



Rural Transportation

Rural Transportation: Addressing Barriers to Transportation Equity with Sustainable Solutions

SYSTEMIC INEQUALITIES IN RURAL TRANSPORTATION

A strong transportation system elevates communities through the economic development, social aggregation, and access to resources it provides. However, inequitable transportation systems can have the reverse effect of debilitating communities that do not have access to its services. This inequitable distribution of public transit is particularly salient across geographic areas: **only 11% of rural residents** report having access to public transportation near their home, **compared to 83%** of central cities in metropolitan statistical areas despite similar rates of reliance on public transit.¹ Figure 1.1 illustrates the similarly inequitable distribution of funding for rural and urban systems.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION

Many rural areas are centered on land-based economies, where robust, rich landscapes are critical to the vitality of these communities. In Ohio alone, **nearly 50%** of land allocation is concentrated on agriculture, despite only **36% percent** of people living in rural areas. Transportation planning, therefore, has important implications for environmental and natural resources protection, especially in a rural context. The development of equitable transportation must therefore consider **both** the socioeconomic wellbeing of rural residents and vitality of rural land in order to be truly equitable.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS OF EQUITABLY DISTRIBUTED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS



Access to Resources

According to NRHA, there are 263 healthcare specialists per 100,000 people in urban areas compared to **only 30 in rural areas**. Additionally, 80% of regions in the US with **low educational attainment** are rural communities. Both factors are **directly related to lack of access to transportation**.



Economic Development

Transportation reduces production costs, leading to more competitive pricing and overall **more economically competitive region**. Better networks can lead to **reductions in travel time, lower vehicle operating costs, and increased property values**.



Community Aggregation

Transit allows more people to come closer together in **higher density developments**, sustaining **clusters of industries and businesses** by supporting their closer proximity to each other, which **improves productivity and creates aggregations of activities**.



Improved Access to Jobs

Increased transportation systems result in **larger pool of employees available for the job market**. This may come from a new transit or commuter rail line that makes it possible for employees to reach **previously inaccessible jobs**.



Improved Well-Being

Transportation is a **fundamentally social determinant to mental, physical, and emotional well-being** for those in rural communities and is also an important tool in **reducing social isolation** for groups such as **older adults and people with disabilities**.

