



Ladders of Opportunity

Or.. How to Analyze your location, and use its economics to get money from the government



So what's the deal?

- **Summary:** This [Ladders of Opportunity Initiative](http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13077_16008.html) makes funds available to public transportation providers to finance capital projects to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities, including programs of bus and bus-related projects for assistance to subrecipients that are public agencies, private companies engaged in public transportation, or private non-profit organizations. Projects may include costs incidental to the acquisition of buses or to the construction of facilities, such as the costs of related workforce development and training activities, and project development.
- (Source: http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/13077_16008.html)



What is the Economics Behind “Ladders of Opportunity”?

- ***It is a broad-based approach*** by the White House to develop a sustainable economic model for growth of the middle class by focusing on **three broad areas**:
- **Enhancing access to work for individuals** lacking ready access to transportation, especially in low-income communities;
- **Supporting economic opportunities** by offering transit access to employment centers, educational and training opportunities, and other basic needs;
- **Supporting partnerships and coordinated planning** among state and local governments and social, human service, and transportation providers to improve coordinated planning and delivery of workforce development, training, education, and basic services to veterans, seniors, youths, and other disadvantaged populations



What does it mean to lack access to transportation?

- For the walking / transferring community, a handy definition is that the stop or line must be within 15 minutes walk
- TRB has set ideal stop spacing distance at 1250' in urban areas (1/4 mile) and 2500' in suburban fixed route areas (1/2 mile)
- In a real-world environment, look at your transit-using areas, and your major commercial, downtown, medical and transfer-point areas. If there's a long gap between stops or lines, it means there's a lack of transit buildout
- If a person doesn't own a car or is low income and lacks cannot get to transport aside of the "family and friends" plan, a person lacks access
- If a person does not understand that public transit is available, even if it is, this a lack of transit information
- If a person is misinformed or afraid of public transportation, it can be said that the person is not acting in his or her own self-interest or has a predisposed negative attitude towards transit



“Low Income”

- What is a “low-income” community?
 - There is no truly agreed upon definition, it can vary by program. HOWEVER...
 - Experience in the matter lends to a few strong indicators:
 - Census Tract Areas where poverty is greater than the median of similar-type areas (urban/suburban/rural)
 - Areas with a low-diversity of economic opportunity and high unemployment
 - Areas of high immigration rate
- PLEASE NOTE: LOW INCOME DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN POOR!
 - Examples such as Seniors and University Students can skew data!!!



What are employment centers, education opportunities and basic needs?

- The definition of an employment center, according to TRB, is 1500 employed persons per square mile
- On a pragmatic basis, any area 1 sq. mile or smaller where the # of jobs is significantly higher than the median is an employment center, including but not limited to: downtown / core business districts hospitals, universities, manufacturing sites, and malls.
- Educational opportunities are training centers, colleges, workforce investment zones or any employer which significantly invests in or reimburses for training (May require qualitative surveys)
- Basic needs are retail outlets for food, clothing, medicine and shelter-related items. Not coincidentally, these retail outlets also serve as primary employers of those needing opportunities



Partnerships and Coordinated Planning

- Encourages business, government and transport providers to work together to help bring service to disadvantaged populations, including, but not limited to:
 - veterans, seniors, youths, people with disabilities, immigrant communities and limited English proficiency areas
- The goal isn't to create a bus for everyone, but rather to have a system so that people can get where they want, to improve their lives, at a reasonable overall systemic cost and fare



So much! How do I analyze all of it?

- The Census and the Labor Department have tools!
- They can even work together!
- First, call your GIS staff and tell them what you need, and see if they've done this before
- This is a partnership, not a “fire and forget” missile; be clear that there will be an interactive process and you expect data to be as near accurate and timely as possible
- You will want to involve transit, planning, GIS and the business and advocacy community where possible



Where do I go?



- Recognize this?
 - American Fact Finder
 - Why is it important?
 - It is the best organized dataset for what you need.
 - You need to do more than download!
- What's the difference between the Census and the American Community Survey?
 - The Decennial Census is broad, short and delivered to everyone every 10 years
 - The ACS is longer, detailed and is generally paneled every 6 years. Available in 1, 3 and 5 year panels



So... how does poverty data look?

- Population by absolute numbers:

American FactFinder - Results - Google Chrome

factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF

[View Geography Notes](#) | [View Table Notes](#)

Although the American Community Survey (ACS) produces population, demographic and housing unit estimates, it is the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program that produces and disseminates the official estimates of the population for the nation, states, counties, cities and towns and estimates of housing units for states and counties.

Versions of this table are available for the following years:
2013 ▶
2012
2011
2010
2009

Subject	Syracuse city, New York					
	Total		Below poverty level		Percent below poverty level	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Population for whom poverty status is determined	131,752	+/-709	45,605	+/-1,491	34.6%	+/-1.1
AGE						
Under 18 years	32,564	+/-795	16,078	+/-815	49.4%	+/-2.3
Related children under 18 years	32,423	+/-818	15,944	+/-834	49.2%	+/-2.3
18 to 64 years	85,347	+/-903	27,379	+/-967	32.1%	+/-1.1
65 years and over	13,841	+/-490	2,148	+/-274	15.5%	+/-1.8
SEX						
Male	62,256	+/-767	20,546	+/-913	33.0%	+/-1.4
Female	69,496	+/-754	25,059	+/-956	36.1%	+/-1.3
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN						
One race	125,022	+/-985	42,348	+/-1,495	33.9%	+/-1.1
White	72,272	+/-1,290	18,327	+/-1,020	25.4%	+/-1.4
Black or African American	40,871	+/-1,128	17,958	+/-1,082	43.9%	+/-2.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	1,329	+/-351	575	+/-301	43.3%	+/-15.4
Asian	7,146	+/-544	3,395	+/-559	47.5%	+/-6.6
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	41	+/-40	6	+/-12	14.6%	+/-37.2
Some other race	3,363	+/-621	2,087	+/-511	62.1%	+/-9.7
Two or more races	6,730	+/-653	3,257	+/-454	48.4%	+/-5.7
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	11,117	+/-814	6,262	+/-731	56.3%	+/-4.7
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	66,882	+/-1,302	15,507	+/-921	23.2%	+/-1.4
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT						
Population 25 years and over	81,232	+/-1,070	19,729	+/-876	24.3%	+/-1.0
Less than high school graduate	15,730	+/-775	6,876	+/-507	43.7%	+/-2.7
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	21,956	+/-872	5,955	+/-502	27.1%	+/-1.9
Some college, associate's degree	22,202	+/-1,032	4,412	+/-486	19.9%	+/-2.1
Bachelor's degree or higher	21,344	+/-1,075	2,486	+/-381	11.6%	+/-1.6

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factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/download_center.xhtml

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United States Census Bureau

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Select geographies to add to Your Selections. Click **Next**.

The download center allows you to select from groups of geographies, such as all counties in a state. To select from all available geographies, use [Advanced Search](#).

Select a geographic type:
..... Census Tract

Select a state:
-- select a state --

Select one or more geographic areas and click Add to Your Selections:
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2013 ACS 5-year estimates

Tables matching your selections: **2,280**

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