

# Transportation Security & Quality of Life

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Humboldt County Mobility Management Summit, Nov 5th, 2009

So, as it says up on the slide, I work for the Humboldt Partnership for Active Living, which is a project of the Natural Resources Services Division of the Redwood Community Action Agency. Humboldt Partnership for Active Living (HumPAL) has been committed to increasing active living through the design of our communities since 2006. HumPAL is an effort to address the fact that the way our communities are built will directly effect our ability to move around them under our own power of walking or rolling, as we say. We do this through the examination of the relationship between transportation and land use choices, equitable community design, and public health, and implement projects to increase active transportation. Today I wanted to bring a different kind of context to this discussion about transportation coordination. As I said before, this isn't just about bus-shaped holes. What we're really talking about today, in my mind, is transportation security for all Humboldt County residents. So my presentation is going to be about local efforts to assess how increasing our transportation options can improve health and access to goods and services, and help us have a higher quality of life.

# Transportation Security



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So I think today we'll find out that we have a lot in common. Let's take a poll (that's Humboldt County, by the way), so raise your hand when I say something that you do or need.

Who has ever gone to the doctor? I see a lot of folks have had to go to the doctor at one point or another.

Does anyone get mail? Maybe from a post office? Not everything is electronic yet.

How about food? You need to get groceries? Or even if you grow your own food, some how you need to get the starts, the tools, the soil, etc. I mean, some people are totally self sufficient, but I would argue, perhaps not the majority of us?

Does anybody work around here? No? Oh, I see, some folks do.

How about getting the pharmacy at the end of the day because after you went to the doctor you didn't have time before you went back to work?

All right. So that's a lot of basic necessities. But life isn't just about basic necessities. It's about having what you each, individually, would consider a high quality of life. Maybe that means all of these

(CLICK QUICKLY)

Shopping

Parks

Live Music

Beaches

Fishing

Community Events

Restaurants

Plays

Hiking

Art Galleries

The point of this is not to see how many people need these services, or even what we can or can't get to with existing resources - this exercise is to illustrate what we mean when we say

## And what about health?

- Defining 'health'
- Local efforts to evaluate transportation & health

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So what is the link to health? Well, again, I think a discussion about quality of life necessitates thinking about what 'health' is. My favorite definition is the World Health Organization: Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. And I just want to emphasize that - it's not just the ABSENCE of disease or infirmity.

So how does transportation play in to health?

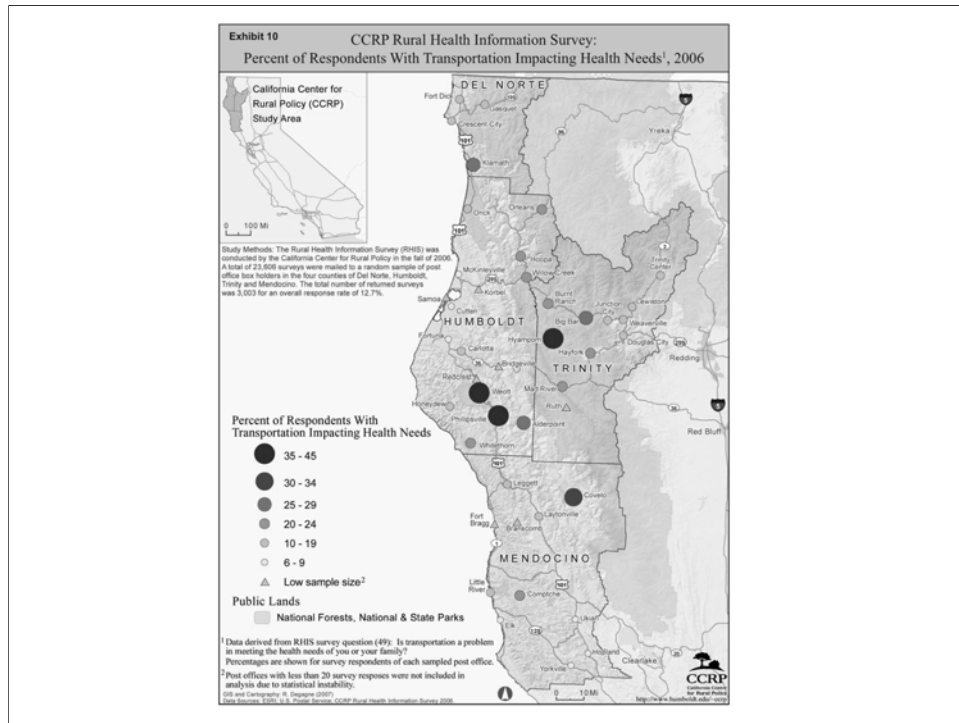
As I stated before in the introduction of the day, transportation security means access to many more activities, goods, and so forth.

Let's look at a couple of efforts to done locally to address transportation, access to goods and services, and health. And what I'm going to try to do is bring together the reality of how transportation affects access to health and how we can think about transportation coordination in a way that can encourage non-vehicular travel. Walking, rolling, or even carpooling, taking public transit or other ways - the main thing is to think about those vehicles that have a single occupant, and how by coordinating our resources, increasing the amount of choices we have, we might be able to reduce the amount of cars on the road, pollution in our air, and, honestly, maintenance on our roads.

# California Center for Rural Policy

The California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University is a research center committed to informing policy, building community, and promoting the health and well-being of rural people and environments.

A note on that rural idea - let's go ahead and recognize that our communities are spread far apart, by and large, and that there is a challenge there in creating a program that meet the most needs of the most people. But that also means that folks have come up with some innovative ideas on how to get people to where they need to go. From a bus system to a Google group that's used to post carpool or rideshare needs or opportunities in Petrolia.



In 2006, CCRP conducted the largest and most comprehensive survey of the general population in the Redwood Coast Region (Del Norte, Humboldt, Trinity and Mendocino counties). The Rural Health Information Survey was sent to over 23,000 residents in 43 communities. **The purpose of the survey was to identify issues impacting health and access to healthcare with the goal of providing useful information for planning and policy development aimed at improving health in the region.**

CCRP has released several reports about the findings from the survey. The topics have included health insurance, food security, home access to phones, computers & the internet.

The most recent report focuses on transportation impacting health needs in the region. Transportation shortages were known to block access to health care, and the 2006 survey was able to quantify the extent of the problem and pinpoint those populations and communities most in need.

The Redwood Coast's poor, non-whites and thinly populated areas suffer disproportionately from transportation problems that diminish their access to health care.

I'm sure that many people here are familiar with these kinds of needs that CCRP has documented. This is just one part of the story of why and where folks are in need of transportation options.



The other local effort I'd like to talk about is the Planning for Active Transportation & Health Project, which was done in 2006 as well. This was a project done by Natural Resources Staff and an incredible multi-disciplinary partnership with County Public Works and others. It was funded by the Caltrans Environmental Justice Program and Humboldt County Public Works. The PATH project was partially an effort to address equity in transportation planning.

# Why? A New Transportation Era

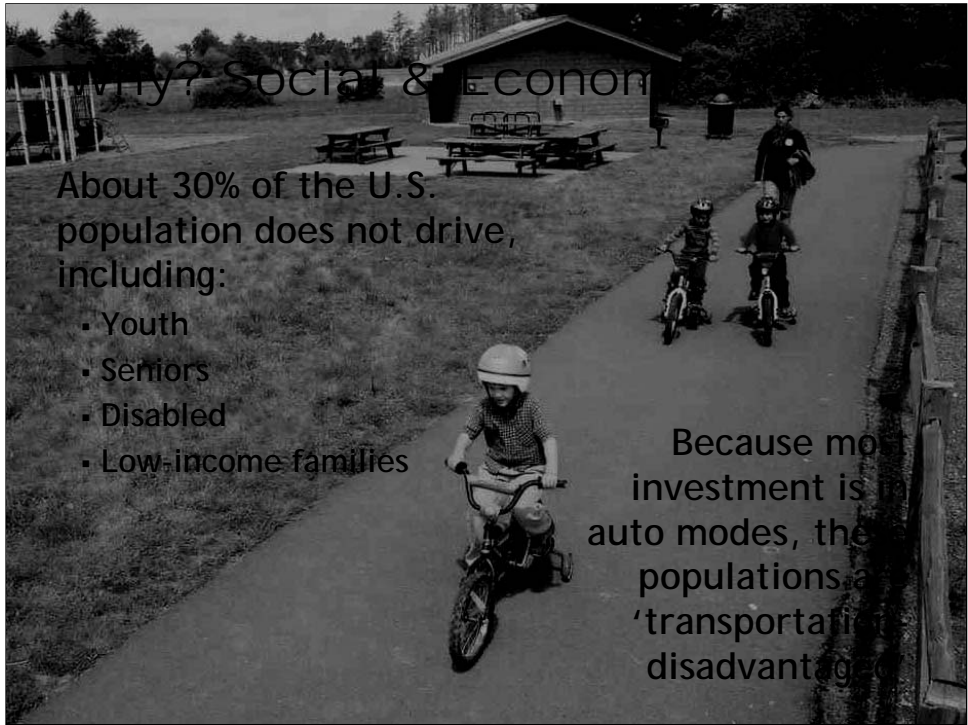
Renewed emphasis  
on Environmental Justice  
since 2001

*... involve a significant  
adjustment in the way  
transportation planning  
has traditionally been  
approached.*

*- Kern Council of Governments  
Environmental Justice Report, 2003*



*New transportation investments... primarily benefit long-distance commuters, leaving the needs of low-income communities unmet... And these investments last for a long time, so when transportation is coordinated or planned in areas with populations of a higher socioeconomic status, they see those benefits for a long time. And, likewise, when low-income communities are, for one reason or another, left out of the investment, they are disadvantaged for a long time.*



## Why? Social & Economic

About 30% of the U.S. population does not drive, including:

- Youth
- Seniors
- Disabled
- Low-income families

Because most investment is in auto modes, these populations are 'transportation disadvantaged'



# Walking for the Community

Benefits

- Basic needs
- Transportation choice
- Negative health effects
- Economic opportunity

## Physical activity

- Opportunities to walk and bike for transport and recreation

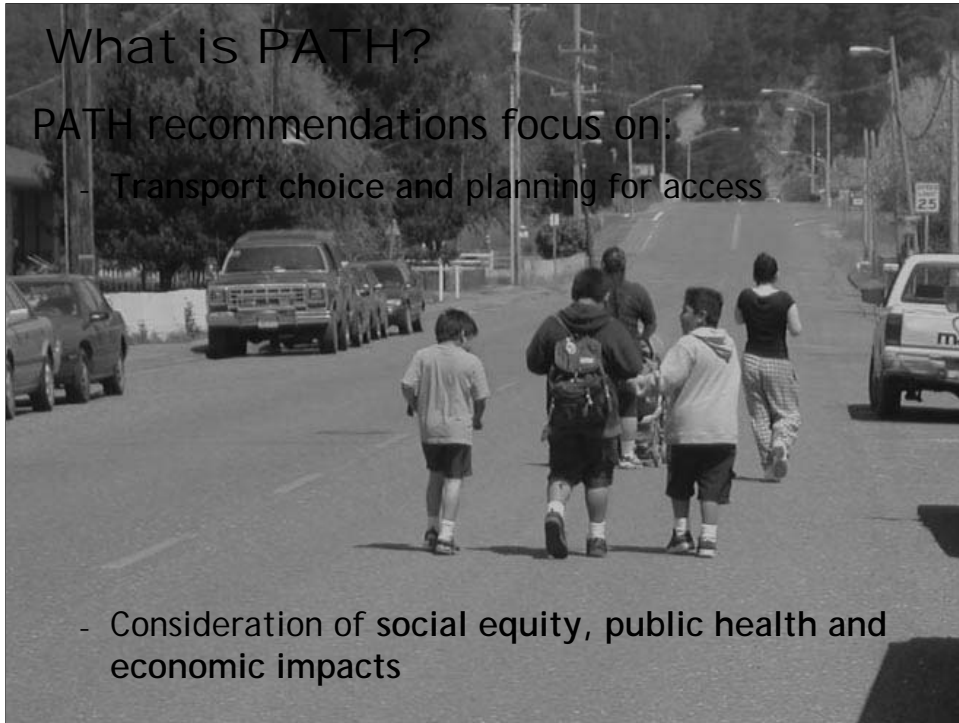
## Safety

- Reduced risk of collisions

## What is PATH?

PATH recommendations focus on:

- Transport choice and planning for access



- Consideration of social equity, public health and economic impacts

What is PATH?

PATH recommendations focus on:

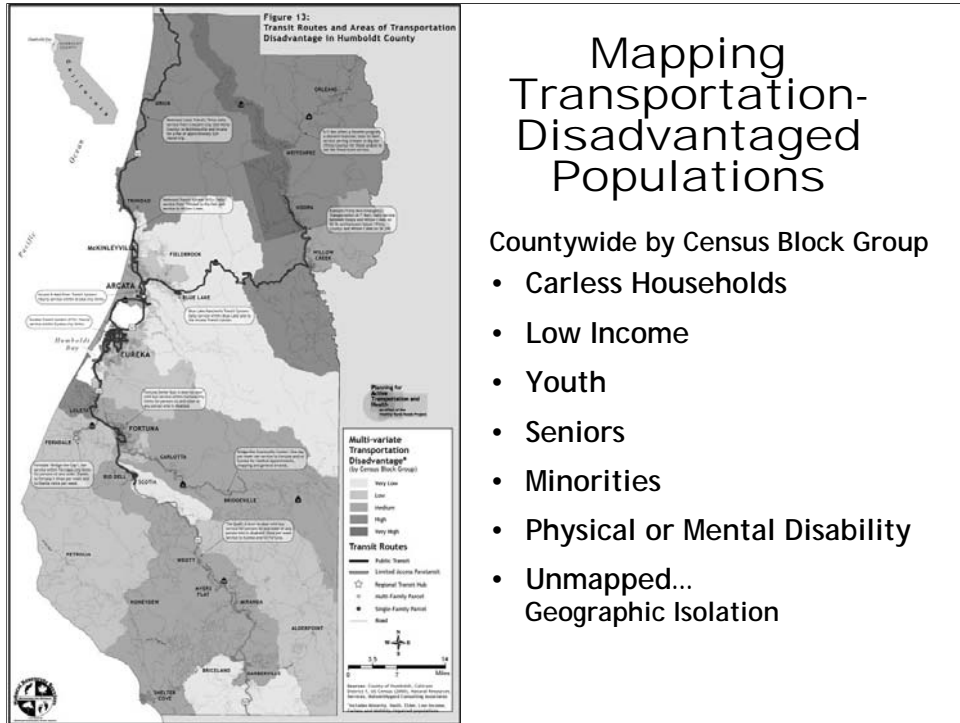
- Integrating transport and land use planning efforts
- Ability of non-metropolitan governments to meet these needs

photo courtesy Michael Smith



# Transportation- Disadvantaged Population Report

- Needs
- Coordination of transportation services
  - Improved marketing, info
  - Stakeholder engagement
  - Pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements in Eureka

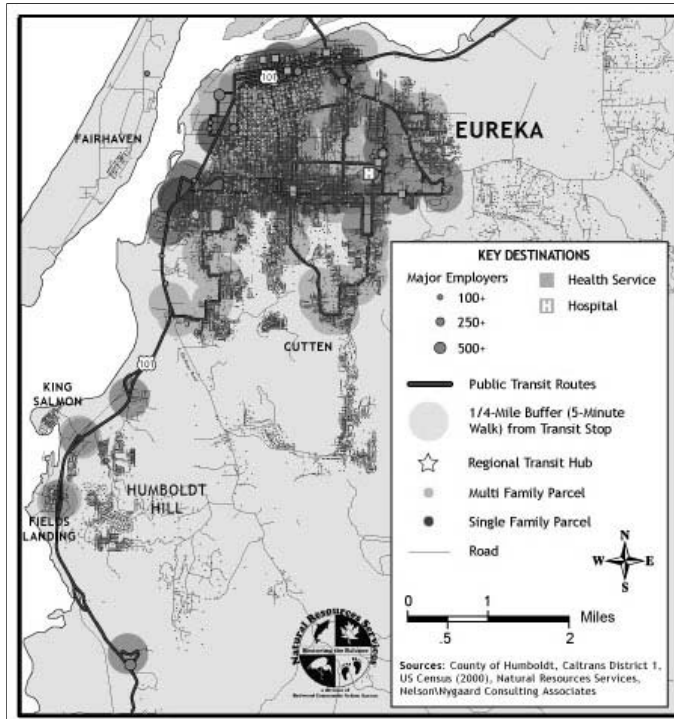


## Mapping Transportation-Disadvantaged Populations

Countywide by Census Block Group

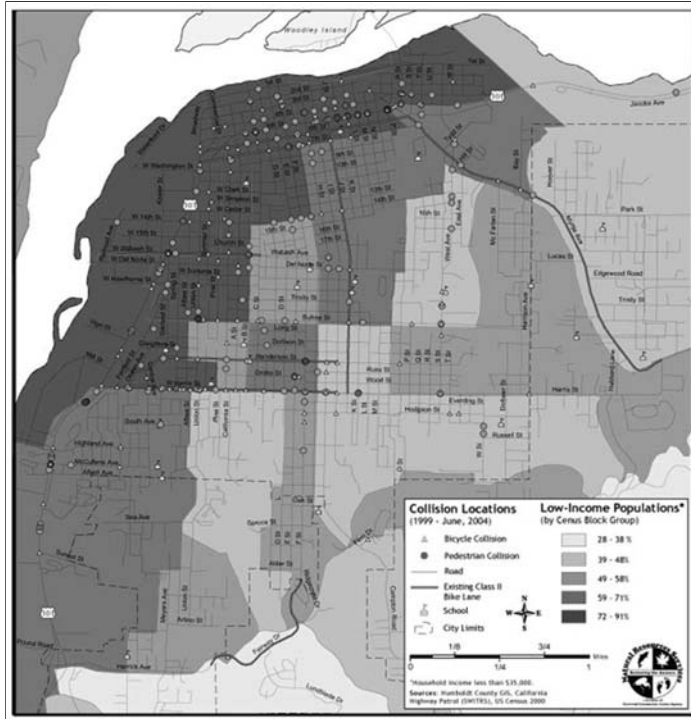
- Carless Households
- Low Income
- Youth
- Seniors
- Minorities
- Physical or Mental Disability
- Unmapped...  
Geographic Isolation

Not picking on bus lines, but are showing where they don't go and why we need the coordination of resources to answer this transportation need.



# Mapping Transit Access to Key Destinations

Compared with residential parcel locations



## Mapping Ped- & Bike-Auto Collision Locations

Correlation with low-income neighborhoods

County GIS, HCAOG, Caltrans have all GIS data and results

# Opportunities to Improve Transportation Equity in Humboldt County

**Recommendations: small steps that will have a collective impact**

- Objective: Public Participation
- Objective: Active Transportation
- Objective: Community Access
- Overall priority: 'clearinghouse' transport services program
- [www.nrsrcaa.org/path](http://www.nrsrcaa.org/path)



## P participation:

Engage stakeholders, provide more information, cross-pollinate professionals

## Active T:

Include walking/biking in land use/projects, promote safety awareness, infrastructure improvements

## Community Access to services, goods and employment:

**Funding, coord/marketing of community-based transport efforts;  
planning reform that promotes accessible, complete streets**



## Key PATH Concepts

- Encourage multi-disciplinary partnerships
- Enhance stakeholder education & participation
- Use new sources of info and assistance
- Promote creative resource collaboration
- Can do!
- [www.nrsrcaa.org/path](http://www.nrsrcaa.org/path)

This project was not possible without the support of County Public Works!

## Next Steps

- Examining access for the entire County
- This Summit and outcomes of today

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