Are We There Yet?
Creating Complete Communities for 21st Century America

Allison Brooks
Chief of Staff
Rail~Volution
Los Angeles, California
October 16, 2012
The Challenge: How to Measure Metro Performance on Livability and Sustainability

We developed 4 categories in report:

- **Living**: managing growth & change, affordable housing
- **Working**: employment density, multimodal access to jobs, quality of life
- **Moving**: transportation choices, transit investments, bike and pedestrian access
- **Thriving**: health, education, crime, access to fresh food, parks and recreation, cultural amenities, happiness
Why You Might Be Interested

• We measured performance at the regional scale in every one of the 366 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA’s) – 33 individual data points
• We established grades based on metrics
• We graded MSA’s against each other
• We divided regions by size into 4 categories so Altoona, PA, would not be graded against NYC
Utilizing Two Main Terms in Report

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES
Provide people who live and work there what they need to thrive

OPPORTUNITY AREAS
Have the foundation for complete communities.
Do not necessarily have fixed-guideway transit.
New Concept: **OPPORTUNITY AREAS**

Defined based on

- Walkability (Block Size)
- Or
- Intensity (People / Acre)

Places with good opportunity to reduce auto dependence,
Increase transportation choices
Original Metric Sample:

**LIVING:**
- Share of households living in opportunity areas
- % of affordable units in opportunity areas
- Growth in opportunity areas compared to region

**WORKING**
- % jobs near fixed-guideway transit
- % jobs in opportunity areas

**MOVING**
- % of stations in opportunity areas

**THRIVING**
- Percent of opportunity areas in food deserts
- In opportunity areas, acres of parks/1000 households
Regions With And Without Opportunity Areas

[Map showing regions with and without opportunity areas across the United States]
Living in Opportunity Areas

Top 10 regions with households in opportunity areas

1. NEW YORK, NY - 63.5%
2. LOS ANGELES, CA - 54.7%
3. SAN FRANCISCO, CA - 43.8%
4. CHICAGO, IL - 38.8%
5. LAREDO, TX - 36.4%
6. PHILADELPHIA, PA - 33.7%
7. HONOLULU, HI - 32.9%
8. BOSTON, MA - 32.3%
9. SAN JOSE, CA - 31.9%
10. ALTOONA, PA - 29.8%

Source: Reconnecting America
Transit Commuting, 2005-2009

- 5.8% of commuters nationally take transit, 10% in the top 20 metros

- Transit ridership as share of commute has increased by 4% nationally

- The most notable increases have been among smaller metro regions, with under 500,000 residents
Focus on Transit

- Since 2000, **25%** increase in households near transit; **14%** increase in # of stations.
Household Growth Near Transit

Top 10 regions with the fastest household growth near transit:

1. Memphis, TN - 74.5%
2. Jacksonville, FL - 35.4%
3. Denver, CO - 31.2%
4. Miami, FL - 28.2%
5. Seattle, WA - 28.1%
6. Portland, OR - 24.8%
7. Salt Lake City, UT - 22.4%
8. Dallas, TX - 21.6%
9. Detroit, MI - 20.6%
10. Atlanta, GA - 19.2%

Source: CTOD
Job Accessibility on Transit

Top 10 regions connecting existing jobs to transit

1. NEW YORK, NY - 45.1%
2. BOSTON, MA - 37.2%
3. SAN FRANCISCO, CA - 36.4%
4. PORTLAND, OR - 28.9%
5. CHICAGO, IL - 27.5%
6. SAN JOSE, CA - 26.7%
7. WASHINGTON, DC - 25.7%
8. PHILADELPHIA, PA - 24.8%
9. EUGENE, OR - 20.0%
10. NEW ORLEANS, LA - 19.5%

Source: CTOD
Laredo ranks 5th behind New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago in the share of households living in Opportunity Areas

LAW OF THE INDIES

Falls short in other categories
Affordability Near Transit

- Both station areas and opportunity areas are more low income than the nation as a whole
Affordability Housing At Risk in Southwest
Physical Activity

Most and least physically active regions

**MOST PHYSICALLY ACTIVE**
- Boulder, CO
- Santa Cruz, CA
- Santa Fe, NM
- Provo, UT
- Corvallis, OR
- Fort Collins, CO
- Medford, OR
- Bend, OR
- Salinas, CA
- Denver, CO

**LEAST PHYSICALLY ACTIVE**
- Gadsden, AL
- Morristown, TN
- Pine Bluff, AR
- Johnson City, TN
- Huntington, WV
- Florence, AL
- Weirton, WV
- Charleston, WV
- Cleveland, TN
- Texarkana, TX-AR

The national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tracks the general health trends in regions and states across the U.S.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*
Access to Healthy Food

Top 10 worst regions for food access

Source: USDA Food Atlas
Los Angeles

Population: **12,828,837**
Fixed Guideway Stations: **105**
Opportunity Areas: **1403**

Our communities need basic elements to support economic opportunity and health for all people. Reconnecting America identified the neighborhoods with these elements – smaller blocks and moderate density housing and/or jobs – to define opportunity areas. Using opportunity areas and other data points, Reconnecting America created metrics and determined composite grades for every metropolitan statistical area (MSA) in the country.
Building Partnerships

- Public Sector
- Developers
- Business
- Labor
- Advocates
- Funders
- Investors

Who has taken a leadership role in different regions?
How to Build Momentum for Complete Communities?

Key Ingredients:

• Political leadership and champions
• Multi-sector collaboration
• Proactive advocacy
• Supportive policies
• Aligning Financing and Investments
• Establishing Performance Expectations (and tracking progress)
Thanks to APTA, the Ford Foundation and the Surdna Foundation for their support of this project

www.reconnectingamerica.org/arewethereyet

Allison Brooks  
Chief of Staff  
Reconnecting America  
EMAIL: abrooks@reconnectingamerica.org  
PHONE: 510-268-8602 ext.203