand it can have an extremely negative impact on residents who get priced out of the neighborhood as demand and rents rise. We can create great schools and be intentional about making them diverse, but without affordable housing and transit, we're not solving the problem. Smart growth and transportation, civil rights, education, and housing experts need to come together to find solutions to these wicked problems. Foundations need to be challenged to expand our systems thinking as well.

> "We can no longer maintain that our decisions in transportation don't impact educational outcomes, or that education policy isn't a factor in housing choice."

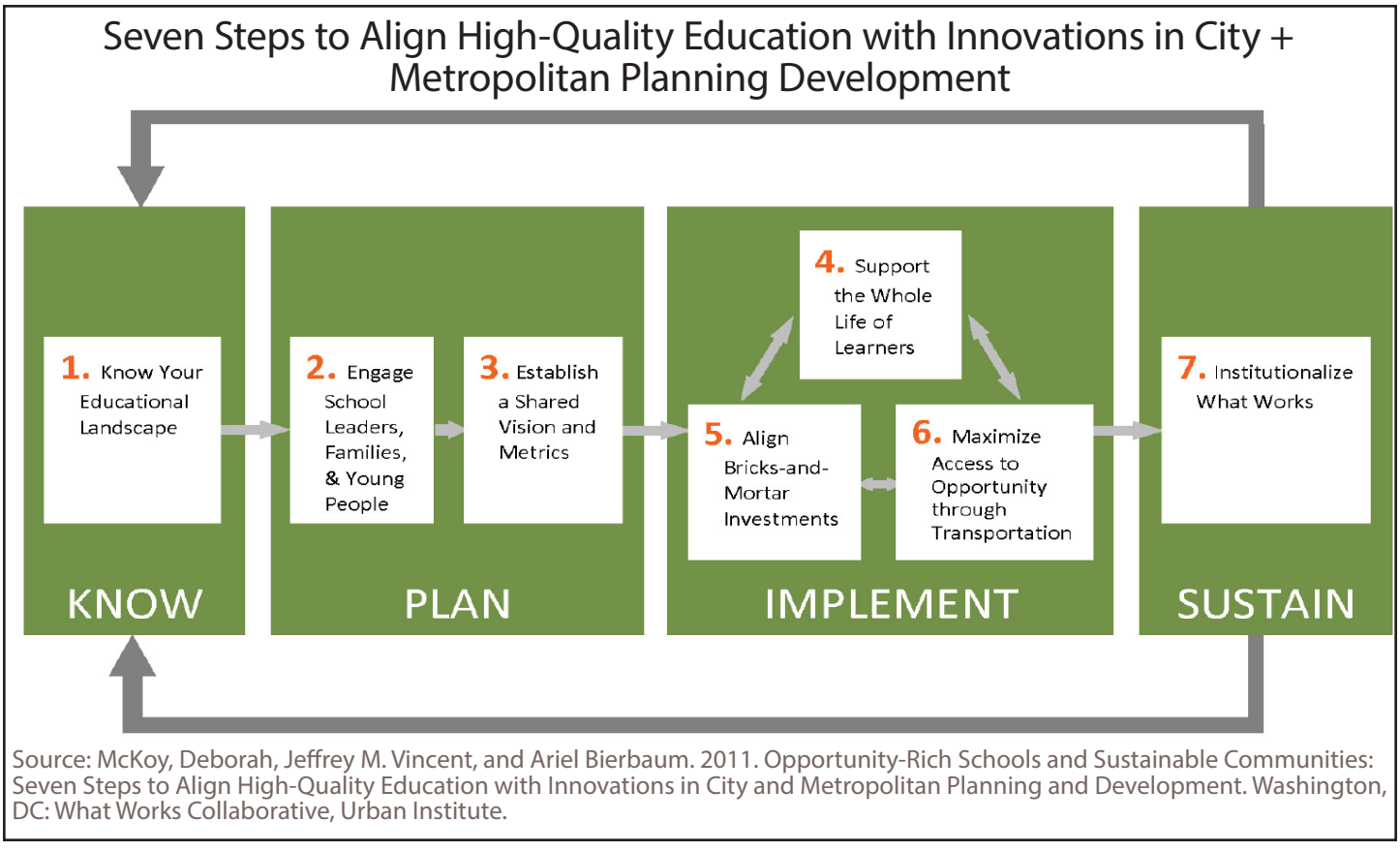
The Mechanics of Collaboration for Family-Friendly Cities

***Deborah McKoy**, Executive Director, and **Jeff Vincent**, Deputy Director, Center for Cities + Schools, University of California, Berkeley*

No matter where a child grows up, he or she should have the necessary ingredients for a bright future: good schools, safe streets, places to play, and a broader community to help them succeed at every stage of life. Yet children of color in high-poverty urban neighborhoods are often cut off from many of the resources needed to support their success. The "opportunity gap" is the result, where many young people don't have a fair chance at achieving their potential in school, career, and citizenship. The causes behind the opportunity gap are complex and varied. But one cause is urban planning. Tragically, the housing, transportation, and community development policies that define urban planning have often unintentionally perpetuated segregation and struggling neighborhoods. As a result, there are still far too many children living in places without the resources they need to succeed. Decisions about new development, affordable housing, pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure, where schools are placed, public transportation routes... these decisons all shape the communities children live in, and as a result, the opportunities available to them. The interplay between housing, transportation, and education determines so much of this for every individual child.

Important shifts in the understanding of what shapes a child's achievement call for interventions like housing and transportation. Educators have moved from a focus on the achievement gap (which is really a measure of outputs) to a focus on the opportunity gap (a measure of inputs to education). A big part of the opportunity gap is influence of so-called "out-of-school factors," ranging from health and nutrition, family stress/trauma, safety, housing stability/affordability, transportation access and the like.

> "There are few decisions as personal or sacred than the decision about where your children go to school."



Source: McKoy, Deborah, Jeffrey M. Vincent, and Ariel Bierbaum. 2011. Opportunity-Rich Schools and Sustainable Communities: Seven Steps to Align High-Quality Education with Innovations in City and Metropolitan Planning and Development. Washington, DC: What Works Collaborative, Urban Institute.

The right mix of these resources will attract diverse residents (Step #4)

- Provide comprehensive social services aligned with educational needs and opportunities. Schools and service providers should tailor these "wrap-around" services and programs to the social and educational needs of students.

- Provide quality amenities to attract families and enrich students' lives. Family-oriented attractions, such as early-learning programs, high-quality childcare, and open play space, attract families to a neighborhood and offer enrichment opportunities.

- Harness public and private funding to align program operations for efficiency. Leverage and maximize a variety of funding streams, including public investment in schools, libraries, and other community infrastructure, as well as private investment in development. The latter often includes investment in community assets.

Use cross-sector partnerships to coordinate capital investments in schools, housing, transportation, and neighborhoods (Step #5):

- Establish schools as centers of complete communities. Ensure adequate modernization and expansion of existing schools to bolster neighborhoods, maximize the joint use of school facilities, and site and design new schools so they are connected to neighborhoods and energy-efficient.

- Ensure family-oriented, mixed-income housing. Mixed-income housing aims to decrease high concentrations of neighborhood poverty and provide affordable housing options for families at every income level, including school teachers and staff.

- Pursue joint development with school districts. Through joint development, two or more entities partner to plan, site, design, and build facilities.

Enhance access to jobs, health services, and educational options for families living in high-poverty, resource-limited neighborhoods (Step #6):

- Make areas surrounding schools safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. Upgrades to sidewalks, bicycle lanes, street lighting, and street furniture improve the safety and vibrancy of public spaces and enable young people and their families to more easily access local schools.

- Site schools to maximize multimodal transportation access. Strategically locating schools allows them to serve as the "home base" for a range of academic and extracurricular activities.

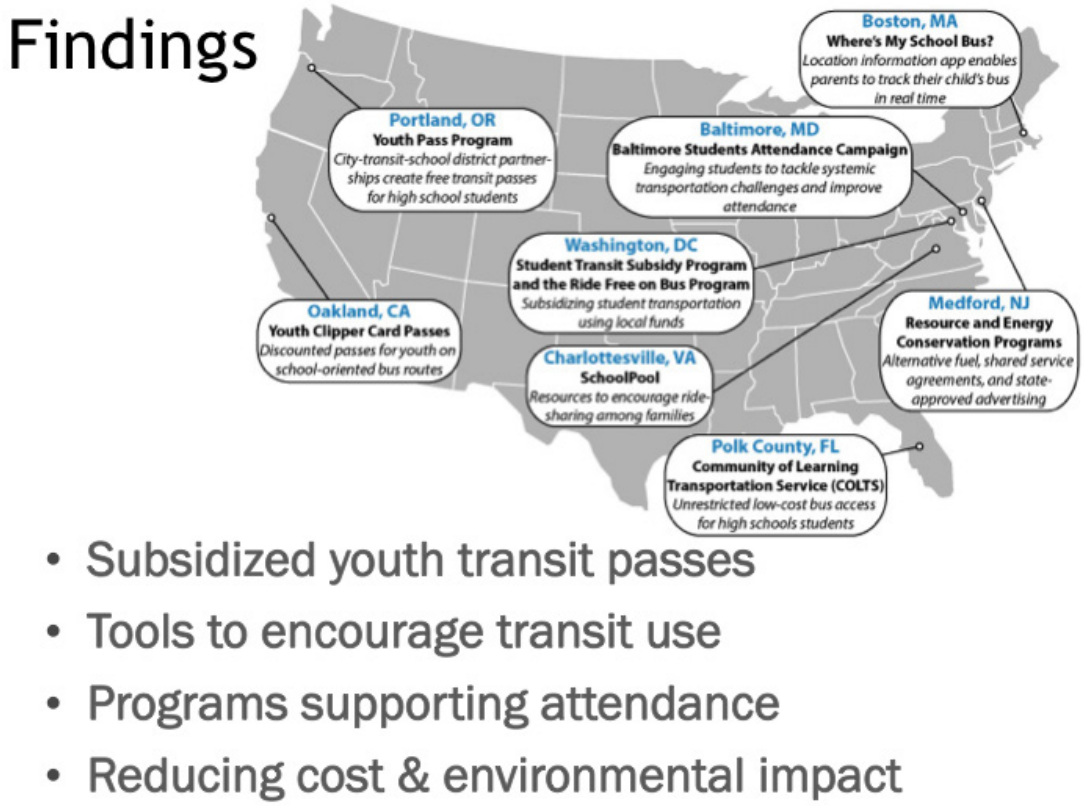
- Align transit options to support school choice and extracurricular opportunities. Given that parents now have greater choice than ever in where to enroll their children in school, transit can play a key role in ensuring all families' access to educational choices, including after-school activities.

- Create incentives for multimodal transportation choices by students and families. Urban design elements and neighborhood infrastructure that create safe and vibrant environments are critical to getting families with children walking and bicycling.

Access to safe, affordable, and convenient transportation shapes the 'geography of opportunity' for many children and youth. It impacts their decisions on which schools to consider attending, which extracurricular activities they can join, and what internships or work-based learning opportunities they might take advantage of. For children and youth in isolated, disadvantaged communities, this 'opportunity gap' is even more pronounced – and it is mirrored in the pernicious and deeply entrenched achievement gap.

"Taking advantage of increasing educational options and regional opportunity resources for families requires affordable, multimodal transportation options."

Youth Transit Programs Across the Country



Source: Vincent, Jeffrey M., Carrie Makarewicz, Ruth Miller, Julia Ehrman, and Deborah L. McKoy. 2014. Beyond the Yellow Bus: Promising Practices for Maximizing Access to Opportunity Through Innovations in Student Transportation. Berkeley, CA: University of California-Berkeley, Center for Cities+Schools.

The publically funded yellow school bus has been the long-standing pillar of student transportation service across the country (more than 25 million children ride one each day). However, the continued operation of yellow bus service is threatened by a host of challenges, including school consolidations and school choice programs, making routing complex and expensive. As a result, many school districts are privatizing bus service, reducing it, or discontinuing it altogether.

Localities across the country are implementing new and innovative alternative approaches to student transportation that expand regional transportation access for K-12 students, improve cost- effectiveness, and leverage inter-agency partnerships beyond the traditional yellow school bus. We found four main areas of innovation:

- Subsidized youth passes for public transit
- Tools to facilitate easier use of student transit
- Supportive transport programs to increase school attendance
- Programs that reduce student transport costs and environmental impacts

Lessons:
Transportation plays a key role in the contemporary context of educational choice and opportunity. Public transportation can – and should – be an important part of the mix of student transportation options. Our cases show that carefully structured partnerships can be compatible with federal Tripper Rules, which protect private student transportation operators from competition from school districts working with public transportation providers. When adequate transportation is not available, either families bear undue financial burdens, students suffer intolerable safety risks, and/or children effectively lose the ability to make the choice for where to attend school.

METROPOLITAN PERSPECTIVE:
Local H/T/E Innovation Around the Country

Mobility + Place-Based Strategies + Results in Texas

***Shannon Van Zandt**, Associate Professor & Director, Center for Housing and Urban Development, Texas A&M University (Austin and Dallas, TX)*

In a recent ruling on school finance inequality in Texas, a judge lamented that "accidents of geography" shape opportunity for young people. Housing, transportation, and education policies are often designed to address one or the other. I cast H, T and E as "people, place, and connection," and stress the fact that they can't be dealt with separately. The debate over fair housing and community development reflects the false opposition of place- and people-based approaches in our fields. We need to look at people and place, and transportation is the connection. I give two case studies that demonstrate the need for both mobility-based and place-based housing initiatives to push beyond business as usual, develop new capacities and establish relationships with partners.

In Dallas, the Inclusive Communities Partnership is a voucher program that offers mobility counseling to relocate families to higher income neighborhoods where they have greater access to jobs, housing, and education. Inclusive Communities takes a rights-based position, and uses litigation to help clients fight discrimination and access these neighborhoods. Education is not a central goal, but it is a key piece. With counseling, voucher holding families show significantly greater success in finding housing outside of disadvantaged neighborhoods. Still, the program was limited by the lack of affordable units in these areas. Adapting to this reality, they hired new staff to take on affordable housing development and push to have more units built.

In Austin, Foundation Communities is a place-based program originally aimed at increasing the volume of affordable housing units in higher opportunity neighborhoods. In both Austin and Dallas, the "opportunity index" differs a lot between highly segregated neighborhoods.

Foundation communities changed their approach significantly when they found that they could be more successful by locating new affordable units in lower income neighborhoods and incorporating comprehensive education services through on-site tutoring and learning centers, and partnerships with neighborhood schools and funders. They have had success in turning around lower performing schools.

The cases in Dallas and Austin suggest that organizations pursuing mobility- and community-based housing programs (each separately), have had to expand and intertwine their approaches to ensure success for clients. Thus, mobility- and community-based approaches are needed to provide both a range of choices AND supportive services.

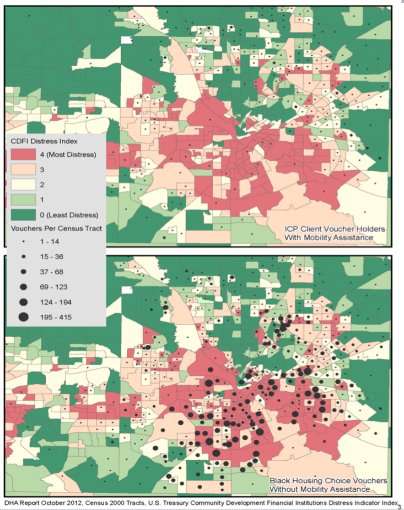
Dallas:
Inclusive Communities Project

Mobility-based program predicated on the right to choose where you live

Success looks like greater integration of low-income or minority households into suburban or "high opportunity" areas that include high-performing schools

Limited by a lack of affordable housing in such areas

Addressed by beginning to develop affordable rental property



Austin:
Foundation Communities

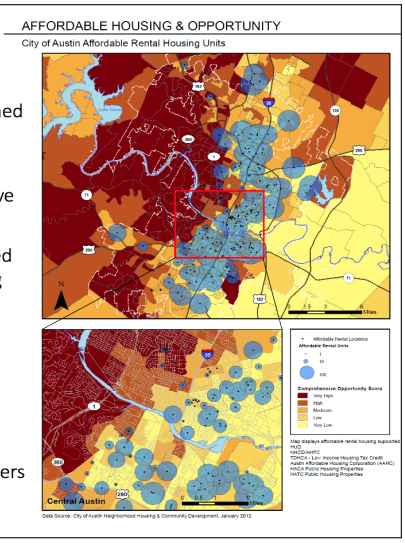
Place-based program originally aimed at increasing the volume of affordable housing

Pair housing with on-site, supportive services; focus on youth

Recent siting decisions have focused on locating near poorly-performing schools

Community learning centers at housing developments provide tutoring, enrichment, and other services

Has developed partnerships with other neighborhood service providers



Collaboration: Getting the School District to the H/T/E Table in San Francisco

***Hydra Mendoza**, Member of the Board of Education and Mayor's Education Advisor (San Francisco, CA)*

Educators need to come out of their box to address housing and transportation issues in addition to workforce development, public safety, health care, and community development. In San Francisco this reality is stark: the city has lost many of its lower income students and students of color, many to the affordability crisis in both housing prices and cost of living. The school district has made great strides in improving and supporting low performing schools by increasing resources, adding successful programs such as language immersion programs and building human capital. These investments have been successful in increasing school quality.

We cannot underestimate the positive improvements for children and families that are possible at the H/T/E nexus when school districts and city agencies collaborate. I want to share two examples of good partnerships in San Francisco. The Shared Schoolyards program is a collaborative between the Mayor, Supervisor Farrell, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and four city departments (Rec and Park, Public Works, 311 and the Police) that opens school sites to the public, increasing open space for families across the city regardless of school enrollment. Our intent was to show that the school district is invested in the city in a larger way by making school sites more visible as community institutions. It gives families the opportunity to take advantage of play space at school sites they may not attend, and value schools as neighborhood assets even if they do not have a child attending this neighborhood school.

The city and the school district also collaborated on a mutually beneficial land-swap. SFUSD owned a vacant property in the Mission district, a traditionally Latino and low-income neighborhood with increasingly valuable land prices. SFUSD had no immediate plans to develop it, and was discouraged from selling because under state law the revenue from selling the property must be used exclusively for real estate purposes – which prohibited the funds from going into their general funds for other educational purposes. In the context of the technology boom and rising rents in San Francisco, housing prices had emerged as a pressing issue for district families. So SFUSD began to think differently about how it could use the site to benefit the population it serves. The city and the school district did a multi-parcel land swap, and exchanged one of the sites for a large parking lot behind the school district administrative offices. In a win-win, the city committed to using the site for affordable housing, and the school district was able to provide public land for public purpose while securing a valuable piece of land that they could now develop next to their headquarters.

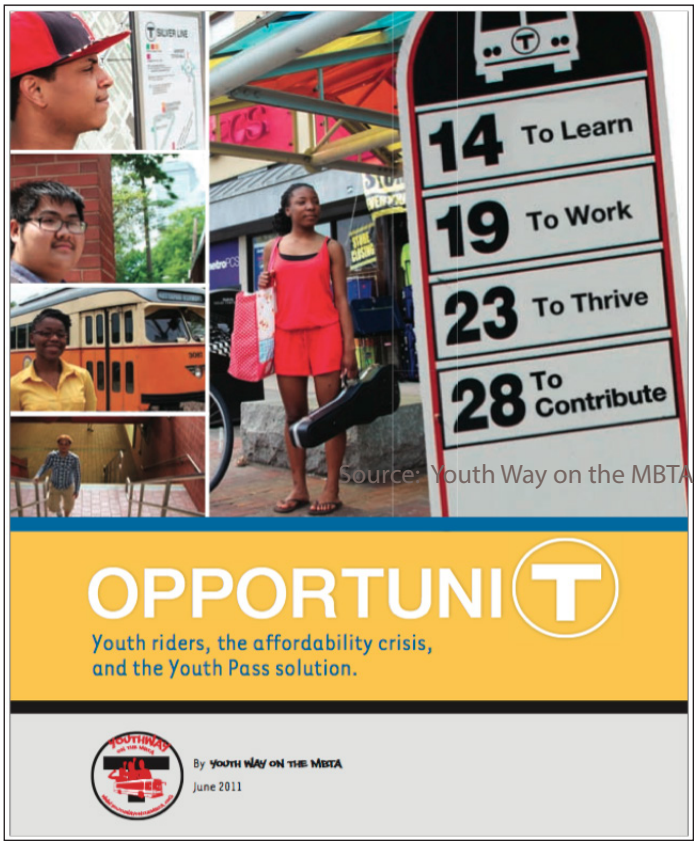
Participation: The Role of Youth Voice + Activism for Equitable Transit in Boston

***Dave Jenkins**, REEP Program Director, Alternatives for Community & Environment (Boston, MA)*

The Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project (REEP) is in its 18th year as the youth led program of Alternatives for Community & Environment. REEP's Youth Way on the MBTA is a campaign to improve public transportation for young people. It is led by youth, for youth, in partnership with the Boston-area Youth Organizing Project. From the beginning, youth have shaped the strategy, messaging, and framing around affordability, quality service, safety, and respect for youth riders of the "T" (short for "MBTA").

Young people are organizing for affordable access to public transportation all over the country. Young people are often transit dependent, and we want them to become life-long riders to promote sustainability in cities, and develop public will to invest in transit infrastructure over time. Perhaps more importantly, a simple public investment in affordable transit can increase youth access to education and employment that will pay off over generations. REEP's 2011 Opportuni(T) report, based on youth led participatory action research, showed that two thirds of young people in Boston depend on transit, but many of them face significant cost barriers that prevent them from regularly attending school, GED classes, healthcare appointments, and keeping regular employment. In response, REEP proposed a new Youth Pass that would deeply discount transit to remove the cost barrier.

The Youth Pass would be much broader and more affordable than Boston's existing Student Pass. The proposed Youth Pass would have no day or time restrictions, and be available for all youth ages 12 to 21. The pass would be available directly through the MBTA, to avoid the common practice among school administrators of tactically withholding Student Passes because of academic performance or other factors, which has the effect of compounding existing challenges. Advocacy for the full Youth Pass is still underway, but REEP has had some wins already, including extending the hours of the existing Student Pass to include weekends and evenings, allowing high school students to access extra-curricular activites and get home safely outside of regular school hours.



Source: Your Way on the MBTA

Upholding Values in Place-Based Work: A National Perspective

Judith Bell, *President, PolicyLink*

The H/T/E conversation reflects exciting progress across the country, particularly under a new federal landscape of place-based programs. President Obama is lifting up the intersection between geography and opportunity through federal programs like Promise Neighborhoods, Choice Neighborhoods, and Promise Zones that represent a shift towards thinking about interventions on place and the importance of collaboration with communities – while holding us accountable to outcomes. There are many challenges, but this is a different moment with exciting support from programs, policies, and policy-makers. At PolicyLink, we believe that by framing conversations like these around values, we orient people to being in the discussion together. We need to be accountable to values, while recognizing that places are unique and there is no one size fits all approach. PolicyLink supports place-based work through partnerships that lift up the wisdom, voice, and experience of local leaders. Important values link this work together: an asset-based approach, authentic engagement, high expectations, and the urgency of now.

A successful place-based initiative is a) comprehensive and multifaceted in developing partnerships and going deep by bringing different people around the table, b) operating on high standards, c) accountable to results, and d) evidence based, engaged, and leveraged. Place yields the possibility of engaging with individuals, systems, and policy to identify specific components that need to improve. Through this approach we can recalibrate systems to reflect the realities and serve the needs of families and children. Often there is a "hub" organization that can hold the goals and values, while also facilitating integration and partnerships that allow the work to "go deep."

These discussions and agendas must be driven by, and accountable to, equity results. This requires attention to racial and economic equity issues. It requires looking carefully at data that is disaggregated by geography and race to determine how and where to focus programs, policies and resources. And, it requires a commitment to meaningfully engaging leaders from low-income communities and communities of color throughout the process, honoring their wisdom, voice, experience and leadership. With the nation rapidly becoming majority people of color, equity is now an economic and moral imperative for the future of our communities and the nation.

Source: Mile High Connects

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE: Incentivizing Collaboration

Incentivizing Leadership + Collaboration to Connect H, T, + E

***Salin Geevarghese**, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*

"Who here is involved in economic opportunity and mobility?" I hope everyone here today stands. However, we too-often define ourselves not by the outcomes and values that we all seek, but rather by our means – our pathway to actually get there and where the silos have increasingly gotten ossified. Whether you do housing, transportation, or education work, I ask you, "What business are you in?"

When you focus on children and ask what's going to enable them to succeed, you have to think beyond the four walls of their schools. You start thinking very critically and clearly about the policies and practices, and programs that affect children and families, and you arrive to community and economic development issues.

In HUD's Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, we are working together in the Partnership for Sustainable Communities with DOT and EPA, because we all know we wanted to not embrace the false dichotomy of people and places, but essentially embrace the fact that this work HAS to be about people and places. It is not just about creating high quality places, but it is about high quality standards of living for everybody involved.

I believe we must move our governance and decision making systems towards more collaboration towards people and places. Three thoughts come to mind to collaborate across multiple disciplines, from multiple perspectives:

Source: Mile High Connects

Empathy: Our capacity to understand what target populations and places need springs from our ability to empathize, and see the issues from multiple perspectives. For example, if you're building a transit system in the hopes and expectation that it's going to serve low-income communities, do you sufficiently understand the lives of people to make wise policy choices and investments? Everyone wants choices, but choices ceased to exists in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty a long time ago. Are you seeing the issues from the other perspective while bringing the perspective you have?

Brain science and poverty: Recent research on the connections between brain science and poverty show the inextricable linkage between how the environment, where people are living, expands or contracts the choices people have. We know where there is social bias, where there is trauma, where there is deprivation, where there is poverty, the literal capacity of an individual to get themselves out of poverty is severely hampered. If folks are in environments that don't have the amenities or opportunities, the ability to exercise what you and I might think of as the 'rational choice' is completely hampered. And we wonder why breaking the cycle of poverty is so tough in this country. The challenge is sticky, wicked, and entrenched.

Economic mobility: A prominent recent Harvard-Berkeley research finds that there is a strong relationship between economic mobility and income inequality, and that spatial issues of neighborhood segregation play an important defining role. The findings speak to the importance of addressing racial segregation as an economic imperative. We know that sprawl increasingly complicates the lives of the poor.

But we shouldn't overemphasize the rocket science of our work, and underemphasize the political science of our work. What we need to think about are the leadership and collaboration – the political science of our work that is going to help us persist to the outcomes and the ends that we need. I'm going to give you five takeaways for moving forward in connecting H, T, and E:

- **Do not take "no" as the answer from a school system that doesn't participate.** And school districts don't take "no" from your local cities.

- **We need to redesign systems and institutions to increase the probability we can reach the outcomes we seek.** We need more "boundary spanners."

- **We must be willing to engage our own ignorance in policy areas that we may not know about.** That willingness to engage our own ignorance is one of the enduring lessons in the Sustainable Communities Initiative.

- **We must be focused at all levels and all scales** to restore opportunity for those who are getting left behind not only as the moral imperative, but as an economic imperative.

- **We need translators between policy spaces:** We need outcomes brokers, we need humble and empathetic leaders like folks in this room who are intensely curious and nimble, but insanely focused on results.

It's an 'all hands on deck,' 'all eyes on the prize' business we are in. So I end with a question: What business are you in?

"The best policy decisions are made when we define 'us' broadly and consider all our kids."

THE H/T/E NEXUS IN DENVER

MILE HIGH CONNECTS

Mile High Connects (MHC) is a multi-sector collaborative working to ensure that the Metro Denver regional transit system fosters communities that offer all residents the opportunity for a high quality of life. The partnership formed in 2011 to ensure that FasTracks, the region's $7.8 million transit build-out, benefits low-income communities and communities of color by connecting them to affordable housing, healthy environments, quality education, and good-paying jobs.

To realize this vision, they focus on several strategies: increasing resources to build inclusive communities along transit lines, influencing policy to ensure participatory planning processes, increasing resident engagement in neighborhoods affected by the expanding transit system, and working to make the public transit system more accessible and affordable.

Specifically in terms of education, Mile High Connects is working with the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and Denver area school districts to make it easier for students to get to the high-quality primary and secondary schools that can best prepare them for the future. By providing data to inform decision-making around school quality and transit accessibility, encouraging development of affordable housing near high performing schools, working with RTD and school districts to ensure bus service routes reach high performing schools and collaborating with education organizations, Mile High Connects wants to increase students' chance for success.

In order to accomplish their goals, Mile High Connect has issued the following recommendations:

- Increase outreach to education decision makers to reinforce the importance of transit
- Encourage brick-and-mortar investments in early childhood centers and K-12 schools to locate near transit lines
- Prioritize improving school performance for schools located within one-half mile of transit
- Create intergovernmental relationships between school districts to plan for highly-mobile, low-income students
- Provide last-mile connections between schools and transit stations

Working in conjunction with the Denver Regional Council of Governments, Mile High Connects formulated the Denver Regional Equity Atlas and released it to the public in April 2012. This valuable tool has proven to raise awareness about the benefits and opportunities that a robust public transportation network can create. Both practitioners and community members can use this interactive resource to create custom maps and view summarized statistics for particular areas of interest in a region. It visually represents the relationship between different issue areas—demographics, education, employment, health care, housing and transit—in order to inform investment decisions, grant making and community outreach. The Atlas has received national attention for its innovative approach to visually representing the region's opportunities and challenges in relation to transit; several other regions are now considering developing their own equity atlases.

"Mile High Connects believes families need and deserve access to high quality education opportunities, and should be able to get to jobs, school, and meet daily needs without tranportation as a barrier – and should be able to choose where live. Recently – lots of attention and initiatives for increasing transit and affordable housing in Denver. Our city has invested millions of dollars in choice websites and data, and what we're finding is that transit is the #1 barrier for low income and communities of color."

-Mike Kromery, Executive Director, Together Colorado

"Growing up on the south side of Chicago, I knew and understood about transit frequencies and headways long before I got into the transportation profession, because I knew if transportation was not there it was hard to go to school. And if my mother missed the last bus from the city, she might not make it home. Now I direct the largest transit expansion program in the country here in Denver, called Fast Tracks. We're adding 122 miles of additional commuter and light rail, and Bus Rapid Transit, parking lots. I see it as a huge opportunity to build TOD and also make sure young people can get to school and work. We understand that if young people cannot get to school, that's a problem. A big priority is mobility of young people/old people to get to places of education."

-Phil Washington, General Manager, Denver Regional Transportation District

"At the Denver Housing Authority, we use a health lens – and we're looking at how to apply this to community revitalization. Education is central to our framework of a healthy community. It's the intersection of health care, transportation, education, and environment. If don't have good schools or school options, then we won't be successful in terms of mobility and economic self-sufficiency for all Denver children."

-Ismael Guerrero, Executive Director, Denver Housing Authority

We're working hard in the Denver region to plan proactively, together, and more often. We can't just get together when there is a problem – we have to get together proactively problem solve before they arise. Choice, transportation, and affordable housing – hits key components of the education pipeline. We're focused on increasing access and connectivity. This responsibility is not just limited to public transportation agency but other city programs. We're focused on aligning 26 city agencies that fund or provide services that affect children and families.

-Lindsay Neil, Executive Director, Children's Affairs, City and County of Denver

Denver's Success Express

Success Express features a fleet of DPS buses that circulate through the Far Northeast and Near Northeast neighborhoods and offer students three opportunities to catch a ride.

Now in its third year, the shuttle runs from 6:30 to 9:30 a.m., and then from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., facilitating more flexible school days and on-time access for students to their participating school of choice.

Students can get on or off any bus at any stop, and in many cases can simply wait for the next bus to arrive within 15 minutes if they miss the first one.

Every bus has two adults on board – the driver and a paraprofessional, whose primary job will be to make sure students are getting on and off at the right spot, and doing so safely.

ID tags worn by participating students will indicate what school they are attending. (More info: http://transportation.dpsk12.org/successexpress/)

OUTLINING A POLICY AGENDA

Moderated by
***Chris Estes**, Executive Director, National Housing Conference,* and
***Heather Hood**, Deputy Director, Enterprise-Northern California*

Zip codes should not be the determinants of children's health, prospects and outcomes. And yet, as we heard so many times today, they are. To help our housing, transportation and education systems break free of the Gordian knot they are tied in, today's panels were designed to enrich us with inspiration. We wanted to dig into how we got into this knot and leave you with a sense of hope— that even though our systems often force families to make trade offs between proximity to jobs, access to good schools and living in homes they can afford, there is a path forward.

In the scheme of things, it was only a decade ago that the fields of housing and transportation found common ground and shared interests— as epitomized in the work of HUD's Office of Sustainable Communities. It was only a decade ago that education and neighborhood planning found common purpose— as epitomized in the establishment of UC Berkeley's Center for Cities + Schools or the ongoing conversations to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing. And of course, since *Brown vs Board of Education*, we have collectively thought a lot about transportation and education. It is our sincere hope that the conversations generated today will stir our imaginations about how to design pilots and policies that will make the state of consciousness and practice such that in a decade from now, there's no questions these challenges can be faced together. Just as families face them as a threesome, the fields can, too.

As Salin Geevarghese said so well, "Our capacity to understand what target populations and places need springs from our ability to empathize, and see issues from multiple perspectives."

The participants in the wrap-up conversation had comments pointing to four headlining next steps:

1. **Develop a clear research agenda that promotes family friendly cities.** This is an agenda that brings housing, transportation and education together. Some overarching questions are: As cities are changing, how do we make them family-friendly places? What kind of planning, policy and finance interventions will be necessary to ensure they are?
2. **Nurture a high functioning network of practitioners and policy makers** who consider these issues to be one issue and have the capacity to exchange ideas, research and policies that will propel the field past its many challenges. Systems change takes systems translators and collaborators— people who can keep a keen eye on the big picture and bring people together. New inter-agnecy, public-private partnerships are needed to address regions. A 'big-umbrella' frame is needed that brings educators together with equity-oriented urban planners and investors. These intermediaries, whether they are organizations or individuals, need to be supported.
3. **Involve youth in the work.** Culture can change when young people are genuinely involved in their community. This work will take longer than a decade and they will be leading, so best to ensure they are well prepared to do so.
4. **Continue to define and refine local, state and national policy agendas** that demand more cross-sector work.
5. **Develop clear communications** about the issues and successful silo busting.

Source: Enterprise Community Partners


CENTER FOR
CITIES+SCHOOLS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY


Enterprise


MileHighConnects
Opportunity for all through transit


NATIONAL
HOUSING
CONFERENCE


NRDC
THE EARTH'S BEST DEFENSE