

Many departments and systems within the United States government have for too long have perpetuated systemic inequality through their programs and funding, both intentionally, and unintentionally. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) is no different in this regard, with both disparate treatment and disparate impacts on the poor, minority, and disabled communities, among others. To address this issue, the future policy must focus on three parts: 1. Removing outright hostility in the policies regarding treatment of these communities, 2. Fixing previous disadvantages caused by former USDOT policies, local and regional policies, and structural societal biases with a focus on equitable outcomes, 3. Pre-empting unintended consequences and perverse incentives which can lead to an inequitable distribution of resources and outcomes.

The first shift in policy to address these issues would be the reallocation of funding within the department. The framework for analyzing a large amount of the unequal access in transportation is covered under Title VI (of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) ^[1]. An increase in enforcement funding would allow for the USDOT to address issues that currently exist within their current and future project grants. Additionally, more funding is highly necessary for Title VI enforcement as in *Alexander v. Sandoval*. the Supreme Court decided that individuals could not bring suits for disparate impacts, and thus the only recourse is enforcement through the USDOT ^[2]. I would also move to increase research funding for analysis of equitable outcomes in transportation policy as the unintended consequences of policies' interactions with our current society is a primary driver of inequality. A thorough accounting of how previous, and current policies are affecting communities of color, individuals with disabilities

In addition to increased funding for enforcement, a more active approach towards seeking out individuals in low-income and minority communities and advocating for their benefits is a necessary step. While many transportation bills have sought to increase municipal planning organizations (MPOs) adoption of inclusive policies, there is still a very evident discrepancy in the percentage of low-income and particularly individuals with disabilities who are consulted when discussing planning decisions ^{[3],[4]}. A requirement for State DOTs and MPOs to engage in pro-active outreach towards the community, until a representative cross-section of the population's opinion has been obtained, rather than relying upon those who are willing and able to travel to planning meetings, would be a top priority.

Finally, the largest and most expansive shift, would be to move away from auto-centric development which has decimated the urban and suburban landscapes, brought on during the decades of urban renewal and perpetuated by our road funding and lack of investment in public transport in the years since ^[5]. I would make a move towards a more environmentally sustainable allocation of department resources. The first priority in this category would be to set up a review of all current highways in the U.S. with a recommendation for removal of any which are not integral to the transport of large numbers of vehicles over long distances, and a preference towards large ring highway as opposed to those which cut through inner cities. Large highways are one of the main factors preventing adequate investment in inner cities, with suburbanites driving over these areas due to limited access. Grants would be provided to assist in this project, along with grants to encourage localities to reduce and/or eliminate minimum parking requirements. In addition to a natural increase in the traffic to previously dilapidated areas, these two policies, highway removal and removal of parking minimums would also reduce induced demand, creating preferences for higher density development, as well as alternate modes of transportation. This could then be combined with the funding freed up by the decreased cost of highway maintenance to incentivize larger investment in public transit. This

investment can be geared towards increasing off-hour access as well as adding routes that lead not just into and out of cities' downtowns, but suburb-to-suburb as well (a route which has become increasingly common in recent years but does not fit with the old paradigm upon which our current transit operates). The move towards public transit and away from automobiles has both the impact of increasing access for those without automobiles, who are disproportionately minorities, as well as decreasing the environmental harms associated with climate change as well as pollution which exacerbate disparate health outcomes among the same communities.

Works Cited

1. Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub.L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241 (1964).
2. 532 U.S. 275, 121 S.Ct. 1511 (2001).
3. Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), 23 U.S.C. § 101 et. seq. (1991) (amended in 1998 by TEA-21).
4. Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, Pub.L. 114-94 (1964).
5. D. Karas, "Highway to Inequity: The Disparate Impact of the Interstate Highway System on Poor and Minority Communities in American Cities," *New Visions Public Aff.*, vol. 7, pp. 9–21, (2015).
6. *National Equity Atlas*. Car Access. *National Equity Atlas*.
https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car_access#/ (2018).