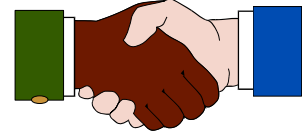


9. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Capitol Region Council of Governments is committed to fully integrating the basic principles of environmental justice into all of its transportation planning programs and activities. These principles are:



- Reaching out to involve minority groups and low income groups in the planning process;
- Preventing “disproportionately high and adverse” impacts of transportation decisions on minority groups, low-income, and transit dependent groups; and
- Assuring these same groups receive a proportionate share of benefits.

This commitment was first included in the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan. Since then, CRCOG has made substantial progress in advancing these core principles. We completed a full assessment of our planning process in 2002. An Environmental Justice Action Plan was adopted in June 2002, and incorporated into CRCOG’s Public Involvement Plan in May 2005. Key elements of the plan that have been implemented include:

- *Environmental Justice Advisory Board.* An Environmental Justice Advisory Board was established as a standing CRCOG committee. Its purpose is to provide guidance on how to improve our planning process to achieve environmental justice goals, and to provide input into the development of major planning products such as the Regional Transportation Plan.
- *Transportation Committee Membership.* An EJAB member was appointed to the Transportation Committee to allow direct involvement in our core transportation planning activities.
- *Equity Assessment Methods.* Equity assessment methods were developed to evaluate the distribution of burdens and benefits from projects funded through the transportation program.
- *Bus Users Forum.* A bus users forum was established to provide an opportunity for transit dependent residents to discuss bus service issues directly with transit operators and planners.

These are critical components of CRCOG’s environmental justice action program that we will continue to pursue and improve. We remain committed to involving minority groups and low-income groups in our planning process, and to developing plans and programs that provide an equitable distribution of benefits and burdens. We are also committed to identifying and addressing transportation issues that are of special concern to minority, low-income, and transit dependent households. To begin the latter task, we undertook a special effort to identify issues of special concern. The effort and issues are described below.

Issues of Special Concern

There are a number of transportation issues that were identified by the EJ Advisory board as being of particular importance due to their potential to affect minority, low-income, or transit dependent populations. The issues and associated recommendations are provided below.

CRCOG COMMITTEE STRUCTURE.

CRCOG’s revised its Committee structure to include an Environmental Justice Advisory Board, and a representative from that Board on the Transportation Committee. The new structure provides better opportunities for the involvement of environmental justice communities in the transportation planning process, and should be continued.

RECOMMENDATION: The revised committee structure is satisfactory and should be continued.

ACCESS TO JOBS.

Access to jobs is one of the most critical issues for low-income and transit dependent households in the Region. The growth of employment in suburban areas and the lack of good transit service to these areas often pose a problem for these residents when they search for job opportunities. CRCOG administers a program to provide special transportation services to and from work for welfare-to-work clients and other low-income workers. The program supplements regular CT Transit bus service to serve hours or routes not previously served by CT Transit.

RECOMMENDATION: CRCOG should continue to support the Jobs Access program as a high priority program.

BETTER TRANSIT SERVICE.

The region's regular transit service is not a convenience, but rather a necessity for transit-dependent residents. Whether they live in the City of Hartford or inner ring suburbs served by transit, these residents depend on the service for virtually all their transportation needs. Improvements should continue to be made to the service, including more frequent buses and longer operating hours, as well as at bus stops, including more shelters and better maintenance.

In addition, the bus-riding experience can be vastly improved with the application of advanced technologies, or intelligent transportation systems (ITS), at the bus stop and on the bus. Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) systems can provide information to the bus passenger about next bus arrival times and can allow automated on-board next-stop announcements. Transit priority added to traffic signals can help keep buses on schedule. And computer-aided dispatch can improve efficiencies for both fixed route and dial-a-ride services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ***Better Bus Service.*** CRCOG should continue to support better bus service as part of its environmental justice program. CRCOG should also continue its efforts to give transit users a voice through the bus users forum, and continue its efforts to address bus stop issues.
2. ***ITS for Transit.*** CRCOG should continue to support the application of ITS in the Region's transit services. Implementation should be a priority.

RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM.

Rapid transit proposals form the cornerstone of the Regional Transportation Plan. Bus rapid transit is proposed for several corridors, and a commuter rail service is being evaluated for the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield corridor. These rapid transit services can be designed to meet the needs of transit dependent residents as well as those of suburban residents who have easy access to automobiles.

RECOMMENDATION: Rapid transit services should be designed to serve the needs of transit dependent residents as well as those with access to automobiles.

CLEAN FUEL VEHICLES.

Transit Buses. The current bus fleet is composed almost exclusively of diesel-powered vehicles. The primary bus routes traverse many low-income, minority, and transit-dependent neighborhoods. Diesel emissions can pose a health hazard in these urban neighborhoods where asthma rates are often higher than in suburban neighborhoods. The concern regarding low emission buses and reducing diesel emissions in the region is therefore a priority. To that end, the Environmental Justice Advisory Board proposed a program to retrofit CT Transit buses with diesel particulate filters.

Retrofitting the fleet of buses will significantly reduce diesel exhaust emissions and decrease the adverse impact on Hartford's residential neighborhoods by reducing the particulate emissions from CT Transit buses. As an important part of CRCOG's Environmental Justice Program, CRCOG submitted an

application for CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program) funds to retrofit CT Transit buses with diesel particulate filters. Buses with six years or more of useful life left will receive the modification.

By 2010, all CT Transit bus models from 1999 through 2006 will be retrofitted with EPA emission certified Diesel Particulate Filters and their associated exhaust backpressure and temperature-monitoring equipment. CT Transit will implement the program. All 2007 and later model buses will come equipped with the diesel particulate filter so no retrofit of those vehicles will be necessary. They will also include active control filters that improve operations and require less maintenance

Construction Equipment. In a similar manner, diesel-powered vehicles used on construction sites add to a reduction in air quality. New federal rules regarding diesel emissions take effect in 2007, but older vehicles are exempt from the law and the requirement that off-road vehicles be as clean as on-road vehicles will not be phased in until the 2011-2012 model year. This coupled with the fact that construction vehicles generally have a much longer useful life than most on-road vehicles creates a need to require the retrofit of existing vehicles wherever possible.

In 2005, the State passed legislation establishing a plan for reducing diesel pollution from the transportation sector. It directed the CT DEP to develop a Clean Diesel Plan "to reduce emissions of diesel fumes and particulates from school buses, transit buses, state-funded construction projects and other sources." That report was completed and submitted to the legislature in January 2006. With regard to diesel emissions from construction equipment, the State incorporated contract specifications requiring retrofit emission controls or the use of less polluting fuels on construction equipment used on State projects of \$5 million or more. The DEP has recommended expanding on this project as part of any future steps to further reduce diesel emissions.¹

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Reduce diesel emissions from buses.** CRCOG's transportation plans, policies, and programs should continue to support the goal of reducing diesel emissions, especially diesel emissions from buses.
2. **Reduce diesel emissions from construction vehicles.** CRCOG should continue to support efforts to reduce diesel emissions from vehicles used on State transportation construction projects.

PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE SAFETY IN URBAN AREAS.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety is an important issue that affects minority, low-income households, and especially transit dependent households living in our more urbanized communities. More than ten percent of the residents in the Region do not own an automobile, and for many of them, walking and riding a bike is an important means of travel. However, pedestrians and cyclists face many safety hazards in urban areas where traffic volumes are high. The rate of pedestrian accidents in Hartford, which is nearly four times higher than any other town in the Region, illustrates the serious nature of these urban hazards.

Pedestrian safety is also a special issue for children. As a result, CRCOG will be advancing a Safe Routes To School Program in the city of Hartford. This will supplement the State program that is not targeted to city schools. The safe routes program can improve safety around schools, reduce traffic, reduce school transportation costs, and improve school children's health.

RECOMMENDATION: CRCOG's transportation plans, policies, and programs should continue to work toward the goal of improving pedestrian and bicycle safety in urban areas of the Region.

¹ *The Connecticut Clean Diesel Plan*, report to the State legislature by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, January 15, 2006.

Equity Assessment:

Each of the relevant elements of the Regional Transportation Plan were reviewed to determine if there were any disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority groups, low-income, and transit dependent groups; and to assure that these same groups received a proportionate share of benefits. They are provided below.

LINKING LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

The recommendations for better integrating land use and transportation planning will have no adverse effect on minority, low-income, or transit dependent populations.

TRANSIT PROGRAM

The transit program recommended in this Plan is expected to benefit minority and low-income households by increasing transit service available to them and by increasing their access to jobs and other opportunities. As part of the Regional Transit Strategy, an analysis was conducted of the two primary alternatives: low capital or 'better bus' alternative, and the high capital or 'rapid transit' alternative. As shown in the table below, both alternatives significantly increased the number of jobs available to low-income neighborhoods within 30 minutes travel time.

Job Access Benefits of RTS for Transit Dependent Households²

ALTERNATIVE	Jobs within 30 Minutes
No Transit Improvements	132,640
Low Capital Improvements: Better Bus	145,857
High Capital Improvements: Rapid Transit	188,602

More recently, special equity assessments were conducted for two of the proposed rapid transit elements of the Regional Transit Strategy: the New Britain Busway and the Griffin Busway. Both analyses found a large share of project benefits going to transit dependent households (0-car households). The results are summarized below.

User Benefits for Busway Proposals
(hours of travel time savings)

	0-car HHs	1-car HHs	Multi-car HHs	Total Hours
New Britain Busway	1,558 <i>38.0%</i>	943 <i>23.0%</i>	1,599 <i>39.0%</i>	4,100 <i>100.0%</i>
Griffin Busway	551 <i>29.0%</i>	437 <i>23.0%</i>	912 <i>48.0%</i>	1,900 <i>100.0%</i>

Other transit recommendations in the Plan are specifically intended to improve mobility for low-income households. Our Jobs Access Program is designed to help low-income workers gain access to job sites otherwise unavailable to them. The recommendation to extend hours of service for the bus system is intended to benefit the transit-dependent person who often cannot access certain activities because bus service stops after 6:00 p.m. on many routes.

² The analysis considered only transit-dependent neighborhoods, which were defined as neighborhoods where 20% or more of households do not own a car. See chapter 5 of RTS report for full discussion.

HIGHWAY PROGRAM

None of the proposed freeway improvements are expected to adversely affect any minority or low-income neighborhoods. The operational and safety improvements will all occur largely within existing rights-of-way and not affect residential neighborhoods.

The arterial roadway recommendations included in the corridor studies are not expected to adversely affect any minority or low-income neighborhoods. In fact, the proposed improvements for Route 44 (Albany Avenue) in Hartford were developed with involvement of the Upper Albany and Clay-Arsenal neighborhoods. In March 2006, CRCOG sponsored a public information meeting at the Artists Collective on Albany Avenue to discuss this reconstruction project. Nearly 100 neighborhood residents and area merchants attended and expressed support for the proposed improvements to Route 44. They are mostly small operational improvements with few adverse impacts. The primary recommendations include reconfiguration of the 3-lane roadway to a 2-lane roadway (with turn lanes at intersections), traffic calming on side streets, and streetscaping along Albany Avenue. While the lane reconfiguration is expected to improve safety, it will be done without any roadway widening and will have no negative impacts on the neighborhoods. The traffic calming and streetscaping proposals will benefit the community and were strongly supported by the neighborhoods.

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PROGRAM

The bicycle and pedestrian program has no negative impacts on low-income or minority neighborhoods. In fact, pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements are likely to significantly benefit low-income individuals. In addition, the bicycle and pedestrian plans include specific recommendations that CRCOG should advance the goal of improving bicycle and pedestrian safety in urban areas, and as a result, CRCOG staff will devote more of its bike and pedestrian planning efforts to safety issues in those areas.

CRCOG's bike and pedestrian planning program has undertaken specific efforts in the City of Hartford: technology sharing on bike lane design; and facilitation of City bike path efforts, including the South Branch of the Park River Trail and a connection from downtown Hartford to the Farmington Canal trail. CRCOG has had a "Share the Road" brochure printed in both English and Spanish and makes this available throughout the region and the State.

BRADLEY AIRPORT

The proposed program of improvements and policies described in the Airport chapter has no negative impact on environmental justice target communities. The roadway projects do not impact any low-income or minority neighborhood, and the proposed improved transit services will likely benefit low-income residents who live in Hartford and work at the Airport.

FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Several issues have been identified as the focal points for CRCOG's emerging freight planning program as it develops over the next several years, such as planning for improved ground access to cargo facilities at Bradley Airport, the use of Intelligent Transportation Systems to improve monitoring of truck safety on highways, and the development of intermodal terminals in Hartford, Springfield, and New Haven, which will allow more freight transported by rail. These recommendations will have no adverse effect on environmental justice target communities.