

## Women's issues in transportation

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### Introduction

This chapter looks at transportation in the US through the lens of a women's rights perspective, challenging transportation providers, funders and regulators to consider and assess impacts on women in the community in planning, research and regulation. The chapter discusses policy approaches that create parallels to civil rights laws in the US, as well as social exclusion theory, community and social impact assessment procedures, avoidance and mitigation of damage, and valuing women's transportation. It makes recommendations on where changes should be made to existing policy and practice. It presents a case study of successful implementation in the field and describes what a new feminist paradigm for transportation might look like.

### An historical perspective

An historical perspective reveals that transportation has been used to subjugate women historically and to the present day. Transportation can serve as a method of securing freedom, equity and an increase in rights and liberties to women. Examples can be seen in the developments in the right to travel cases that gave women the right to move from state to state in the US and to secure welfare benefits in their new communities (see *Shapiro v Thompson*, 394 US 618, 1969, and subsequent US Supreme Court cases).

Cars were marketed to women early in the development of the automobile, but these early electric cars had limited range based on the notion that women did not need to travel beyond the sphere of the home. Institutional sexism strongly relates to women's history in transportation. To this day, we are plagued by the stereotyping of, and jokes about, women drivers. Women in the sphere of transportation are also often stereotyped in culture and societal attitudes and images.

Folk, blues, and rock'n'roll songs provide a telling example of a misogynist attitude toward women. Blues singer Robert Johnson generally displayed misogynist attitudes toward the women in his songs (Lemon, nd, para 2):

In songs such as *Terraplane Blues*, Johnson shows a misogynist attitude when he uses the sexual metaphor of a car as a woman's body. In *Terraplane Blues*, Johnson speaks of all the things he plans to do to this woman, even though it appears that she is not interested in doing anything with him.

Douglas Brinkley, author of *Wheels for the world: A biography of Ford Motor Company*, stated in an interview on *Morning Edition* on 3 June 2003 (para 3):

Henry Ford was shrewd enough to see women as the great consumers of America. If the man was going to be working these 40 or 50 hour workweeks, that gave the woman the time to do the shopping, to be the one who perhaps bought the Model T or the family car, and he won a lot of women over to his product by doing that.

Similarly:

Historians agree that the dominant gender ideology in America by the mid-nineteenth century and, with increasing ambivalence, into the early twentieth century, was that of separate spheres. The division of the world into public and private, male and female

worlds, has created a tension for women using any means of transportation, because transportation has traditionally taken place in a public, male space. But ideology bent to convenience: women frequently, if less frequently than men, used trains, streetcars, wagons, or cars, even if their use of these means of transportation ran counter to the separate spheres concept. (Schlanger, 1998, para 1)

## **Feminist theory**

In planning, where the press of work and current issues in the profession leave little time for philosophical examinations, basic theory gets understandably short shrift. Nonetheless, it is wise on occasion to step back and examine the theories and ideas underlying our practice, for they are important.

The aim of our research is not to examine the impact on specific areas such as land-use planning, but on the conception of transportation planning and the ways it is carried out. The challenges and contributions of this work have many implications for planning theory, going well beyond issues of gender and dealing with power, process, professionalism, and ethics. These issues reach to the foundation of many issues of current importance in planning: defining the public interest, citizen participation, equity, justice, and the legitimization of planning itself.

Vigorous debates around feminist theories have been found in many disciplines since the 1960s. All are motivated by a shared purpose: to challenge male dominance, to contribute to knowledge about women, and to construct a science in which gender and gender relations are seen as fully social and explanatorily important. The data and documentation establishing the extent to which gender bias has permeated the humanities and sciences and the impact this has had is now extensive and widely accepted.

There is no single 'feminist theory'. There are many areas of divergence and disagreement between Marxist feminists, radical feminists, women of color, materialists, idealists, postmodernists, and others. Despite the many differences between and within disciplines, there is a consensus (Snyder, 1995, p 92) on certain central ideas which have direct implications for research and practice:

- *Social experience is gendered.* That is, the social order creates, assigns, and influences our roles, values, opportunities, status, environments, and perspectives in part based on gender. Gender itself is a social construct distinct from the biological category of sex.
- *All theory, like all practice, is inherently political; it necessarily either perpetuates or challenges the status quo.* The development of knowledge and its application through action are social enterprises, and therefore have political and ethical aspects which cannot be disassociated from them.
- *Theory and practice cannot and should not be separated.* Feminist theory is explicitly emancipatory and critical. Most theorists believe that knowledge contains an imperative to action; theory and praxis are seen in a mutually reinforcing, reflexive relationship.
- *Subjects and objects are not and cannot be separated.* A relationship exists between knower and the object, and each necessarily affects the other. Theory and practice are more accurate and clear when this reflexivity is consciously accepted, rather than attempting the scientific ideal of objectivity through separation. A corollary of the above is that personal experience and grounded research are valid forms of knowledge. Feminist thought directs attention to and admits a broader range of experience as legitimate and valid knowledge. Other forms of knowing and other knowers exist beyond the limited authorities and expert status granted by traditional scientific method and the dominant patriarchal culture.

## **Gender differences in travel behavior**

US transportation studies clearly demonstrate significant differences in women's travel behavior, patterns and needs from those of men (see Chapter Two of this volume). For

example, women drive less (21 to 38 miles per day); men drive longer (67 to 44 minutes per day) (US Department of Transportation, National Household Travel Survey, 2001-02). Other differences include variations in trip-chaining<sup>1</sup> travel patterns for working women with children, increased isolation for older women who live in suburban and rural communities and who no longer drive, transportation safety and security concerns of women, and numerous other issues. There are also variations among groups of women, using criteria such as disability, age, race, national origin, limited English proficiency, income, and family status. Many of these differences require a focused policy and practice response.

The Federal Highway Administration (Hanlon, 1997, p 651) finds:

Differences between men and women in terms of the ways in which they use public transport have been well-documented. Increasingly, the typical public transport user is not only a woman, but also a captive customer being without access to a car or without a license. In fact, two thirds of all public transport trips are made by such captive customers.

## **Civil rights law**

Statutory prohibitions against sex discrimination require that the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) ensures that planning and policy decisions and incentives in federally assisted transportation infrastructure do not discriminate against women. These statutes generally require non-discrimination on the basis of sex. However, the concept of environmental justice in the US encompasses minority and low-income communities, but not women. It should, however, since women earn only \$0.72 for every dollar men earn in the US; being a woman is often a proxy measure for having a low income (US Census Bureau, 2002).

We have explored the US federal transportation civil rights statutes and regulations that prohibit sex discrimination and enumerate some of the transportation policy issues that are covered by these provisions. Our analysis links transportation programs covered by sex anti-discrimination provisions and programs that provide benefits to and concern women.

### *The legal implications of transportation policy developments*

Policy developments in transportation that have discriminatory implications include certain Transportation Demand Management (TDM) approaches, such as flexible work schedules, that may not work for women travelers because of the unavailability of childcare for these alternative schedules since childcare facilities frequently are not available in the evenings or on weekends. Transportation Demand Management generally refers to policies, programs, and actions that are directed towards decreasing the use of single-occupant vehicles. It also can include activities to encourage shifting or spreading peak travel periods. Non-discriminatory transportation planning and policy development with a focus on customer need and community input demands consideration of women's transportation issues.

### *Enforcement of non-discrimination laws: federal*

The fact that federal transportation funding statutes prohibit sex discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded transportation programs has been ignored by researchers, advocates, some recipients of federal financial assistance, and to some extent by those charged with enforcing the laws. In the context of litigation challenging allocation of funds to urban and suburban communities as discriminatory, Jeffrey Brown, an advocate for equitable transportation planning (1998, pp 12-13) wrote,

One class of bus riders whose needs seemed to disappear during the struggle is women.

Women make up 54% of Metropolitan Transport Authority (MTA) bus passengers. Women's transportation needs can differ quite significantly from the transportation needs of men. Perhaps most obvious in this regard are the different travel patterns and hence transportation

needs followed by women who work in the household and/or serve as the primary caregivers for their children. These women have different transportation needs than women who commute to work on a regular basis, who themselves often have needs arising from domestic responsibilities. Yet agencies such as the MTA, in their zeal to serve commuters, often make decisions that negatively impact different groups of women. These negative impacts stem from the fact that, like racial minorities and the poor, women have often been traditionally excluded from the MTA's decision-making process (Brown, 1998).

Perhaps one reason gender disappeared from the discussion is because it is not a protected category under either the Fourteenth Amendment or the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the two statutory bases of the lawsuit. However, class is not protected either and this did not stop the Bus Riders' Union (BRU) from linking race and class. The BRU stresses its feminist agenda in its brochures and handouts and boasts about the important roles played by women in its leadership. Perhaps the transportation needs of women will be an area of mobilization for the BRU in the future. At the present time, however, the questions remain: how can we guarantee that individuals can make their own transportation needs heard? How can we recognize the diversity of individuals and needs of the transit-dependent? How can all of us work to guarantee that women's voices are being heard and women's needs are being met?

Jeffrey Brown, a strong transportation equity advocate, seems unaware that federal non-discrimination provisions of federal transportation funding statutes prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex.

#### *Enforcement of non-discrimination laws: state and local*

Another area of this research concerns the extent to which local, state, and federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination against women are enforced in the transportation context. State and local laws cover employment, pregnancy, equal pay, public accommodations, and services. Are governmental transportation entities and state and local civil rights agencies enforcing these laws efficiently and equitably?

#### *Driving while female*

In April 2002, a Virginia state trooper was indicted for soliciting sex from women in exchange for dropping traffic charges against them. At about the same time, a San Bernadino (CA) officer was charged with raping 11 women while on duty. On the East Coast, an officer from a department outside of Philadelphia was convicted of raping an intoxicated woman while on duty and in uniform. Last year, a case occurring in Suffolk County (NY) involved an officer accused of forcing female drivers to strip or face arrest. This prompted a study entitled *Driving while female: A national problem in police misconduct* (Walker and Irlbeck, 2002).

The problem of 'driving while female' parallels the national problem of racial profiling or 'driving while black'. Substantial evidence indicates that police officers stop African American drivers because of their race and not because of any evidence of illegal activity. In other parts of the country, police officers stop Hispanic/Latino drivers solely because of their ethnicity, a practice that has been labeled 'driving while brown' (a major part of the problem, according to the *Driving while female* study, is the failure of law enforcement agencies to investigate allegations brought to their attention). Departments do not take allegations of this discrimination seriously and deny officer wrongdoing, the study said. Moreover, such victims feel "particularly traumatized or humiliated" (Walker and Irlbeck, 2002). The study also points to a "pervasive sexist culture" (Walker and Irlbeck, 2002) that manifests itself in employment discrimination against women, tolerance of sexual harassment within the department, and systematic failure to investigate domestic violence when the alleged abuser is an officer within the agency. The US National Center for Women and Policing has recommended that departments hire more women not only to change from an aggressive style of policing to one that emphasizes communication, but also to stem the use of excessive force and misconduct.

Walker and Irlbeck (2002) recommended that the following steps need to be taken:

*Step one: Data collection*

Law enforcement agencies need to begin collecting data to determine whether there is a pattern of driving while female abuses by their officers.

*Step two: Official policies and training*

Every law enforcement agency should immediately issue a formal policy prohibiting 'driving while female' abuse. The policy should define driving while female as the use of law enforcement powers for the purpose of stopping female drivers where there is no suspect criminal activity or traffic law violation, and also taking advantage of women drivers who have been stopped for legitimate violations. The policy should clearly state that any form of sexual harassment or assault of an individual, regardless of gender, is impermissible conduct that will result in termination proceedings.

*Step three: Better supervision*

Law enforcement chief executives need to take immediate steps to ensure proper supervision of officers on the street. They need to ensure that supervisory officers are alert to the potential problem of driving while female and take the necessary steps to curb it.

*Step four: An open and accessible citizen complaint system*

Law enforcement chief executives should take immediate steps to ensure that the department's citizen complaint system is open and accessible to all members of the community. Where an independent citizen oversight agency does not exist, local communities need to create one that is open and accessible.

## **Other legal and quasi-legal issues**

Professor Ian Ayres (1991) finds overwhelming evidence that, in a variety of markets (retail car sales, bail bonding, kidney transplantation, and Federal Communications Commission licensing) black people and females are consistently at a disadvantage. For example, when Ayres sent out agents of different races and genders posing as potential buyers to more than 200 car dealerships in Chicago, he found that dealers regularly charged black people and women more than they charged white men. He states:

There was evidence of gender discrimination in my original pilot study.... In that study, dealerships offered systematically higher prices to African American women than to African American men. (Ayres, 1991, p 35)

As a counterweight, a recent study by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, and Yale University found that the Internet serves as an equalizer for those whose demographic characteristics might end up costing them at a car dealership, primarily African Americans, Hispanics, and women (University of California and Yale University, 2001).

### *Religious issues*

In the US, photographs of one's face are required for a driver's license. Some women, primarily Muslims, who wear veils for religious reasons, refuse to expose their faces for such purposes. Although it is always difficult to find rational reasons for a religious injunction, modesty and avoiding being attractive to male non-family members are often given as reasons for the rule for some Muslims on the veil for women. A driver's license is a necessity for getting to work and full participation in society, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter. In Florida in 2002, a Muslim woman sued the state for suspending her driver's license after she refused to remove her face-covering veil for the photo (*Freeman v State of Florida*, 2003). She wore a niqab, or face veil.

The American Civil Liberties Union said the law is vague and pointed to another Florida law stating the “government shall not substantially burden a person’s exercise of religion” (Freeman v State of Florida, 2003, Count II, para 2). At least three other Muslim women have been refused Florida drivers’ licenses because of their headdresses, according to Altaf Ali, executive director of the Florida chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, an advocacy group.

The plaintiff did not prevail in the Florida state courts (American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, 2003). In June 2003, Florida Circuit Court judge Janet C. Thorpe ruled that Sultaana Freeman’s right to free exercise of religion would not be infringed by having to show her face on her license. Thorpe said the state “has a compelling interest in protecting the public from criminal activities and security threats” (Sultaana Freeman v State of Florida, 2002), and that photo identification “is essential to promote that interest”. The Florida Assistant Attorney General had argued that Islamic law has exceptions that allow women to expose their faces if it serves a public good, and that arrangements could be made to have Freeman photographed with only women present to allay her concerns about modesty. Interestingly, a driver’s license can be obtained without a photo in 14 states. The story excited a great deal of commentary on the Internet, much of it negative about Muslims. The issue shows the interesting overlaps of women’s issues, religion, privacy, and security. The more rabid criticism was also interesting because it confused the nationality of the woman (a native-born American), saying she should “go back to her own country”. This shows the delegitimising risks women take when they try to stand up for their beliefs.

One could say that wearing the veil and obtaining a driver’s license is not truly a women’s issue, if one adopts the tortured reasoning in the Supreme Court decision stating that discrimination against pregnant women because of their pregnancy is not sex discrimination, because pregnant women are a category apart from ‘women’. One could also ask if men will be required to shave their beards and moustaches in order to present a truer picture when they obtain a driver’s license.

## **Differences across the lifespan**

Women outlive men by several years, creating a significant impact on the conditions under which older women live, suggesting the need for new strategies for providing a decent quality of life for poorer, older women. In a society in which quality of life is determined to a significant degree by mobility, lack of convenient transportation is an important detriment. In the US, unlike anywhere else in the world, the percentage of women who hold drivers’ licenses is very close to that of men. However, research demonstrates that women give up their drivers’ licenses at an earlier age than do men. Analysis of applicable civil rights laws is necessary to determine if this situation presents potential issues of sex and/or age discrimination.

Older women give up drivers’ licenses earlier than men. Women drive cars less often than men do, and have the option of driving less often than men have. This discrepancy is especially blatant among the older generations, partly due to the very gendered process of driving cessation. Anu Siren delivered a paper on this topic at the June 2002 Conference on Reconceptualising Gender and Ageing (Siren, 2002). She noted that, whereas men tend to drive as long as their health allows them to, women give up their licenses at younger ages and for less pressing reasons. Early, voluntary driving cessation can have a strong, negative effect on women’s independent mobility and thus on their well-being.

There is some possibility that this is a ‘habit-related’ rather than gender-related phenomenon, in which older women give up driving unnecessarily soon. Perhaps they have a more realistic view of their driving abilities, decrease in vision and increase in reaction time, and so on, as opposed to older men, who may have an unrealistic view of their abilities.

Stutts (in University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center, 1998) also reported that men are particularly reluctant to stop driving, and often deny any deterioration in their driving skills. Some seniors continue to drive “in spite of everything”, regardless of

physician recommendations against driving and injury-producing, at-fault crashes. On the other hand, there is one subset of older drivers, typically women, whose giving up driving prematurely has been studied. Generally, these drivers never really enjoyed driving, are uncomfortable in today's driving environment, and have a spouse who drives. Although an event like a hospitalization may trigger their decision to stop driving, often they just drive less and less until they no longer feel comfortable behind the wheel. Due to lack of public transit in the US suburbs, where an increasing percentage of Americans live, driving cessation can create basic subsistence problems, due to lack of availability of shopping. This is discussed in more detail below in regard to the specific example of grocery shopping.

Older women have some greater accident risk than men because of some auto-design and auto-safety design issues, such as seat belt and air bag placement, and increasing accident rates among women (Staplin, et al, 1999). With percentage crash fatalities down due to air bags, but lower body injuries significant, there may be differential impacts on women due to osteoporosis (brittle bones, especially in hips) of older women drivers and passengers. There are data indicating that older women are more timid drivers than men and that older women might benefit from older driver education programs.

Part of the phenomenon of women giving up licenses prematurely or ahead of men may be due to the current generation of older women, who may not have started driving or become as habituated as their age-cohort men. If the statistics change over time, with fewer older women giving up their licenses, then there will be some reason to believe that the phenomenon is based on social practices. Today, as most US young women begin to drive when young men do, and drive continuously throughout their active lifespans, the discrepancy in driving cessation may gradually end.

#### *Differences due to child-raising responsibilities*

As noted earlier in this chapter, women frequently do not rely on public transportation because it is difficult and inconvenient for those who need to travel to work, childcare, shopping, and so on, known as trip-chaining. To determine what might be an effective solution to meet this need, the US Federal Transit Administration and the National Council of Negro Women Inc. (NCNW), conducted a study of the effectiveness of locating childcare services at transit hubs (Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, 2002). The project sought to determine if such an approach was desired by women in the several communities investigated and to determine if such childcare center placement was effective in increasing public transit usage and made travel more convenient and efficient for the women. The NCNW outreach into urban areas through its community-based national affiliates and its network of collaborative organizations provided an opportunity to obtain community input on the needs for safe, accessible and affordable childcare services that also facilitated use of public transit.

There have been proposals for – and limited experiments with – ‘transit villages’, which are clusters of apartments, townhouses, offices and stores near transit hubs. They can provide ready transit access to stores, services and community resources such as libraries, clinics and day-care centers, which can save time and travel expenses for commuters who pass through the transit village on the way to and from home or work. In Oakland (CA), most of the original Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) parking area at the Fruitvale station will become part of an innovative project with a senior citizen center, a health clinic, a day-care center and a branch library in addition to almost 250 residential units (including lofts) and 70,000 square feet of commercial/retail space (Stewart, 2002).

A similar plan has been proposed for the Cincinnati (OH) area, called MetroMoves (Trapp, 2001). MetroMoves calls for a web of routes running east and west and from suburb to suburb, connecting most of Hamilton County and beyond. Serving the connections would be 26 transit hubs occupied by businesses tailored to each community's needs, such as day-care centers, newsstands and dry cleaners. Similar ideas are in various stages of consideration and development in Toronto, Ontario; Minneapolis (MN); and Detroit (MI).

Time spent chauffeuring children to activities also comprises a surprisingly large component of parental (mostly female) time (Budig and Folbre, 2002). Results from the *Child development supplement of the panel survey of income dynamics* (CD-PSID) show that:

... in 1997 children under the age of three in the US spent about as much time with their mothers on a weekday in transportation as they did in personal care. (Fuligni, 2000, cited in Budig and Folbre, 2002, p 11)

Most of this transportation time was time spent riding in a car with parents who were on their way to childcare, shopping, or errands.

Having children in the car is also a contributor to 'distracted driving'. Distracted driving is under some discussion now because of the growth in the use of cell phones. Distracted driving may contribute to accidents, due to perception blindness caused by the distraction.

### *Trip-chaining*

Combined trips are referred to as 'trip-chaining'. Trip chaining creates complex trip patterns, making transit time consuming, inconvenient or impossible. For example, stopping at the dry cleaner or grocery store is combined with picking up children on the way home from work. Incentives to trip chain include lack of practical transit. Women trip chain much more than men. For women without cars, the problem is magnified. For example, a stop at the dry cleaner is combined with picking up little Johnny after school. Some impulse trips can be delayed or combined. Historically, the incentives to trip chain include an individual's personal time management and the physical unavailability or impracticality of transit options. The complex trip patterns of time-pressed two-worker households that involve multiple stops along the commute route often make the use of transit time consuming, inconvenient – and often impossible. Trip chaining especially affects women with small children.

### *Spatial mismatch*

Spatial mismatch is an increasingly serious barrier to employment. It refers to the location of suitable jobs in areas that are inaccessible by public transportation. This is a result of the growth of new service jobs in areas outside the city, in new outer suburbs and airport industrial parks. Service jobs are heavily held by women and in particular lower-income women leaving welfare-to-work (WtoW) programs.

There is concentrated poverty in the historic center of cities, but de-concentrated opportunity in the form of job suburbanization toward the metropolitan periphery. This phenomenon is most prevalent in larger metropolitan areas that tend to be fragmented by multiple political jurisdictions, because that fragmentation helps to create disequilibrium, a market failure, in the labor market. Being female, especially being single and a mother, is often a proxy measure for being poor. While poor people and black people, on average, live closer to currently existing jobs than do white people, they are generally located farther from areas of net employment growth. Job vacancy rates and wages are also higher in less-skilled jobs that are located in predominantly white suburbs rather than cities or racially mixed suburbs, suggesting better labor market opportunities for those with access to the former. For instance, potential workers without cars have more difficulty gaining suburban employment than do potential workers with cars, and employers located near public transit stops attract more new employees than do those located further away.

The access of low-income inner-city residents to suburban employers depends not only on the proximity of employers to mass transit stops, but also on the distance of various employers from low-income neighborhoods and the extent to which direct public transit routes are available between these sites (that is, without the need to change buses or trains one or more times). Harry J. Holzer, chief economist at the US Department of Labor, stated (1999, section, para 1):

Unskilled workers, especially inner-city minorities, face a variety of barriers on the demand side of the labor market relative to their own characteristics: high-skill demands of employers, racial discrimination, lack of transportation to and information about suburban jobs, and lack of effective networks and contacts. Taken together, these factors generate difficulties for unskilled workers in gaining or keeping employment, especially at wages/benefits above the most minimal level.

These issues have a disproportionate impact on indigent women, especially those now placed in so-called WtoW programs. Women returning to work after participation in welfare programs face numerous barriers, including domestic violence, lack of childcare, limited job skills and education, all of which are enhanced by lack of transportation.

Some of these transportation issues are being addressed to a limited extent by the WtoW programs (see Chapter Ten of this volume).

### *Personal safety issues*

Some researchers on women's safety state that women's fear of using public transportation is unfounded because transit crime is decreasing (Anderson, 2003). Others indicate that women are afraid of isolated bus stops, transit parking garages and crowded mass transit. Surveys support this latter contention. Sexual harassment on transit is not always reflected in crime statistics. A common fear of women who use public transportation is car-jackings in rail and other transit parking lots. The crowded conditions on trains create opportunities for invasion of personal space. When surveyed, men rarely list safety and security as a reason not to take transit. Women do, however, express this fear, particularly in relation to using bicycles (Anderson, 2003, Fear of Attack section, para 1 and 2):

Another occasionally expressed reason for bicycling attracting such a small percentage of females is fear of attack in remote places. Driving through a dark neighborhood in a car with locked doors gives a sense of security hard to match on a bicycle.... This is not entirely an unfounded fear. Women do report a certain amount of harassment while riding, usually in the form of remarks shouted from passing cars.

In addition to traffic safety, fears surrounding the level of safety and crime in an area may deter walking. A study conducted in five US states showed that residents who perceived their neighborhoods to be unsafe were significantly more likely to be physically inactive (Neighborhood Safety, 1999). This physical inactivity was highest among women, older people, people of color, people with a high school degree or lower, and people with annual incomes below \$20,000.

### *Access to healthcare and abortion services*

Lack of transportation deprives many women of necessary health services, resulting in greater need for emergency healthcare and poor health. The Kaiser Women's Health Survey (Salganicoff et al, 2002) clearly points out the dramatic effects of lack of transportation on women's health, finding that transportation difficulties resulted in delayed care for 21% of women in fair or poor health, four times the rate of women in better health:

Women are major consumers of healthcare services, in many cases negotiating not only their own care, but also that of their family members. Their reproductive health needs, greater rate of health problems, and longer life spans compared to men make their relationships with the health system complex. Their access to care is often complicated by their disproportionately lower incomes and greater responsibilities juggling work and family concerns. Because of their own health needs, limited financial resources, and family responsibilities, women have a vested interest in the scope and type of services offered by health plans, as well as in the mechanisms that fund health care services. (Salganicoff et al, 2002, p vii)

Innovative programs help to link women with free and low-cost breast health-screening services in the community: for example, arranging transportation and case management for women who have access problems and bringing mobile mammography screening to a facility in the community. Bringing healthcare to transit-deprived women is one effective way of addressing healthcare needs (Kramer and Wiatr, 2002).

Another area of healthcare that is limited for some women, especially those in rural communities, is access to abortion services. The combination of laws that require so-called 'waiting periods' between the initial visit to the abortion provider and the performance of the abortion procedure, along with lack of access to transportation, frequently results in denial of abortion services, increased costs and/or substantial delay in obtaining the abortion. These 'waiting periods' frequently require two separate trips to the abortion provider: the first for 'counseling', and the second for the abortion. This often requires two trips to the provider or an overnight stay in a hotel. For women without a car or unable to drive or with a car in disrepair and long distances to transverse, this is impossible.

The declining number of clinics and the growing concentration of clinics in cities mean that many women must wait longer and travel farther to exercise their right to end a pregnancy. Ninety-four percent of the counties in Georgia, for example, have no abortion provider, a percentage that mirrors that found in many states, according to National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) Pro-Choice America Foundation (2004). Nationwide, 87% of US counties have no abortion provider, according to Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health and The Alan Guttmacher Institute (2003).

Given the declining number of clinics, Karen Shugart (2003, para 5) states:

Amid such declining access to clinics, the need for such transportation services is growing. Many organizations are responding to that need in the same way as the Volunteer Drivers Network [in Georgia] and some are providing even more extensive services.

Volunteer driver networks are an example of an effective and supportive approach to resolving a difficult situation for many rural women. Unfortunately, the programs that exist are not able to assist many women, resulting in unnecessary denial and delay.

### *Time poverty*

Women suffer from time poverty, in part due to transportation problems. As Jeff Turner and Margaret Grieco (1998, Abstract section, para 1) have noted:

Women have different transport and travel patterns to men in the developed world. Women are involved in poorly resourced, highly complex, multiple purpose trips, men make single purpose trips on higher cost and superior modes of transport. These differences in transport and travel patterns are generated out of the differential accesses of the genders to economic resources, social resources and time resources. Women are time poor as a consequence of the disproportionate level of household tasks they are required to perform within present social structures.

The location of childcare centers at transit hubs, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, is partly designed to alleviate this problem.

## **Examples of good practices in addressing gender biases in transportation delivery**

### *Childcare services*

Although there are many women's transportation issues that still need to be addressed, there are some successes in obtaining community input in transportation planning. As noted earlier in this chapter, women frequently do not rely on public transportation because it is difficult and inconvenient for those who need to travel to work, childcare, shopping, and so on, known

as trip-chaining. To determine what might be an effective solution to meet this need, the Federal Transit Administration and the NCNW conducted a study of the effectiveness of locating childcare services at transit hubs (Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, 2002). The project sought to determine if women in the several communities desired such an approach, to investigate and determine if such childcare center placement was effective in increasing public transit usage and made travel more convenient and efficient for the women. The NCNW was able to outreach into urban areas through its community-based national affiliates and its network of collaborative organizations provided an opportunity to obtain community input on the needs for safe, accessible and affordable childcare services that also facilitated use of public transit. Although this project was not undertaken under a formal community impact assessment process, it provides a model for including the needs and concerns of women in transportation planning.

### *Assistance with shopping*

There have been pilot programs to assist older women and women without cars with shopping, through grocery store shuttle systems (Winkler, 2002). Since women still have primary responsibility for household tasks, including grocery shopping, poor access to grocery stores because of lack of transportation has a significant impact on women's lives, health and time management.

Some supermarkets in inner-city areas including New York, Savannah, Houston and Los Angeles operate a shuttle for their customers. Mohan and Cassady (2002, pp 4-5) state that:

... despite the financial success of current shuttle programs around the country, the shuttle concept is not familiar to many storeowners operating in inner city areas who may be searching for means to improve sales.... It appears that shuttle programs improve customer loyalty; reduce costs from shopping cart loss and retrieval; and win new customers.

Shuttle programs can improve the health of low-income consumers facing transportation barriers to purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables and other healthy foods.

Residents of lower income and minority neighborhoods in many urban areas face a double bind that limits their access to fresh, healthy food. Full service supermarkets are scarce in low-income areas, and residents in low-income, urban areas are less likely to own cars than their suburban counterparts, making it difficult to travel to supermarkets outside of their immediate neighborhoods. Residents of urban neighborhoods with few supermarkets have to travel farther to shop for food.

According to a US Department of Agriculture study, only 22% of food stamp recipients drove their own car to purchase groceries as compared to 96% of non-food stamp recipients. Transportation planners rarely plan bus routes around community food needs, leaving residents little choice but to carry their groceries long distances, use precious resources on taxi rides or make multiple transfers. Transportation via taxis and/or buses or paying for a ride can be costly, reducing a family's food budget by up to \$400 per year.

Another study (Calgary Regional Health Authority Health Promotions Initiatives Fund, nd, p 2) made the following recommendations:

1. Create a systematic method of compiling, disseminating and updating information on current grocery shopping services and transportation services for use with seniors and their support workers.
2. Establish inter-sectoral partnerships with government agencies, seniors' organizations, retailers and volunteer organizations to communicate the grocery shopping needs of seniors and to develop a range of community-based programs to address the needs.

3. Work with existing services such as the grocery store shuttle buses and milk delivery service to increase awareness of these services to seniors and investigate possibilities of expanding services to improve access.

### *The role of intermediaries*

Low-income workers in general, and especially low-income working women, tend to benefit from supports and services such as childcare and transportation. Many of the ‘mismatch’ problems associated with spatial issues, such as transportation and information, can be addressed with assistance from labor market ‘intermediaries’; that is, third-party agencies that can help bridge the gap between workers and potential employers along a variety of dimensions (Pavetti et al, 2000). These agencies can assist workers with job search or job placement, particularly if they develop good relations with local (often suburban) employers. They can also provide workers with transportation assistance.

Prior to the implementation of TANF (US welfare reform law) (Pavetti et al, 2000, p vi):

some welfare offices used intermediaries (often referred to as employment and training service providers) to operate all or part of their Job Opportunities and Basic Skills training (JOBS) programs. Intermediaries also provided services to welfare recipients and other low-income job seekers through the former Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs. In addition, some community-based organizations act as intermediaries, helping unemployed community residents (some of whom are welfare recipients) find employment, often in conjunction with participation in other programs.

Intermediaries are both non-profit and for-profit entities. They are less commonly used in rural settings. As the 1998 Workforce Investment Act is implemented, its One Stop job centers are supposed to establish coordination with transportation entities. It remains to be seen how well they do this.

## **Methods to deal with the problems identified**

### *Consideration of women’s issues in regional transportation planning*

Based on this review, we recommend the following considerations for dealing with these transportation issues.

### *Metropolitan planning organizations*

A significant issue is whether women’s needs are considered in the transportation planning process, especially through metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). These are currently required to consider a wide range of needs, including those concerning minorities, people with disabilities, and people who have limited English proficiency, but do not specifically address the needs of women.

### *Community impact assessment*

The FHWA encourages the use of community impact assessment (CIA) in transportation planning (FHWA, 1996). There is a question of whether CIA currently includes assessing the needs of women and whether anti-discrimination laws require the inclusion of this input.

### *Consider additional car ownership programs*

There are a growing number of low-income car ownership programs across the country, but most of these are small programs with limited funding and capacity, and many are facing cuts due to state budget crises. Equal Rights Advocates (ERA), a San Francisco (CA) women’s advocacy law firm, has recommended the expansion of existing loan programs that assist welfare recipients in purchasing cars and increase accessibility to public transportation. To achieve this, counties should expand their existing programs or create new programs that lend

money to welfare recipients and other low-income families to purchase cars. Counties should also explore savings accounts that enable recipients to save for purchasing their own cars, without jeopardizing their financial eligibility for welfare cash aid. Also recommended by ERA is that counties partner with transportation agencies to translate transportation information and resources into other languages.

### ***Older women***

Demographic projection and forecasting techniques should be enhanced to define for the next few decades, not only the population size and survivorship of older women, but also family and social network size and availability, the levels of transportation-related disability and economic access to personal and public transportation. Additional targeted research is needed on the personal perceptions of older women with respect to access, acceptability and utility of all modes of transportation and other sources of mobility, as well as personal mobility needs and desires, in order to more effectively plan for mobility needs (Wallace and Franc, nd). More study is also needed on the evolution of urban and regional design changes that affect the mobility of older women. Changes that promote safe mobility should be championed. Also, the impact of assisted living facilities and other newer modes of residential design for older persons in general and older women in particular should be evaluated for their impact on transportation needs.

### ***Communication***

Enhanced communication on these issues is needed and greater interaction with established groups interested in women's transportation issues. These groups should include the Women's Transportation Seminar, the National Organization for Women Legislative Agenda, and the Transportation Research Board Women's Transportation Issues Committee.

## **Conclusions**

In transportation, there is a general, but not universal, disadvantage to women. Women generally lack opportunity in transportation and we have argued that a new paradigm is needed to address this; a feminist approach to transportation. Data must explicitly be collected, breaking out a wide variety of transportation statistics by gender. We must avoid the problem Margo Schlanger points out of the 'erase of gender'.

The future does not bode particularly well for women's issues in transportation in the US, however, but there are interesting and useful experiments and pilots underway in the US. External influences may affect the situation, such as women's participation in the US workforce having reached a peak and declining slightly, perhaps temporarily. National security concerns appear to be draining resources away from local endeavors. Appropriators in Congress appear to be most interested in highway funding concerns. Transit funding does not appear to be very popular. There are opportunities to influence this legislative dialogue, and introducing more women's issues into the mix.

Demographic changes include a growing number of older women, who may flood and overwhelm local entities' ability to bring about necessary changes. Necessary childcare issues, closely tied to trip-chaining, are not being solved. Studying the problems and introducing a new public policy architecture and paradigm, such as this chapter has done, are useful steps in the right direction, but ultimately changes will have to occur on the ground, and these changes cost money, in a time of declining governmental resources and revenues. However, for those action changes that do not require government funding, some can be brought about by increased alliance and coalition building among women, disability groups, and other transportation-disadvantaged groups. While linking women's issues to environmental justice in the US is clearly a good idea, it may not be effective because environmental justice itself is in a state of disrepair, having suffered losses in the courts. Legal attacks through the sex discrimination civil rights statutes show a little more promise,

but who will bring them? Federal agencies have the responsibility, power, and authority to do so, but have not. Private plaintiffs face obstacles created by the US Supreme Court in bringing civil rights cases alleging discrimination based on disparate impact. Under disparate impact theory, rules which are neutral at face value, but which have a disparate impact on legally protected classes, such as women, in practice, are illegal. In addition, individual women litigants and women's rights advocacy organisations often lack the financial resources to bring such law suits. The authors strongly encourage federal agencies to fulfill all their civil rights law enforcement responsibilities. As they had noted, numerous disparate impacts of transportation exist.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> The term trip-chaining is used to describe a journey which combines a number of different journey purposes, for example, including a stop-off at a day-center with the journey from home to work.

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