

CASE STUDIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC TRANSIT TITLE VI REPORTING

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order (EO) 12898 Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, which directed all federal agencies to examine their practices and to avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations. Over the last decade, EO 12898 has prompted renewed interest in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in any federal program or federally-funded program and applies to any agency that is the recipient of federal funds, including state and local agencies. The topic of environmental justice was identified as one of 11 priority areas for research by the Research and Technology Committee of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). An in-depth study of the public transportation issues, examples, and guidance was recommended.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were to identify state and national examples of environmental justice solutions and Title VI reporting and implementation that demonstrate commitment to equitable distribution of public transportation resources. In an earlier study funded by the National Center for Transit Research, Title VI reporting was identified as a tool for assessing the impacts of transportation decisions, particularly as related to environmental justice. Title VI Reports provide baseline information on the community where the action will take place. Using case studies, this research identifies environmental justice issues, examples of transit agencies that have addressed the issues, and Title VI activities used.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In addition to an extensive literature review, five case studies are provided. One focuses on a racial group, American Indian and Alaska Native, and the other four on environmental justice issues related to different geographic areas in the U.S. The findings suggest that ethnic and racial minorities and persons living in low-income households tend to be concentrated in central cities, away from jobs and, sometimes, goods and services. The cases provide examples of regional solutions, the interaction of other federal policies, which may present challenges to transit agencies, and considerations of the effects of land use decisions.

Recommendations are provided based on the guidelines provided in the Federal Transit Administration Circular 4702.1, Title VI Program Guidelines for Urban Mass Transportation Administration Recipients. The Title VI Circular has been available since 1988. While the study suggests the expansion of considerations to include subgroups of the population that have been recognized by statute or policy since its inception, the basic requirements and assessment process are incorporated in the Circular. New or more extensive applications are proposed, specifically: using

the demographic and service profile maps and charts to identify communities that may be affected by a proposed action, using the information to partner with the community and others to understand the potential impacts, and working with the community to take remedial action to ensure equitable treatment. Public transportation agencies are encouraged to use these guidelines and subsequent reports as planning tools to identify potential impacts of proposed actions to low-income and minority communities.

BENEFITS

It is anticipated that a better understanding of impacts and the participation of minority and low-income communities in identifying impacts and solutions will lead to better service planning and delivery. Further, this research provides a historical perspective on public transportation environmental justice issues, which is necessary to foster an appreciation of the breadth, scope, and interrelation of the issues.

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