

How can public policy and urban design combat inequality and unsustainability?

Free Public Transportation

Fighting Inequality (& a Booming Economy!)

Regardless of income, residents should be able to move about their city. Mobilization should not be a privilege reserved for those not impoverished. In fact, the current policy criminalizes the poor. **Stop and think.** If somebody can't pay a 2 dollar toll to ride the bus, how could they possibly pay the fine for not paying?

Only when public transportation is free can it truly be considered a public good. Economically, we can argue that everyone benefits from people traveling for free. Workers can get to more jobs, the labor force grows, and people can take trips to shopping centers.

A Lower Carbon Footprint (& a Booming Economy!)

Private modes of transportation come with their own cost, and not simply to the user, but to the public, such as pollution and congestion. In economics, this is referred to as a negative externality: society has to pay for something they did not choose to incur the cost of (here, society is paying in environmental damage, health care costs, and wasted time in traffic jams).

Transportation accounts for a large chunk of U.S. Greenhouse emissions. Public buses emit an estimated 33% lower greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile than a private vehicle (U.S. Department of Transportation). Making public transit free would likely increase ridership, even among those who own a car, which would reduce the negative externality promoted by cars.

Who will pay for it?

Obviously nothing is truly free. The money to pay for public transit has to come from somewhere, however the argument can be made that much of the cost of public transit is already subsidized by our government, so it wouldn't be that much further of a leap for the cost to be completely covered.

