THE LOS ANGELES EQUITY ATLAS
OPPORTUNITY. MAPPED.
The Los Angeles Equity Atlas

In 2008, voters approved an unprecedented expansion of the Los Angeles County transit system. In recognition of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, the California Community Foundation and Reconnecting America convened experts from public health, planning, community development, transit, environmental advocacy, business and philanthropy. The goal was to collaborate in illuminating the impact, value and challenges that this investment can create in the region.

The Los Angeles Equity Atlas outlines a framework to understand this opportunity. It maps the connections between transit and jobs, housing and community resources. It builds a case for investing in greater access to opportunities for all in the development around the new transit lines. And it establishes a baseline for measuring equitable outcomes as the transit network is built out.

Most importantly, The Los Angeles Equity Atlas provides the vision along with a checklist of outcomes that we should all be thinking about. Every Angeleno is a stakeholder. Don’t just let it ride. Get informed. Get involved. Get on board. Keep reading to start to explore a vision for a better future; a healthy, livable Los Angeles for everyone.
These are exciting times. We have the opportunity to reshape Los Angeles and build out the new $40 billion voter-approved public transit system. In a few years, almost a hundred new stations will be under construction across the County. The changes happening around those stations are critical to success. We need to be asking the right questions, right now. Are there sidewalks and bike paths that enable people to easily reach the stations? Are we managing neighborhood change to ensure that the people who currently ride public transportation can afford to live nearby, while encouraging new homes and jobs to be built near stations? Will the system serve workers late at night, with easy connections? Are the areas around the stations safe and comfortable?

Consider this: frequent riders of today’s public transit system typically earn less than $25,000 per year. If new stations attract new residential development, core riders will need affordably-priced housing to stay near transit. If core riders move farther away they’ll have to drive instead of taking public transit, and transit ridership could go down. More cars on the road would mean more traffic congestion and pollution, and a tremendous opportunity would be missed. To prevent this, it is important to identify the key issues and ask the hard questions.

**So what is an Equity Atlas, and why do we need one?**

An “equity atlas” simply involves mapping the opportunities, gaps and areas of concern in neighborhoods where transit goes. It overlays the transit network with measures like job locations, average commute times, housing options, schools, bike paths and local businesses. It looks at the plans on a regional and local level to understand how the system performs today and can perform better in the future.

Though The Los Angeles Equity Atlas focuses on transportation investments, it really helps us understand the need to plan for improvements around the transit stops: Create walking and biking paths that safely connect neighborhoods with public transportation; ensure that people of modest financial means don’t get pushed out of their neighborhoods because they can’t find an affordable place to live; make places for local businesses to thrive alongside new ones that come to the neighborhood; and add parks and green spaces to neighborhoods.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to remake and reshape Los Angeles. It begins with mapping opportunity, then engaging in dialogue. Asking the hard questions. And tracking our progress. The Los Angeles Equity Atlas can be the beginning of a report card for gauging our progress in building a healthy, livable Los Angeles around our new transit system.
The Crenshaw and Blue Lines have almost no connecting bicycle routes limiting the current reach of the transit corridors into surrounding neighborhoods.

Let’s Make It Fun and Easy to Use Transit

The cost of transportation is a driving factor in the city’s high cost of living. Transportation is the second highest household expense for the average American, and Los Angeles County residents spend more of their income on transportation than the national average. Today there are about 763,000 people living within walking distance of frequent transit. When expansion is completed that number will nearly double to over 1.4 million. The number of jobs within walking distance of transit will more than double to 1,485,000. For the expanded transportation system to be functional, people have to be able to easily get to it.

1 Transit stations will be easily reached by foot, bike or bus

The design of future stations and nearby roads must plan for safe and accessible transfers between rail and buses. We need good bike lanes, sidewalks, streetlights and street trees to create comfortable and safe connections between home, work and school and the transit system. Children should grow up feeling safe walking, biking and taking transit.

2 People who can’t drive will have better options

Locate housing and activity centers for seniors and disabled residents along transit lines. This will facilitate more independent living and better quality of life for older Angelenos.

3 Key destinations will be connected to the regional transit network

In addition to work opportunities, transit should be connected to cultural and recreational activities like museums, sports venues, shopping centers and beaches.

**FAST FACTS:**

- **$90%** of transit commuters earn **less than $50,000.**
- **$70%** earn under **$25,000 annually.**

Los Angeles residents spend almost **a quarter of their income (22%)** on transportation. In 1969, **48%** of children walked or biked to school. In 2009, only **13%** did. By **2030**, one million more Angelenos will be **over age 65.** Commuters are more likely to take transit to work if their place of employment is **within 500 feet** of the stop.
AFFORDABLE HOUSING
AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

More Options for More Income Levels
Locating jobs and housing near the transit network can reduce car trips and congestion, especially in low-income areas where residents take the most trips—by train or bus. Studies have shown, however, that neighborhoods with new transit systems sometimes inadvertently displace their core riders when a lack of affordable housing options pushes them out of the neighborhood. For the expanded transportation system to achieve both environmental and equity goals, jobs and affordable housing have to remain nearby.

1. More people of all incomes will live near transit
   Use regulatory tools and financial incentives to encourage new development for a range of household incomes and types.

2. Current residents will be able to stay within their communities
   Enforce rent stabilization measures and just cause eviction laws to protect the rights of low-income residents.

3. The housing sector will increase housing production on publicly-owned land
   Use more publically-owned land for affordable housing for low-income residents.

4. We will learn from best practices and tools that create affordable housing development near transit
   Review innovative county-wide models where subsidies, development incentives and community benefits were used in transit planning. Make equity a key factor in incentive planning.

FAST FACTS:

- By 2035 the county will need **250,000 new homes for low-income residents**, and another **100,000 for moderate-income households**.
- From 2006-2012, only **7,500 homes** in the City of Los Angeles were added for low- or moderate-income residents, and **34,200 for higher income households**.
- Between 2001 and 2007, **14,000 rental units** in the City of Los Angeles were demolished or converted to condominiums.
- **79% of residential development** between 2000 and 2010 in Los Angeles County was near current or future transit areas.
This map shows the educational attainment levels of workers in major job centers. 47% of jobs are near the frequent transit network, meaning one-half of workers don’t have ready access to non-driving transportation choices. Los Angeles’s largest job centers accommodate many types of workers, reinforcing the need for a transit system that everyone can use.
Transit Helps Connect Jobs and Opportunities
Los Angeles County will be more economically resilient, productive and prosperous if it better connects workers with jobs. Higher wage jobs in Los Angeles are currently more densely located than low- or middle-wage jobs that are scattered throughout the County. In some areas, the expanded transit system uses the footprint of the historic turn-of-the 20th Century transit system, so it does not directly connect to some of today’s major employment centers. This makes bus connections very important. For the expanded transportation system to be well used, supporting bus lines and schedules have to be coordinated.

The transit network will connect the workforce with job centers
Align new transit corridors with the County’s job clusters. Network planning should consider the current commuting dynamics to major job centers. For example, nurses whose shifts end at 1:00AM need late-night buses or trains.

Residents and workers will have commutes of reasonable cost and length
Connect jobs and affordable housing development to transit.

High quality transit areas will support existing job hubs and accommodate future job growth, limiting sprawl
Support job growth and job preservation near stations through land-use policies and incentives.

Transit will connect low-income workers to the training and education needed to prepare for higher quality jobs, which also fill the workforce needs of employers
Engage workforce development and economic development practitioners to support investments in transit and encourage them to locate training facilities along transit corridors.

Small-scale entrepreneurs and local businesses will be preserved and fostered near transit
Balance regulations to preserve local businesses. Establish marketing support and working capital loan programs for small businesses during transit construction.

Local businesses and workers will benefit from building the transit system
Connect local workers with skills for transit construction, educate residents on how to boost their skills and consider using the Metro Construction Careers program as a model for other transit-related public works projects.

FAST FACTS: 52% of the current commute times on transit (mostly by low-income workers) take more than 45 minutes, compared with 21% of commutes overall. Americans change jobs more often than they change residences—meaning they look for jobs within a reasonable commuting distance. Healthcare has been identified as a key sector for workforce development in the next decade. Many of these jobs do not have 9-to-5 work schedules.
Transit Can Actually Make Us Heathier
Transportation choices that reduce car trips can positively impact public health by reducing the pollution that contributes to chronic diseases like asthma. Transit also encourages the return of daily walking or biking. Transit commuters are four times more likely than drivers to walk. For the expanded transportation system to positively impact the creation of healthy communities, we need to integrate community health factors in the planning process.

1. Residents and visitors will have a safe and comfortable environment for walking and biking
Design and plan transit expansion projects that integrate bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Cities without bicycle plans should be encouraged to adopt them. Public events like CicLAvia can also help promote walking and change people’s views of how to get around.

2. All residents will easily access affordable and healthy food
Many low-income neighborhoods lack access to stores with produce and well-priced groceries. Plan station areas to include good connections to farmers markets and community gardens as well as grocery stores.

3. All communities will have clean air and reduced sources of pollution
Factor local sources of air pollution into decisions about housing and school development near transit stations—especially where transit lines run near freeways.

4. Healthcare will be geographically accessible to all residents
Encourage healthcare facilities to adopt transportation management programs for employees and patients, including shuttles from transit connections.

5. Communities will be free of crime and violence
Design stations that encourage pedestrians and bicyclists, so users feel safe.

6. All residents will have access to active and passive public open space, parks and rivers
Expand and create community parks and public recreational facilities through new funding mechanisms that can improve access to urban parks and school play spaces.

FAST FACTS:

- Transit commuters are four times more likely than drivers to walk the recommended daily 10,000 steps.
- Children living within a quarter mile of a freeway had an 89% higher risk of asthma than children living a mile from a freeway.
- Currently, 55% of all healthcare jobs are located near the transit network.
- Neighborhoods within walking distance of transit currently have less than half the average park acreage of the region.
GET THE MESSAGE

Simply put, if we want to realize the opportunities that a $40 billion investment in the transportation infrastructure can create we must:

- Preserve and plan for more housing for low-income residents near transit stations
- Avoid job sprawl; encourage job preservation and growth near transit stations and in centers
- Connect job centers with other modes of transit and appropriate schedules
- Make transit stations accessible to those who want to walk or bike there

Visit www.losangelesequityatlas.org to see the full report, maps and complete set of recommendations.

Get onboard
Start talking about the issues highlighted in the Los Angeles Equity Atlas. The dialogue that informs transit planning, programs and investments happening right now. Through collaboration we can ensure an equitable and sustainable Los Angeles. More choices about where we live, how we get around and where we can go will improve quality of life in Los Angeles. Share the report with your elected officials and tell them you care about building a healthy, livable community. Go to www.losangelesequityatlas.org and vote on your favorite ways to build a healthy Los Angeles.

Advisory Committee
The Los Angeles Equity Atlas Advisory Committee included 61 individuals from the following organizations:

- Alliance for a Better Community (ABC)
- California Community Foundation
- CD Tech
- Coalition for Clean Air
- Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County
- Community Coalition
- Department of City Planning, City of Los Angeles
- East LA Community Corporation
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Kaiser Permanente
- Liberty Hill Foundation
- Little Tokyo Service Center CDC
- Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
- Los Angeles Business Council
- Los Angeles Community College District
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Low Income Investment Fund
- Move LA
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
- Prevention Institute
- Strategic Actions for a Just Economy
- Southern California Association of NonProfit Housing
- Southern California Association of Governments
- The California Endowment
- U.S. Green Building Council
- UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Science
- USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity

Inclusion does not imply organizational endorsement. The full list of committee members can be found at www.losangelesequityatlas.org.
About California Community Foundation
Since 1915, California Community Foundation (CCF) has worked to strengthen Los Angeles County through effective philanthropy and civic engagement. Through initiatives and opportunity funding, CCF both ensures the long-term impact of grants and responds to community needs. In partnership with diverse stakeholders, CCF fosters positive change as it inspires and empowers charitable giving by and for the Los Angeles community.

About Reconnecting America
Reconnecting America is a national nonprofit that integrates transportation and community development. Reconnecting America advises civic and community leaders on how to overcome community development challenges to create better communities for all. Reconnecting America develops research and innovative public policy, while also building on-the-ground partnerships and convening players needed to accelerate decision-making.

Contact
www.losangelesequityatlas.org
Tel: 213.413.4130
221 S. Figueroa St. Suite 400
Los Angeles, CA 90012