

# IMPROVING JOB ACCESS FOR THE URBAN POOR

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Transportation planners are beginning to learn that different population groups have different travel needs. This paper summarizes what has been learned about the work-related travel requirements of the metropolitan poor. It begins with a description of likely travelers, the already motivated poor; their preferences for good jobs paying at least \$2.20 per hour; and the types of available jobs, most of which are unpleasant jobs paying unacceptable wages around \$1.60 per hour. The needs likely to be faced by poor people when they have to travel—in search of work, to apply for a job, and to commute—require flexibly routed and scheduled vehicles. The suitability of buses, car pools, and private autos to meet these needs is considered, and their availability and service inadequacies are identified. Programs are recommended to reduce the need to travel for work-related purposes, to foster self-help transportation by facilitating car ownership among non-car-owning households, and to provide better transport options such as taxis or dial-a-bus systems for those who cannot help themselves.

●SINCE 1967, in more than 20 cities, suburban employers, anti-poverty agency staffs, transit operators, planners, and other groups have attempted to provide better public transportation for the urban poor. These efforts have involved over \$7 million in federal assistance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Transportation that have helped to pay for bus demonstration operations between downtown ghetto areas and suburban industrial areas (1, p. 3). Additional funds helped pay for technical studies to evaluate the adequacy of existing local transit. These programs held the possibility of being a relatively simple strategy for helping both the poor and the economy. They had the political appeal of using available technology in a visible way to solve a pressing social problem.

Actual operations have raised serious doubts about the limited role that transportation can play in solving problems of poverty. Past programs have not shown that large numbers of poor people have been helped, that the small number of people who have been helped could not have succeeded without assistance, or that different transportation or other programs might not be better aids to the poor. Ridership on most federally subsidized bus routes was lower than anticipated and was far lower than the reported number of available jobs. Revenues on the most traveled lines barely covered operating costs (2). There was no evidence that unemployment rates had been significantly reduced in the long run as a result of the programs.

## POTENTIAL URBAN WORKERS

What has been learned about the people to be helped? Which people constitute the market segment of the poor who will respond to work access improvement efforts?

Studies of ghetto residents and bus passengers suggest that transportation-poverty projects, like other social welfare programs, have failed to reach the hard-core poor families. The majority of this country's poorest people are too young, too old, or unable to work; they are not in the labor force. Hard-core poor families are frequently troubled by serious marital, health, and other problems that transportation improvements cannot solve. Employment activities of these people, including groups of adolescents and ethnic elderly, seem confined to local neighborhoods, possibly because of fears of strange places, travel, and discrimination rather than a lack of transportation (3, 4, 5).

Ridership on bus demonstration projects has consisted of people who already possessed some self-improvement motivation. These upwardly mobile people tended to be more self-confident, more informed, and more adventurous than non-riders from the same ghettos. Many riders had already taken advantage of other available community services such as job training and health care. Most worker-riders had had previous jobs (3).

While some individuals will ride to work regardless of a job's characteristics, most of the responsive market segment carefully consider whether a potential job and the travel associated with working are worth the effort. Their evaluations are affected by whether they are seeking a full-time or part-time job, whether they are looking for a different job while already employed, whether the job is to be the only one in the household or is to supplement other income sources, and whether the job is to be permanent or short-term. By understanding their job selection process, planning efforts may better provide access to jobs considered desirable by the poor.

Transport planners have rarely considered the poor job-seeker's views toward work that play a basic role in their complex process of job selection, rejection, or retention. Instead, past planning has operated under the assumption that all members of the unemployed labor force could be expected to respond favorably to any job offers. The number of bus seats to be provided by buses to jobs was merely equated to the total number of reported job vacancies.

Throughout existing imperfect urban labor markets, however, there are inequalities of applicants and job openings. The simple, one-to-one correspondence between job-seekers and vacancies that has been assumed seldom occurs. All different kinds of poor people are seeking different kinds of work and work conditions. Employers have many different kinds of vacancies and job requirements. The distribution of available labor over a region seldom corresponds to the distribution of vacancies—employers want the cheapest labor while workers tend to want the nearest jobs. Well-known national firms and institutions have large personnel staffs to handle long lists of job applicants while smaller regional and local firms may be hard-pressed to attract many job applicants. Finally, job vacancies are not always available at times when labor is available.

Many of the poor, especially the young and discouraged, do not view jobs and employment as ends in themselves. Recent increases in education, advertising, and communication have raised employment and living standard expectations of today's poor far beyond the expectations of earlier generations. The notion that a job is a good experience regardless of how nasty or unremunerative is not widely accepted among the poor (6). Most studies reveal that poor unskilled heads of households who can work want to enter the primary job market, which features good, secure jobs and advancement possibilities that will improve their social and economic status, rather than to enter the unpredictable, monotonous, secondary job market that barely pays enough in take-home pay to keep their families alive and healthy (7).

The typical poor job seeker has determined his own minimum "acceptable" wage that tends to be above the legal (federal) minimum wage of \$1.60 per hour, or \$64.00 gross, per week. Just to approximate modest public assistance would require a four-person family worker, for example, to earn a wage closer to \$2.20 per hour, or \$89.00 per week (8). These figures are both much lower than the wage rate considered necessary for the lowest rate needed by an urban family of four, approximately \$3.50/hour, or only about \$7,200 per year (9). From these gross figures, deductions must be made for taxes, fringe benefits, transportation, union dues, and other work-related expenses.

Job vacancies must offer "acceptable" wage levels and job conditions, or potential workers will consider other income sources such as welfare, unemployment compensation, or crime (7). A growing number of sensitive job-placement staff members agree with the informal, "acceptable" conditions set by job seekers of different age and family status; they do not bother to place a head of a household in jobs paying less than at least \$2.00 per hour, and they avoid placements in positions that have high turnover rates, periodic layoffs, and no advancement (10).

## EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS AND PROBLEMS OF THE POOR

The employment patterns of many poor people do not constitute careers; typically, the pattern consists of a series of unrelated jobs and little advancement from one job to another.

Frequently, poor workers experience a recurring cycle of job search, application, commutation, and involuntary termination. This cycle has high financial and psychological costs. The cycle becomes increasingly demoralizing with age and is especially difficult for older people and unskilled members of minorities. A comprehensive job-access improvement program must consider the transportation needed to fulfill the travel needs at each cycle stage.

### Stage I: Locating Jobs

The Job Search Process—Good transportation plays a necessary role in the discovery of job openings. Poverty studies have shown that the principal ways the poor learn about jobs is by word-of-mouth, seeing help-wanted signs posted along transport routes, reading newspaper ads, and visiting job placement offices. Preliminary "outreach" efforts have been made by urban and county governments to send mobile employment centers with recruiters into high-density poverty areas (12); usually, however, the job searcher is on his own to find out about job vacancies. (Times of high unemployment create special problems. Not only are fewer new employees hired and more recent employees fired, but also normal turnover of regular employees between companies drops. Good jobs tend to be passed along to needy friends before being placed in the open market.)

Past poverty-transportation projects focused on a few ghetto areas without considering the poor who live scattered in non-ghetto areas within cities and in suburbs (13). This widespread distribution of poverty throughout metropolitan areas creates different kinds of job-discovery problems, depending on home location (14). Concentrations of the poor facilitate word-of-mouth communication and generate sufficient use by job-seekers and employers to support localized job-placement office branches. Information about nearby secondary jobs, such as janitors, short-order cooks, dishwashers, etc., is known to the poor, but information about the better jobs outside the local areas is more difficult to obtain, especially for those poor who live far from placement centers, job sites, and other people. Central-city placement offices tend to have many more job listings than suburban centers, which allows more careful matching of jobs with job-seeker needs and skills.

Suburban poor job-seekers have more trouble and costs receiving news of job openings, despite their relative nearness to much of the new construction and job sites. They are cut off from personal communications. Dispersed poor populations cannot support local job-placement centers. Because employers seek cheap (urban) labor and prefer to deal with a minimum number of job-placement offices, small suburban and neighborhood placement offices are not always notified of vacancies (15).

Available Jobs—Most of the federal transport-poverty programs dealt with job vacancies in the private manufacturing sector of the economy, one which has not grown very rapidly during the last 10 years. (The private sector of the economy failed to provide the 1 million low-skilled new jobs recommended after the Watts riot.) With automation, many jobs for low-skilled people have disappeared. Remaining jobs for the poor are often in unpleasant settings and involve dull or tedious tasks.

The programs were not geared to assist labor in the fastest growing sector of the economy. Service has offered the largest increase in job opportunities for the poor. The public sector, non-profit agencies, and government contracts with private industry have created 9 out of 10 net new jobs between 1950 and 1960. The former two groups provided 85 percent of the new jobs for black people from 1958 to 1962 (16). Public-sector jobs vary in quality from low-paying clerical and inspection positions to highly paid policemen and sanitation workers. Most of these jobs offer advantages of job security and good fringe benefits.

Many of the available jobs offer wages that are too low to be acceptable to principle wage earners. Companies offering wages above \$2.00 per hour were marked by few

primary job openings; companies most frequently complaining about labor shortages had poor jobs averaging around \$1.60 to \$1.70 per hour. In labor-intensive industries such as food processing and clothing, where automation is difficult, competition from southern and foreign low-wage areas keeps urban region wages at levels so low only supplemental wage earners and recent immigrants will accept them. Private and public managers are also constrained from increasing entry-level wages because that would likely lead to additional wage payments for all other employees.

Many jobs have undesirable qualities. These are held only for very short times because they are very physically demanding, unpleasant, or clearly dead-end (17). Some jobs are available only for short periods during peak production or sales seasons or to fulfill special contract requirements. Some jobs (corrections and medical institutions) have difficulty retaining workers because of the low status associated with low-skilled jobs or because of their demoralizing and depressing nature.

Sometimes employers have minimum job requirements the poor cannot meet. Simple jobs such as delivery boy, truck driver, or parking lot attendant may not be undesirable supplement jobs, but the poor without a driver license cannot qualify. Placement offices report that driver licenses are not common among the poor, who have relatively little access to a car. Many elderly poor have never learned to drive. People with criminal records can encounter legal difficulties in acquiring licenses.

The crude surveys of job vacancies used in transport-poverty studies did not usually inventory job vacancies or their characteristics throughout the metropolitan regions. They rarely considered job vacancies of those downtown employers that were already served by some transit and/or were near poor neighborhoods. Some evidence suggests that large numbers of jobs for low-skilled workers are unfilled in most downtowns and that these jobs are not much different from those now vacant in the suburbs (18).

## Stage II: Applying for Jobs

In addition to the travel required to locate desirable job vacancies, the job-seeker must frequently travel to apply for and secure the job itself. Depending on the complexity of the process at employment and personnel offices, transportation may be needed for several trips between the applicant's home and place of application. If the applicant is lucky or the application process is streamlined, his first trip to the placement site might be combined with a job interview and he may be hired on the spot. (This is common practice in certain jobs in construction and dockwork.) More typically, several trips will be required for obtaining application forms, returning them for review, having an interview, reporting results of medical exams, and pressuring personnel staff for a positive answer. It is not unusual to be applying for several jobs during the search and application stages of the employment cycle, resulting in additional travel for each possibility.

Most of the hiring takes place at the job site. Large employers may have special recruiting staffs, but they rarely recruit in poverty areas because the number of job vacancies at any one time is often quite small and poverty recruiting assignments are viewed as too unpleasant or dangerous. Smaller companies seldom have special recruiting staffs at all. Instead of field recruiting, companies require job applicants to visit the plant or office as a sign of interest, to give the company a chance to show off its facilities or to demonstrate that the applicants can get to the job site without the employer's assistance (11). The applicant is frequently on his own to find out how to get to the interview site. To help him get there, as well as to keep him company during travel and the long waits that are incurred before interviews, it is not uncommon for a poor person to want to ask a friend or relative to come along. Job-improvement access programs should therefore have the capacity to transport job applicants, and perhaps one of their companions, from their homes to the job hiring site.

Job recruitment timing is an important planning input. Most job applicants need transportation during the middle of the weekdays, after the start of business and before the end of the business day. Interviews may be scheduled throughout the daytime shift, but relatively few are held before 9 a.m. or after 4:30 p.m. People already working days may need to have interviews during their lunch period. The applicant must assume

that lateness will hurt his job chances, so reliable and predictable transportation is important. If the applicant seeks to minimize his time in a job interview waiting room, he will want to have transportation that can arrive close to the scheduled interview time and can leave soon after the interview is completed. Since the applicant rarely can predict how long the job application process will take, it is hard for him to know when homeward-bound transportation will be needed. Almost certainly, however, the process will last less than a full work shift, so that transportation at infrequent intervals or only during rush hours will seriously reduce or prevent application travel.

### Stage III: Commuting to Work

For low-skilled employees, the first few days, weeks, or months can be a difficult transitional period. Transportation problems associated with commuting are only part of his adjustment problems. During this time, irritations can cause him to reevaluate whether working is worth the effort. He may be subject to discrimination. He is likely to slow down his work group's productivity while he acquires job skills. Seldom are there people around him to help settle problems with his supervisors. He must pay for work-related expenses before he gets his first paycheck. He may be anxious about his performance if he is on probation for a long-term position (11, 14). If he becomes too irritated, he may quit and have to start searching for still another job or income.

Commuting generates different travel requirements than job search and hiring, in terms of locations, scheduling, and costs. Most low-skilled jobs are not located in the central business district of a metropolitan area. They tend to be in older fringe areas of downtowns, in decaying satellite cities, in unpopulated areas and industrial parks near wastelands, swamps, and transport terminals, or strung out along highways. These jobs are usually not within walking distance of most workers' homes because zoning and economic and racial segregation tend to discourage low-cost housing near job sites. The dispersed nature of the poor and their job locations requires transport systems that can handle intersuburban, reverse-commute, and sparsely settled area needs as well as the more classic suburban-town commute. Several of the more common jobs for low-skilled workers require transportation that can carry employees to and from several different job sites (cleaning services) on a cyclical basis or on a continually changing basis (construction, home catering). For people working several jobs the same day, transportation should be able to link one job with another.

Commuter transportation must be available at the times required by the job. The times that many poor individuals must work are markedly different from the working days and hours of the majority of the working population. Many unskilled jobs (plant guards, hospital workers, hotel employees) work on weekends and holidays. These and other jobs are often worked two or three shifts a day; new employees are usually assigned the less desirable evening or post-midnight shifts. Certain industries (dairies, trucking, entertainment, newspapers, hotels) require job accessibility very late at night or during the early morning, between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. Many jobs for women and the elderly (janitors, gardeners, cafeteria workers, domestics) require off-peak, daytime service. To complicate transport planning still further, some people do not always work the same time every day of the week (shift assignments may change from week to week, and some workdays are longer or shorter than others), and some work cycles do not coincide with the standard 7-day week (nurses' aides, firemen).

Formal job starting times can rarely be used by themselves for planning transportation services. Workers may need several minutes to walk from the place where they leave their access mode to the actual location where they must do their tasks or punch a timeclock. Time for job preparation (dressing in certain clothes or learning about recent activities) may be required before the work shift begins.

Formal ending times are not constant in many jobs. Workers may consider it very important to be able to work overtime when they need extra money or their supervisor asks them or requires them to stay late. Informal quitting times may vary with supervisors, the weather, the number of customers, or the varying nature of different work tasks.

If the motivations to work and the job satisfactions are low, high commuting costs

can lead to job termination. Total travel time between home and worksite must be kept to a minimum for bad jobs of principle wage earners and for all part-time job holders. Trip times should probably be less than 1 hour if long-term employment is to be encouraged.

Money costs of transportation must be considered in several ways. In the early, transitional commuting stage, workers are sensitive about spending money before their job is secure. They do not want to tie up savings or early earnings in transportation such as transit or toll-road commuter tickets because they may go unused if the job ends or if the worker misses a particular ride to work. For supplemental and low wage earners, high commuting costs may discourage employment; transport charges to work should probably be less than the 10 percent of total family income that the Bureau of Labor Statistics considers as average for all transport costs.

Expenses to bad jobs should probably be far less than expenses for equidistant commuting to high-quality jobs. The poor seldom have the home location flexibility that affluent groups have. They do not always have the option of moving closer to their workplace in order to reduce commuting costs. Equivalent housing may not be available, they may have strong familial or ethnic ties to their neighborhoods, or they may be uncertain about the permanence of the employment and do not want to risk moving unnecessarily.

Transport programs that reduce commuting costs represent net increases in available income for the poor. With good, stable jobs, poor commuters become relatively insensitive to transport costs (2). At the least, cost reductions reduce the irritations that can discourage the marginally motivated worker.

#### AN ASSESSMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SUPPLY

The work-related travel needs just identified will now be compared to common-carrier bus transit, car pools, and car-driving to determine the role each of these modes might play in work access programs. (Other relevant modes for further study include walking, taxis, jitneys, bicycles, and charter-bus operations.) These specific modes have been chosen following suggestions that work access, especially to suburban jobs, begins on buses, switches to car pools as soon as acquaintances can be formed with co-workers, and ultimately ends when workers buy their own cars. Each mode's suitability and availability will be considered, along with barriers that inhibit their future use.

##### Common-Carrier Transit

In general, common-carrier bus transit operations on fixed routes and limited schedules meet only a fraction of the highly varied and often changing work trip needs of the poor. [In large cities, public transportation use for work trips declines from a high of 72 percent for incomes between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to about 31 percent for incomes between \$5,000 and \$10,000 (19). In cities with poor transit, poor worker use of transit is probably lower.] Those who live and work nearest the central areas of the urban core are likely to have reasonably adequate daytime service for downtown job search, hiring, and commuting, but few city systems operate frequent service late in the evening. The further the poor live or work from the core, the poorer the service is likely to be. Federally sponsored reverse bus operations from a few cities' ghettos to several suburbs' industrial parks did not provide the many-to-many travel services required by dispersed poor people and jobs; most of these buses ran only on weekdays and only served daytime shift changes, not off-peak or weekend hiring and work trip needs. Travel times over 1 hour were common, and most passengers had to pay fares of \$1 or more per day, not including access costs to reverse buses.

Existing transit availability is difficult to estimate. Most city or community technical studies examine transit access by mapping residence distances to local transit routes. The entire labor market area is not usually considered, and many basic "user-oriented" dimensions of transit service are not studied.<sup>1</sup> Official records and engineer-

<sup>1</sup>Some of these "user" dimensions include (a) transit routes by company or operating agency; (b) frequency of service on each route in each direction at all times of the day, week, and year; (c) location of bus stops by time

ing maps are used, although it is the poor peoples' perceptions of available service and distances that affect their trip-making. Problems with information distribution to the poor about available transportation services and travel subsidy programs for jobtrainees continue to keep even existing services from being fully utilized (20).

Several barriers exist to prevent transit from assuming a large role in future worker travel in suburban areas. Even in developed suburbs, low land use densities, dispersed travel times, and high auto availability lead to few local routes that can generate sufficient ridership to support increasing labor and operating costs. As a result, suburban service has been declining (21).

Suburban passenger distribution and collection are made circuitous and time-consuming by a physical environment that has not been planned for bus or pedestrian movements. Deep setbacks of major traffic generators, limited-access highways, spiral-shaped industrial park roads, and narrow plant entrance driveways restrict buses; median strips, guardrails, security fences, and a lack of snow-cleared and lit sidewalks hamper pedestrians, even on short walks to and from transit stops.

Bus operators have great difficulty trying to schedule and route adequate bus service for suburban workers. Frequent service is required if workshift and recruitment times are scattered around the clock and not coordinated among the employers to be served. Employers will rarely change their work hours to facilitate transit use because only a small fraction of their work force is likely to use transit. The bus routes that run between suburban residences and urban jobs can rarely be the same as routes linking dispersed residences and suburban jobs. Since they must also be run at the same rush-hour times as other services, suburban and reverse bus operations increase transit manpower and equipment requirements rather than lead to more efficient use of transit resources just in off-peak periods.

As suburban bus ridership and revenues from scheduled services have failed to keep pace with increasing costs, transit management has become concerned with finding ways to reduce expenses rather than develop and market transit services that might attract more patronage. With limited available funds, managers are now reluctant to gamble on projects with high set-up costs (1, pp. 18-24).

Some financial assistance has been made available from governmental sources, but serious problems with innovative transport implementation will continue. In suburban areas, job- and road-building developments take place sporadically and unpredictably. In the absence of expensive and long-term operating subsidies, most transit companies cannot provide an area's earliest residents and employers with the same levels of service that might later prove economically viable. Small companies frequently lack the interest and/or resources to participate willingly in new programs involving time-consuming government red tape, community meetings, and planning sessions. Self-made transportation managers, trying to stay solvent, show little compassion for the problems of the urban unemployed; instead of devising aids that might help the poor (intercompany schedule and public information coordination, joint tariffs, transfers), managers fear that these aids might divert their captive ridership to competitors' lines.

The most restrictive barriers to better common-carrier service may be political and legal issues (21). Transit unions want job protection and resist operating changes that increase their productivity without compensating benefits. Managers want regulatory freedom to consolidate routes and schedules to cut costs at the same time they want public protection from existing and new competition. While various citizens' groups and taxpayers can be mobilized to fight against disrupting new transportation construction and service cutbacks, getting them to resolve their conflicting travel needs and to generate compromise services has proved difficult. Regulatory commissions and municipalities must make trade-offs between transit suppliers and consumer groups

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of day; (d) locations of pedestrian barriers; (e) fare zones; (f) transfer points and charges; (g) running times (express and local) between all stops by time of day; and (h) capacity of equipment and corresponding load factors on each run, by direction and time of day. This information about service is hard to obtain and keep up to date (10, 22). Regulatory commissions and transit companies rarely have money to maintain accurate, current maps and schedules of complete operations in a metropolitan area. Official "supplier" data are seldom available by small areas and by time intervals such as weekdays or off-peak and hence are not very useful for analyzing service to the poor or for planning particular trips.

when they use their legal authority to control bus route franchises and transit stops, the entry and exit of transit firms in local markets, fare structures, and insurance requirements (22, chapt. 5; 23, p. 26).

### Car Pools

The suitability and availability of car-pool operations for work-access travel needs of the poor have not yet received professional scrutiny. Car pools do not appear to be a viable transportation mode during the job search, hiring, and early transitional commute stages of the employment cycle. High car-occupancy rates have been noted for some reverse-commute movements, but little is known about the long-term economics and operations of car pools among groups of low-income workers of various occupations, residential patterns, and other demographic characteristics (19).

New low-skilled employees may face several problems creating a new car pool or joining an existing one. In some workplaces, only a few co-workers may be interested in forming a car pool. These people may live too far apart to form car pools, or they may prefer to form car pools whose members are of similar status or race. Employers or employee organizations may not provide assistance to start car pools. Many poor workers have not developed the social skills necessary to locate and organize strangers into a reliable, cooperative car-pool operation. Until they form friends among their fellow employees, the poor may be reluctant to ask to join existing car pools.

Several conditions necessary to sustain a car pool may not be met because of the nature of many jobs and the limited resources available to the poor. Car-pool members do not always have phones at their jobs or homes that allow them to communicate easily with one another. Unless all members work the same shifts and hours, shift rotations and overtime work can split up car pools and leave some members stranded. Drivers and the cars used in the pool may not be reliable; driver tardiness and absenteeism or car breakdowns create hardships and tensions among non-drivers. Without a system of backup drivers and cars, car-pool members may not be able to get to work. Finally, high quit rates and terminations among the poor in low-paying or poor-quality jobs will be reflected in high turnover of car-pool participants.

### Personal Automobile Use

Automobiles are particularly well-suited to the dispersed location and schedule travel needs of low-skilled workers. With an auto, job search, application, and commuting come directly under the traveler's control. If a car-owner can share operating costs with other passengers, his perceived costs might be quite reasonable and he has the benefits of car ownership for non-work trips as well as work trips. To the extent that he works in the off-peak hours, in employment locations with adequate parking, or in suburbs, his car commute is likely to avoid the congestion and other commuting problems of the downtown-bound day-shift workers.

Aggregated statistics make it difficult to ascertain car availability among poor urban and suburban workers. Nationally, for all households in 1970 with incomes of less than \$1,000, between \$1,000 and \$2,000, and between \$2,000 and \$3,000, the corresponding percentages of car-owning households have been 25, 41, and 50 percent respectively (24, p. 47). [Auto use to work in large cities by the poor ranged from a low of 14 percent (for \$1,000-\$2,000 incomes) to 49 percent (for \$4,000-\$5,000 incomes) (19). These figures are probably lower than in moderate-sized cities with poor transit.] Urban and suburban figures are probably somewhat lower than these figures, which include rural poor households. Higher car ownership rates are likely in newer cities and suburbs (22, pp. 1-5) and in poor households with incomes above \$3,000. Households with at least one worker might be expected (in any one setting) to have more access to a car than poor households with no member in the labor force.

A poor person is less able to deal with many car-related problems than a more affluent person. A poor car-owner's resources for alternative transportation are limited. He may be less familiar with existing transit service. He is less likely to have a second car available. He cannot afford to rent a car or take a taxi when unpredictable maintenance repairs must be made on his commuting car (2). He seldom

has cash available to pay for expensive parts and labor. (The fraction of the car-owning poor population who enjoy repairing their own cars may be quite small. Many poor people do repairs because they cannot afford to pay costly car mechanics. Other poor people lack the skill, the specialized tools, the time, or a suitable workplace.) He is less likely to know about or take full advantage of consumer protection warranties. When accidents occur, the poor person without a good lawyer is apt to experience longer delays and receive lower settlement payments than a person who can afford better legal assistance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Three general ideas for improved work-access programs emerge from this analysis of travel requirements, patterns of employment, and the suitability and availability of transportation.

### Minimize the Need to Make Work-Related Trips

To minimize travel needs in the short run, greater efforts should be made to foster job search and hiring efforts near poor residence areas. Information about regional jobs should be locally available. To keep employers who offer good jobs from moving away from accessible locations, employers should be informed of the inconveniences that will be incurred by their employees and of the possibility of recruitment problems. For companies who are committed to moving to relatively inaccessible areas, information on transit services and programs to assist job application procedures and bus movements (both spatially and temporally) should be made available.

To minimize travel in the long run, policies to reduce the work needs to travel might include the attraction of new employment into labor surplus areas. Government officials contemplating new hospitals and other service facilities in outlying areas should consider unskilled employee access in their location criteria or be sure to include sufficient funds for employee, job-seeker, and visitor access if they anticipate recruitment and high-turnover problems. Guaranteed incomes and the 4-day workweek are two non-transportation programs that will help reduce total work travel levels. Low-cost suburban housing may or may not reduce commuting distances (13) but will not solve the problems of job search and hiring that already exist in suburban poverty areas (8).

### Reduce Barriers to Self-Help Transportation Efforts

When the constraints on car pools and transit are all considered, the least costly and most practical long-run solution for improving work-access travel needs of the poor seems to rest with some form of self-help vehicle such as a car. [The subsidy costs on demonstration bus projects have run so high on some routes (\$1,500 per rider) that the provision of a car, gas, insurance, etc., would have been cheaper to the taxpayer and would have given each owner and his family multipurpose transportation instead of transportation only to work sites (25)]. Except for those who live in the densest traffic corridors or who are not able to drive, autos provide the flexibility needed for work needs without having to pay for driver labor. (In warm, dry climates such as the Southwest, motorcycles might be economical alternatives to cars.) Although this solution will be anathema to several groups (anti-automobile, middle-class citizens and planners; transport bureaucrats with a restricted mandate to help their poorer clients; environmentalists; people who want glamorous, centrally planned, technological projects), a car-oriented approach that helps more poor people acquire, insure, drive, and maintain an automobile may be the only way, in many cities, to help poor workers who want to travel. With increased car ownership among the poor, more non-owners may have car-owning friends who can drive them to look for and to apply for jobs.

Easing car ownership and operating problems can be a politically sensible approach to encouraging self-help if it does not provide cars just to poor members of the labor force. A broad program to help car owners will benefit a wide range of citizens—the "silent majority" and the poor worker—with relatively small additional government

outlays. Government-backed car purchase and insurance schemes and government resale or off-peak rental of its vehicles should be geared to helping families with no current access to cars. [Past increases in car sales have been to families who already had at least one car, while the number of families with no car has remained steady (26).] Improvements and simplifications in car financing, insurance, and claim processing; non-regressive regulations in automobile taxation and fees, air pollution, and safety; and pressures on manufacturers to develop inexpensive, reliable, safe, and easy-to-maintain cars are programs that make auto ownership and operation less of a burden.

It seems unlikely that the newly acquired cars of the working poor would greatly increase congestion, pollution, and other problems associated with autos in general. These additional cars will not be the "straw that breaks the urban highway system's back," because of the likely timing and location of their use. It is unfair to discriminate against poor families by denying them some measure of increased mobility if they want and need it to work, while planners will spend years trying to devise alternative solutions to fundamental, car-related problems.

#### Provide Transportation for Those Who Cannot Help Themselves

Work-access improvement programs must make some provision for those who cannot provide their own transportation, or else programs will result in major reductions in common-carrier service. Reductions will restrict the mobility of the autoless poor worker still further. Improved information and marketing techniques, coordinated and faster door-to-door transit service, and education programs that help people plan trips and overcome fears associated with travel will help people take advantage of already existing services. Mere expansion of the number of buses in operation, the availability of more capital and operating subsidies, or the reduction of fares will not necessarily help meet work-travel needs. Institutional, legal, scheduling, and managerial barriers to service innovation in the transit industry must be minimized.

Planners must view improved access to jobs from the perspective of their poor clients who are looking for jobs they will accept. Any service planning, analysis, and evaluation must consider job quality as well as quantity. These job search, application, and transitional commuting requirements of poor travelers suggest flexible modes such as taxis or a dial-a-bus system. Operations must be carefully supervised by competent, sensitive managers who can solve problems and market services effectively among employers and job-placement counselors (2, 3, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 23).

#### Paying for Improvements

Who should pay for improvement programs? The principal burden may be borne directly by benefiting employers whose location decisions make self-sustaining transit operations unprofitable and by benefiting workers. These payments might be higher wages, which employees then use to buy their own transportation, employer-provided transportation using its own vehicles, or increased taxes and assessments for publicly provided transportation. At the least, employers might accommodate the travel schedules of transit-dependent workers. Transportation funding may be provided by groups like placement services, chambers of commerce, industrial park members, and unions. Church and other community service organizations might be mobilized to help provide help for job search, hiring, and emergencies. Unless government was itself an employer, government efforts would be required in planning and developing programs, not necessarily in direct operations or subsidies.

### CONCLUSIONS

Over the past few years, many people have had unrealistic expectations that the improvement of access from ghettos to suburban jobs would result in significant decreases in poverty. Experience has suggested that the poor will rarely travel anywhere in large numbers to get to poor-quality jobs.

The routing and scheduling flexibility needs of the unskilled poor when they travel to look and apply for jobs and to go to work are met most satisfactorily by the private

automobile or by publicly provided modes with similar performance capability and availability. Conventional bus service and car pooling have serious service deficiencies that limit their usefulness for many work-related travel situations.

Reductions in the need to travel, self-help travel aids, and assistance for travel-dependent people are pragmatic programs for lessening travel barriers encountered by many persons. The programs offer advantages of low public investment costs, decentralization of travel decision-making and planning, and a more equitable distribution of transportation costs and benefits among employers and the urban poor seeking work.

It seems important to conclude that access to good transportation is not, by itself, necessary and sufficient to eliminate unemployment or poverty. Work-access improvement programs for poor urban residents will only be of assistance to people with job information, marketable labor skills, and the knowledge and confidence required to travel. Anti-poverty program success depends on increasing the total number of acceptable jobs and alternative income sources that provide people not in the labor force with enough money to live.

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