



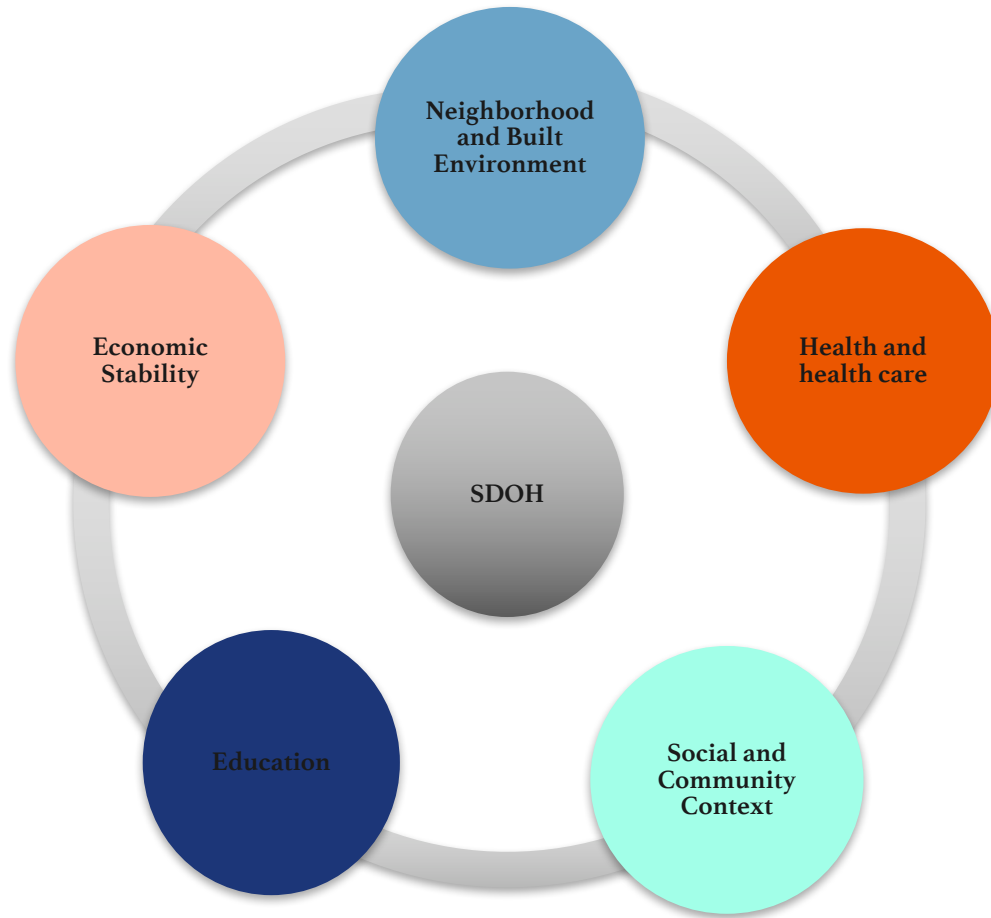
Best Practices for Equity in Planning: Public Health

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Air Alliance Houston
November 1, 2019

**Air Alliance Houston believes
everyone has a right to breathe
clean air and where you live, work,
learn, and play should not
determine your health.**



Why does equity in planning matter?



The Houston Region continues to embrace irresponsible development and transportation planning practices that facilitate sprawl and prioritize cars.

- ❑ Harris County has the highest vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in Texas and the population is growing
- ❑ Majority of emissions are already from transportation sources (automobiles)
- ❑ Public transit (and other modes of transportation) is limited throughout the region
- ❑ Allocation of transportation funding is heavily skewed toward highway infrastructure
- ❑ Minimal adoption of electric vehicles among governmental and organizational fleets
- ❑ **80,000** Houston-area children attend schools in traffic-related air pollution (TRAP) zones



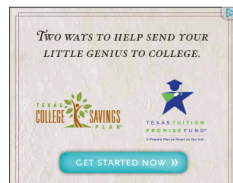
These decisions impact how WELL we live...



The Transportation Barrier

Many low-income people in urban and suburban areas struggle to find reliable transportation. The result is missed appointments and poor illness management, even when care is readily available.

IMRAN CRONK | AUG 9, 2015 | HEALTH



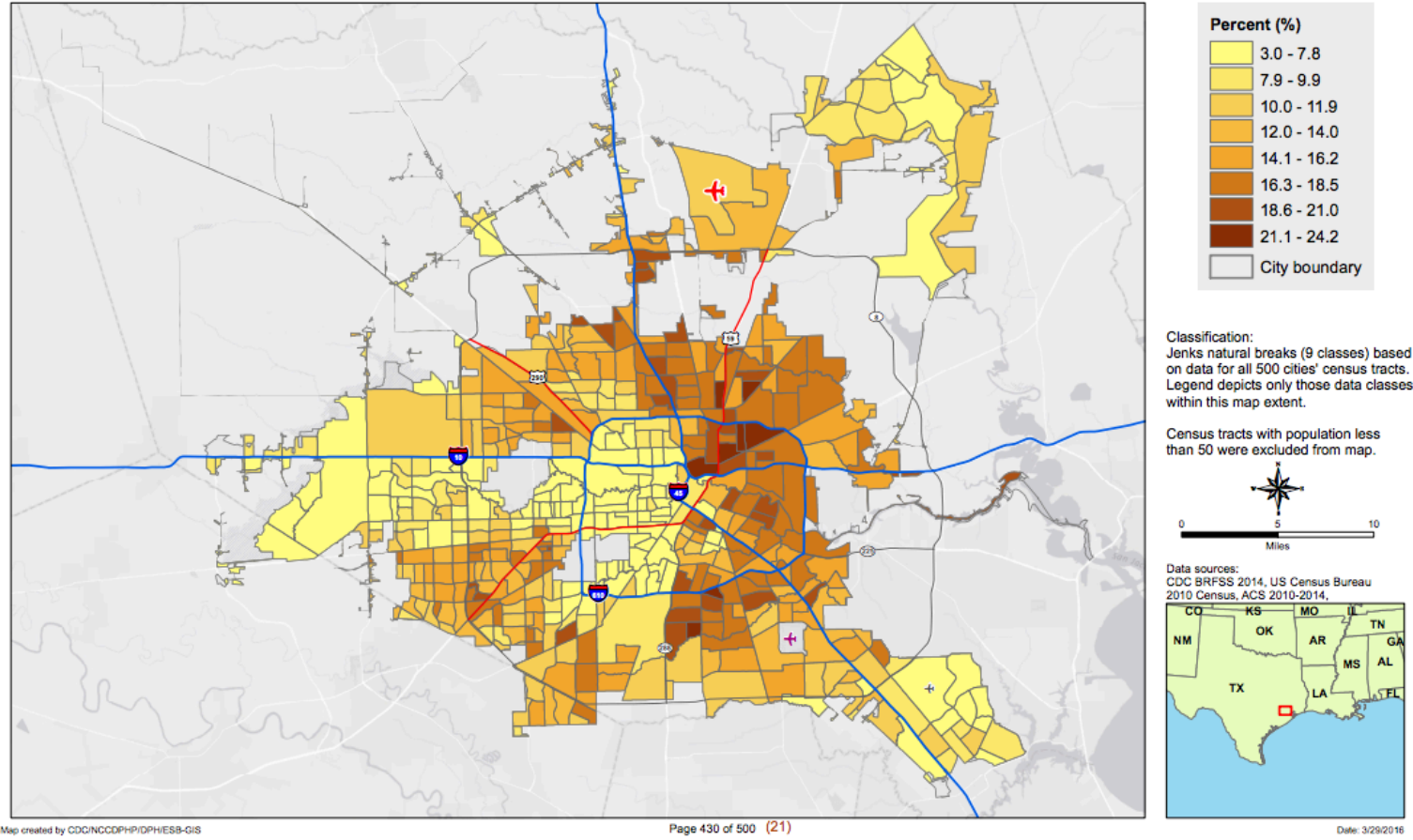
People of color often lack access to equitable transportation options.

People of color are less likely to have a personal vehicle.

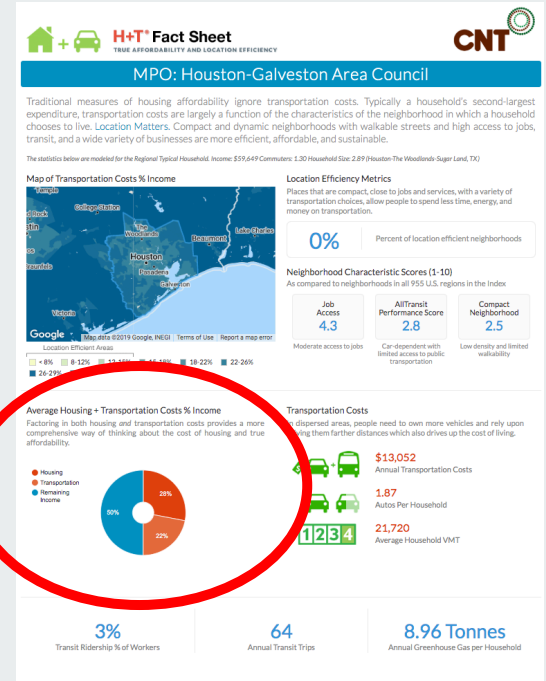
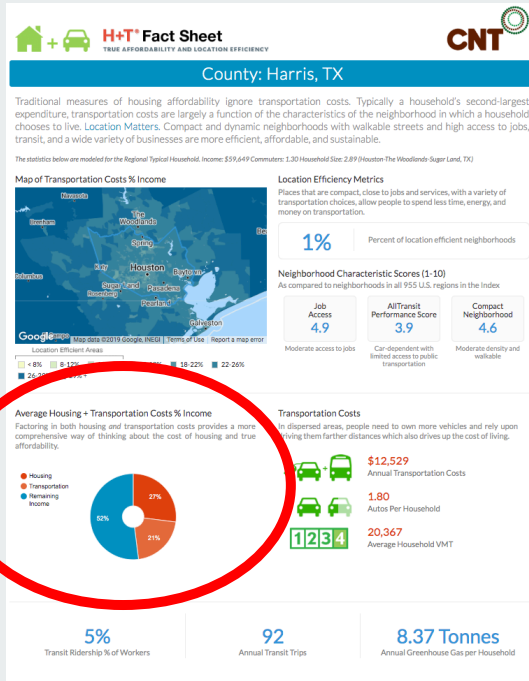
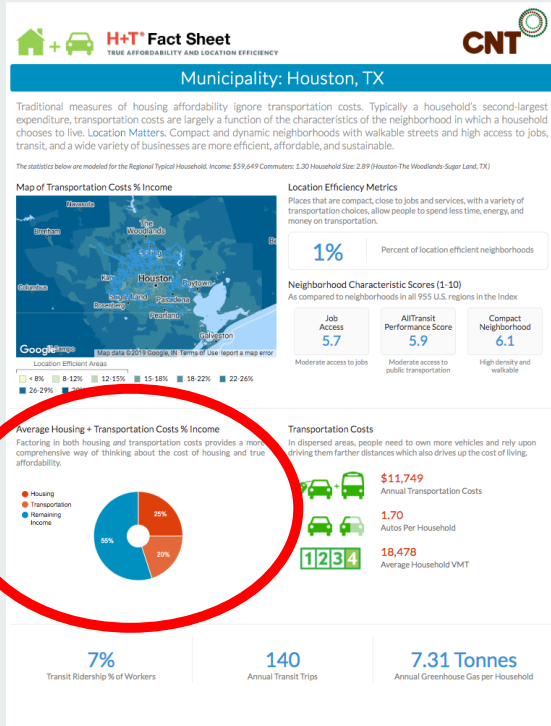
People of color are more likely than their peers to depend on public transit or other drivers to get to jobs, doctor appointments, etc., all while facing unreliable rides and longer commutes.

People of color face cost and reliability challenges using public transit, which impacts health.

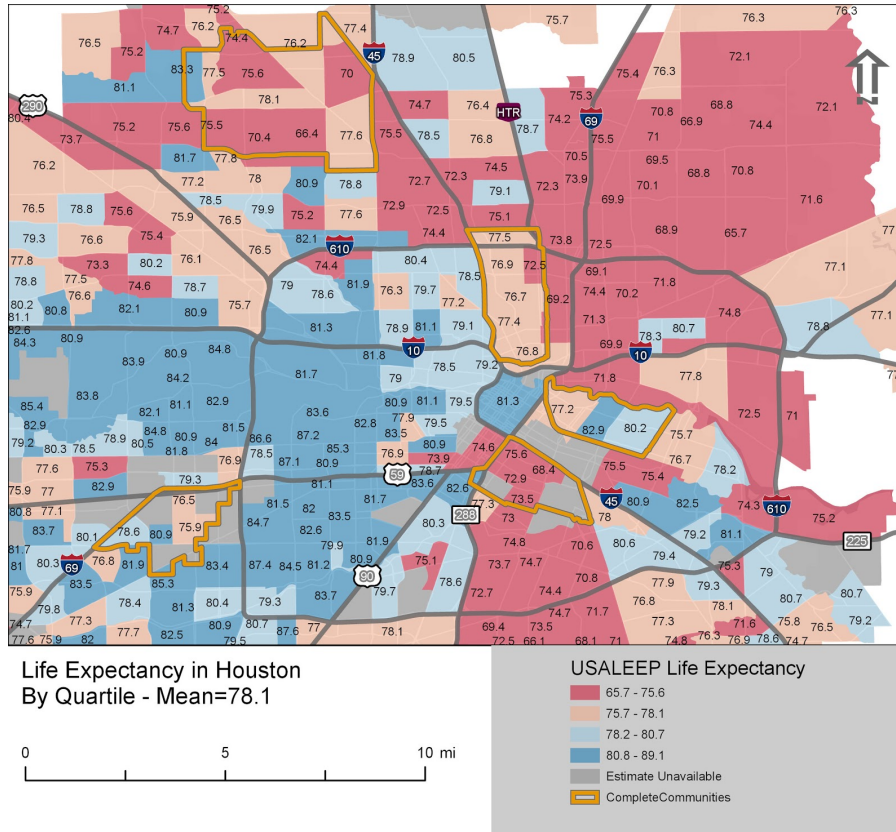
Physical health not good for ≥ 14 days among adults aged ≥ 18 years by census tract, Houston, TX, 2014



“Houston, Texas ranks at the top of the list, with transportation eating up a Texas-sized chunk of residents’ income, at 15.24%”



....and how LONG we live.



According to these data, life expectancy ranges from 65.7 to 89.1 years - an inequity of nearly twenty three and a half years between neighborhoods in Houston.

**Urban planners, engineers,
community developers, etc. are public
health and social justice practitioners**



Example: Nashville Metropolitan Planning Organization Tools and Initiatives

- [Integrated Transport and Health Impact Model](#): ITHIM performs a range of integrated assessments on the effects of transportation scenarios and policies at the urban and national level on public health.
- Active Transportation Program: the MPO adopted a funding strategy which reserves 15 percent of federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds, the largest federal funding source for roadways in the MPO region, exclusively for active transportation infrastructure and education.
- Health Impact Assessments (HIA) and health studies: the MPO has conducted a number of studies to understand the relationship between land use and public health outcomes, focusing on everything from individual projects to physical activity trends among the entire region.



Nashville MPO Initiatives in Action

- **2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP):** the MPO's 2040 RTP outlined a regional shift towards prioritizing public health outcomes in transportation planning. The MPO committed to increased funding for multimodal options and updated project scoring criteria so that 80 out of 100 potential points were geared towards improving public health.
- **Integrated Transportation and Health Impact Model:** the MPO used a modeling tool to predict decreases in 12 chronic and respiratory diseases from projected increases in active transportation rates and decreases in air pollution levels in their region.
- **Middle Tennessee Transportation and Health Survey:** developed a travel survey that sampled 6,000 households that included questions about physical activity and eating behaviors along with other targeted health information about food security, physical activity for transportation and leisure, and chronic diseases prevalent in the household.
- **Hamilton Springs TOD School Siting Health Impact Assessment:** MPO completed a rapid Health Impact Assessment of a proposed school site within the Hamilton Springs Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in Lebanon, Tenn. The HIA concludes that if a school were sited within the TOD, all residents would live no more than a half-mile from the facility, thereby creating the potential for all students to walk or bicycle to school.

Example: Massachusetts



Massachusetts Healthy Transportation Compact (HTC)

- In **2009**, Massachusetts passed the **Transportation Reform Law**, which among other things created the Healthy Transportation Compact (HTC).
- The HTC is co-chaired by the **Secretary of Transportation** (MassDOT) and the **Secretary of Health and Human Services** and includes executives from several other state agencies, including housing and environmental affairs.
- The goal of the newly formed department is to **integrate public health and environmental justice outcomes** into transportation and land use planning.



HTC Tools and Initiatives

- **HIA:** The HTC has implemented several health impact assessments (HIA) to determine the public health costs and benefits of certain transportation and land use projects. HIAs use a range of variables and measurements to assess the impacts of projects, including air quality, flood potential, safety, etc.
- **Healthy Transportation Directive:** MassDOT's Healthy Transportation Directive requires all of the departments transportation projects to include walking, biking, and transit infrastructure



HTC In Action: Examples^I

- [MassDOT Grounding McGrath HIA](#): This Grounding McGrath HIA is the first HIA mandated under the 2009 Transportation Reform Law in Massachusetts. The HIA focused on a transportation planning study to de-elevate portions of the McGrath Highway in a densely populated Environmental Justice community in Somerville, Massachusetts.
- [Climate Action Plan Strategies in Western Massachusetts HIA](#): Massachusetts Department of Public Health partnered with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the municipalities of Springfield and Williamsburg to conduct a HIA to evaluate climate action strategies recommended in the regional Pioneer Valley Climate Action and Clean Energy Plan.
- [Health Neighborhoods Equity Fund HIA](#): The Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund (HNEF) HIA examined the potential health impacts that could result from investments made by the HNEF. The analysis was conducted by using three Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) projects in Boston

Source: https://matracking.ehs.state.ma.us/planning_and_tools/hia/index.html#MyPopup



Recommendations

- Expand environmental impact assessment processes to consider human health impacts
- Apply planning tools that consider health and environmental justice impacts (i.e. health impact assessments)
- Adopt policies, including supportive rules and standards, and apply them consistently
- Integrate new practices for inclusive participation