

# place matters



community engagement | criminal justice | economics | education | housing | land use + transportation

## Bus Access HIA Project Background

In October 2011, ACPHD identified a grant opportunity offered by the Health Impact Project to conduct a Health Impact Assessment on a local policy issue. In collaboration with several community partners, ACPHD identified the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and *specifically the level of funding dedicated to AC Transit*, as an important policy issue affecting the physical and mental health of local communities.

## What is Health Impact Assessment (HIA)?

*Health Impact Assessment (HIA)* is a tool used to inform decision-makers about the potential health impacts of a specific policy or plan. HIA uses research – both community based and academic - to uncover the health impacts that a specific policy or plan will have on different populations, and recommends changes to ensure that the policy contributes to healthy communities. HIA involves 5 key phases: *Screening, Scoping, Assessment, Reporting, and Monitoring and Evaluation.*

## Why AC Transit and Bus Access?

ACPHD and our community partners identified funding for AC Transit as an important focus area for a number of reasons. Funding for AC Transit can determine changes to bus service and fares which in turn affect bus access. Bus access is particularly critical for low-income communities of color, people with disabilities, seniors, and limited English speakers because these populations already struggle with the worst health outcomes countywide and rely on busses to reach basic goods and services. In addition, many of our partners are already engaged in campaigns focused on access to bus service, ensuring that this HIA will be relevant to local community advocacy efforts.

## What does transportation have to do with health?

For many residents, public transportation is the only way to reach essential goods and services. This is especially true in low-income communities of color. *For instance, in Alameda County, about 1 in 4 African American households do not own a vehicle.* Transportation routes and fares affect how easily these communities can make use of transportation services (what we call “access”), which in turn shapes our environments in ways that critically impact health, including:

- Access to **grocery stores** → diet, nutrition → **obesity.**
- Access to **schools** → truancy, violence → **long-term health.**
- Access to **employment** → income → **long-term health.**
- Access to **health care** → overall **physical and mental health.**
- Use of **cars** → air quality, physical activity → **obesity and asthma.**

**Transportation is a core resource that all communities need to reach goods, services, and opportunities that are essential for health.** However, many county residents live in neighborhoods where affordable, reliable, and accessible transportation options are limited. This HIA focuses on transportation access for low-income communities as key to health equity.

## about Place Matters

Place Matters is a local partner of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Health Policy Institute, and is coordinated by Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) in collaboration with the office of Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson. The initiative aims to improve the health of participating communities by addressing the social conditions that lead to poor health. Place Matters works collaboratively with multiple sectors to advance health equity through community-centered local policy focused on economics, education, housing, criminal justice, land use, and transportation.

## Why does place matter?

*On average, an African American child living in a low-income Oakland neighborhood will die 15 years before a white child living in the city's more affluent areas.* This unjust difference in community life expectancy reflects deeply rooted systemic barriers that block access to the things that every person, family and community need to be healthy: good jobs, good schools, clean and safe places to play and walk, quality housing, affordable, reliable, and accessible transportation options, and a criminal justice system that is fair and equitable.

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## Why Should you Get Involved?

Whether you or your constituents rely on bus transit, you are concerned about the outcomes of the RTP, or you are directly involved in the decision making process, you bring an important perspective to the table. The involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders will ensure that this HIA accurately reflects community experience and effectively informs decision makers, maximizing health and wellbeing for communities.

## Who will be Involved?

There are three key players in this HIA – stakeholders, ACPHD, and HIP.

**Stakeholders (You)** from community organizations, transit agencies, non-profit organizations, and decision makers will directly shape and inform this HIA through a formal advisory process, including an *Advisory Committee* and several *Subcommittees*. In addition to the formal advisory process, there will be ongoing opportunities for interested individuals and affected constituents to engage in the HIA process.

**ACPHD** has primary responsibility for the successful completion of the grant. ACPHD provides staff and logistical support and facilitates meetings and communication between all parties, including funders.

**Human Impact Partners (HIP)** is a non-profit organization that specializes in Health Impact Assessments. HIP will be involved as a technical advisor to ACPHD and will be available to help solve problems, provide trainings, and aid in research methodology.

## Core Values for this HIA

Place Matters is committed to both *process and outcome equity*, *efficiency*, and *strong community engagement* in policy decision-making processes. We strive to uphold the following values in this HIA:

- **Transparency** about roles, process, and decision-making authority
- **Meaningful opportunities for stakeholders to shape HIA**
- **Focus on health as it affects low-income communities of color**
- **Community voice** as central to our research process and outcomes

## Want to get involved?

### Contact ACPHD/Place Matters staff:

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[www.acphd.org/healthequity/placematters](http://www.acphd.org/healthequity/placematters)

## Key Terms

### Health Inequity

Differences in health, including access to health care, that are systemic and avoidable and, therefore, considered unfair or unjust.

### Health Equity

Health equity is achieving the highest level of health for all people. Health equity entails focused societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities by equalizing the conditions for health for all groups, especially for those who have experienced socioeconomic disadvantage or historical injustices.

### Social determinants of health

The inter-related social and economic factors that influence health. These factors include, but are not limited to: socioeconomic status, discrimination, housing, physical environment, food security, child development, culture, social support, healthcare services, transportation, working conditions, and democratic participation.

### Access

Access is the ability of an individual or community to make use of a resource or opportunity. In the context of this HIA, access refers to the ability to use a specific transportation service, as a result of several factors including: affordability, physical proximity to transit lines, and frequency of service.

### Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

RTP is a long-term transportation plan for the 9-county bay area that is updated and adopted every 3 years by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). The RTP guides funding and investment decisions for transit agencies throughout the Bay Area.