

# MISSED OPPORTUNITY: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America

## Brookings Institution Report

Presented by:

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HRTPO Board Meeting

Agenda Item #16

June 16, 2011



**B** Metropolitan Policy Program  
at BROOKINGS

METROPOLITAN INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVE SERIES AND METROPOLITAN OPPORTUNITY SERIES

### Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America

Adle Tomer, Elizabeth Kneebone, Robert Puentes, and Alan Berube

**Findings**  
An analysis of data from 371 transit providers in the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas reveals that:

- **Nearly 70 percent of large metropolitan residents live in neighborhoods with access to transit service of some kind.** Transit coverage is highest in Western metro areas such as Honolulu and Los Angeles, and lowest in Southern metro areas such as Chattanooga and Greenville. Regardless of region, residents of cities and lower-income neighborhoods have better access to transit than residents of suburbs and middle/higher-income neighborhoods.
- **In neighborhoods covered by transit, morning rush hour service occurs about once every 10 minutes for the typical metropolitan commuter.** In less than one quarter of large metro areas (23), however, is this typical service frequency, or "headway," under 10 minutes. These include very large metro areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and Washington. Transit services city residents on average almost twice as frequently as suburban residents.
- **The typical metropolitan resident can reach about 30 percent of jobs in their metropolitan area via transit in 90 minutes.** Job access differs considerably across metro areas, from 60 percent in Honolulu to just 7 percent in Palm Bay, reflecting variable transit coverage levels and service frequencies, and variable levels of employment and population decentralization. Among very large metro areas, the share of jobs accessible via transit ranges from 37 percent in Washington and New York to 16 percent in Miami.
- **About one-quarter of jobs in low- and middle-skill industries are accessible via transit within 90 minutes for the typical metropolitan commuter, compared to one-third of jobs in high-skill industries.** This reflects the higher concentration of high-skill jobs in cities, which are uniformly better served by transit. It also points to potentially large accessibility problems for workers in growing low-income suburban communities, who on average can access only about 22 percent of metropolitan jobs in low- and middle-skill industries for which they may be most qualified.
- **Fifteen of the 20 metro areas that rank highest on a combined score of transit coverage and job access are in the West.** Top performers include metro areas with noted transit systems such as New York, Portland, San Francisco, and Washington, but also Salt Lake City, Tucson, Fresno, and Las Vegas. Conversely, 15 of the 20 metro areas that rank lowest are in the South.

These trends have three broad implications for leaders at the local, regional, state, and national levels. Transportation leaders should make access to jobs an explicit priority in their spending and service decisions, especially given the budget pressures they face. Metro leaders should coordinate strategies regarding land use, economic development, and housing with transit decisions in order to ensure that transit reaches more people and more jobs efficiently. And federal officials should collect and disseminate standardized transit data to enable public, private, and non-profit actors to make more informed decisions and ultimately maximize the benefits of transit for labor markets.

BROOKINGS | May 2011

"As states and regions strive to put Americans back to work, policymakers should be careful not to sever the transportation lifelines between workers and jobs."

# INTRODUCTION

- **The Brookings report provides a view of the “supply side” of transit, transit’s potential effectiveness in serving workers and employers, and accessibility of workers to access jobs via public transportation.**
- **First time ever that a study details and compares transit coverage and connectivity in the nation’s major metropolitan areas.**
- **Data includes 371 transit providers in the nation’s 100 largest metropolitan areas, including HRT and WATA.**

# REPORT METRICS

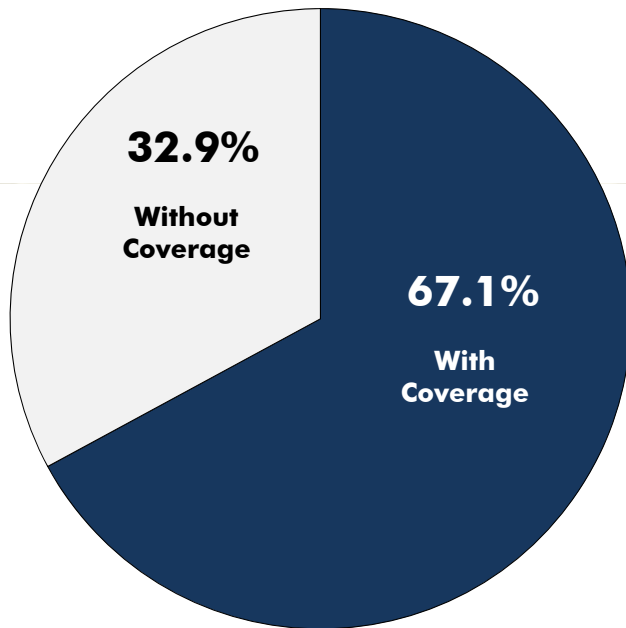
- **Coverage**
- **Service Frequency**
- **Job Access**
- **The analysis also differentiated these metrics between job skill levels, neighborhood income groups, and city/suburbs.**

# COVERAGE

- ***Coverage***
  - **The share of working-age residents living in census block groups that are considered served by transit.**
  - **Census block groups must have at least one transit stop within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the population-weighted centroid to be considered served by transit.**

# COVERAGE

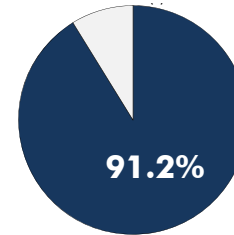
## % Coverage in Hampton Roads



Hampton Roads Rank = 42

Metropolitan Area Average Coverage = 61.9%

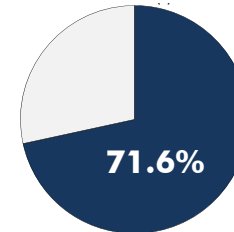
Low Income



Hampton Roads Rank = 41

Metropolitan Area Average Coverage = 84.5%

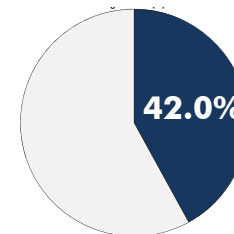
Medium Income



Hampton Roads Rank = 40

Metropolitan Area Average Coverage = 61.8%

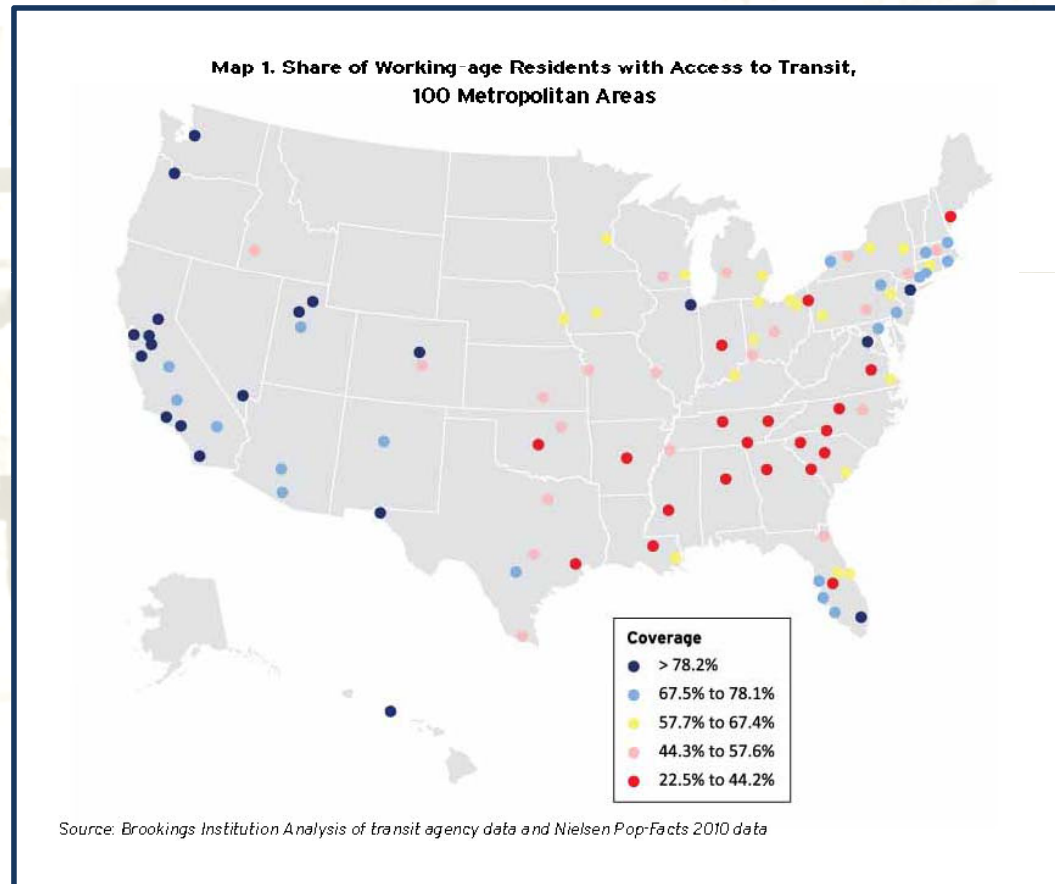
High Income



Hampton Roads Rank = 50

Metropolitan Area Average Coverage = 44.3%

# COVERAGE



# SERVICE FREQUENCY

- ***Service Frequency***
  - The median headway for morning rush hour transit service *in each census block group*.
  - The overall metropolitan area service frequency is calculated as the median of typical headways in each census block group with coverage, weighted by working age populations.

# SERVICE FREQUENCY

## Service Frequency in Hampton Roads



Hampton Roads Rank = 69

Metropolitan Area Average Service Frequency  
= 15.5 min

Low Income



Hampton Roads Rank = 67

Metropolitan Area Average  
Service Frequency =  
13.2 minutes

Medium Income



Hampton Roads Rank = 68

Metropolitan Area Average  
Service Frequency =  
16.3 minutes

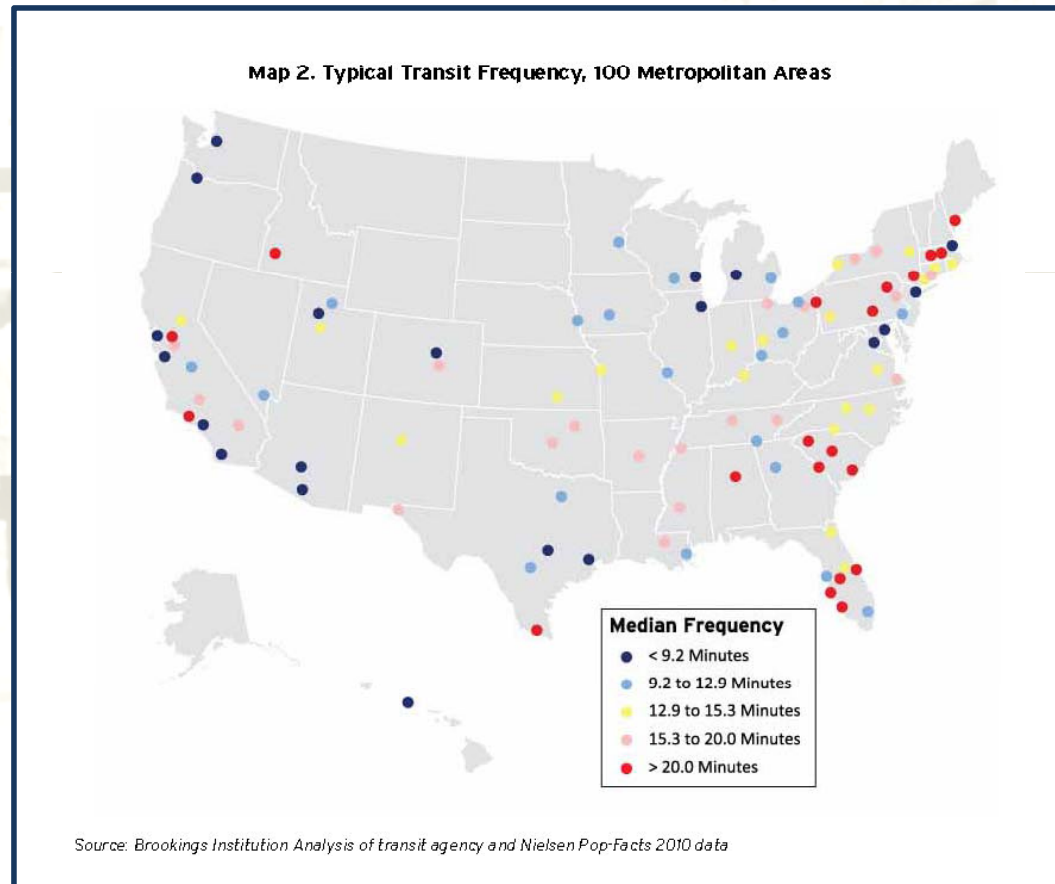
High Income



Hampton Roads Rank = 75

Metropolitan Area Average  
Service Frequency =  
19.4 minutes

# SERVICE FREQUENCY

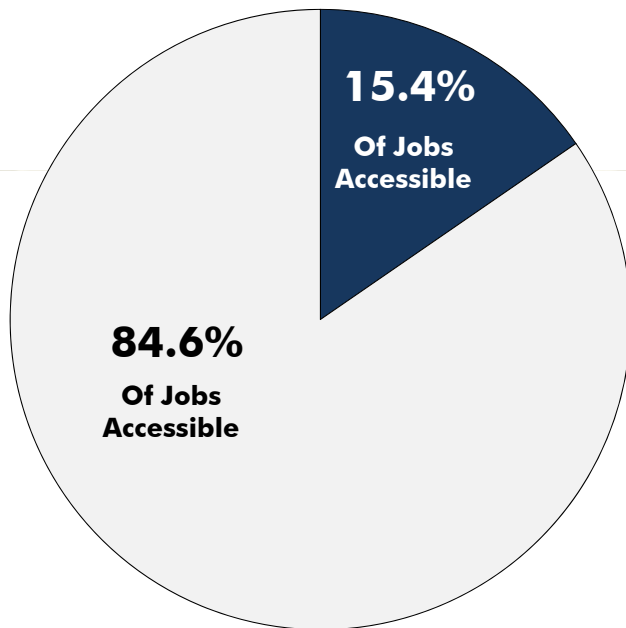


# JOB ACCESS

- ***Job Access***
  - **The share of jobs residents can reach via transit within 90 minutes.**
  - **Overall metropolitan area job access is calculated as the average share of jobs reachable within 90 minutes across all census block groups with transit coverage, weighted by block group working age populations.**

# JOB ACCESS

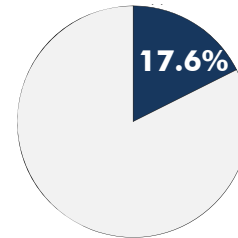
## % of Jobs Accessible within 90 minutes in Hampton Roads



Hampton Roads Rank = 96

Metropolitan Area Average Job Accessible = 30.9%

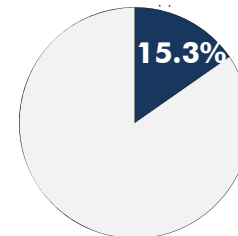
Low Income



Hampton Roads Rank = 93

Metropolitan Area Average Job Accessible = 36.0%

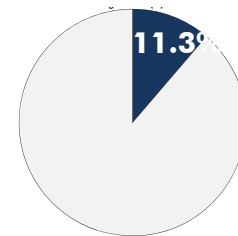
Medium Income



Hampton Roads Rank = 94

Metropolitan Area Average Job Accessible = 29.5%

High Income

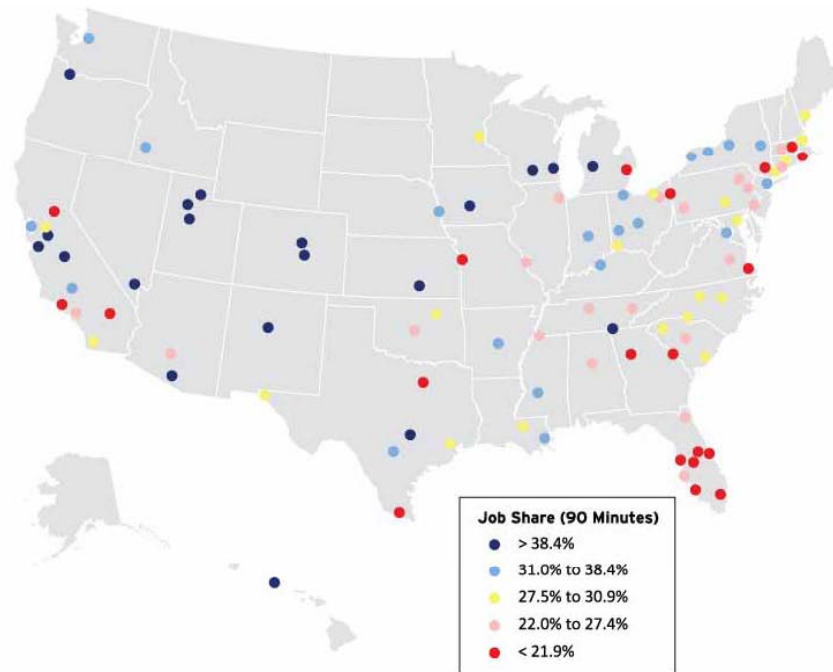


Hampton Roads Rank = 94

Metropolitan Area Average Job Accessible = 24.5%

# JOB ACCESS

Map 3. Share of Jobs Accessible on Average in 90 Minutes via Transit, 100 Metropolitan Areas



Source: Brookings Institution analysis of transit agency, Nielsen Pop-Facts 2010, and Nielsen Business-Facts data

# HAMPTON ROADS RANKINGS

- Coverage Ranking = 42nd
- Service Frequency = 69th
- Job Access = 96th
- Combined Access Ranking = 78th
  - Reflects a combination of Transit Coverage and Job Access

## STUDY CONCLUSIONS

- **Transit access to employment is impacted by a multi-faceted and complex set of public policy decisions, land use rules and regulations, private sector choices, residential housing preferences, and infrastructure investments spanning many years.**
- **Results expose the need for broadly coordinated policies and updated thinking to create an interlocking network for opportunity.**
- **Study advances a new method to measure access to work and provide a platform for decision makers to strengthen metropolitan economies.**

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