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MOVING TOWARDS EQUITY? CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC TRANSIT PLANNING IN THE DETROIT METROPOLITAN REGION

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MOVING TOWARDS EQUITY? CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC TRANSIT
PLANNING IN THE DETROIT METROPOLITAN REGION

By

Sarah Cipkar

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Political Science
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

This research explores citizen participation in the Detroit metropolitan region in formal governmental institutions in the public transportation sector. Its purpose is to understand whether citizens feel empowered to be active, effective, and robust stakeholders within the public transit policy process. By surveying members of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and observing various CAC and Regional Transit Authority (RTA) public meetings, this study determines the level and perceived effectiveness of participation by CAC members in transit decision-making to be moderate, yet restrained by the institutional structure. The wider implications on creating an equitable transit system are discussed. I conclude that with limited influence and the lack of obvious representation of marginalized groups, it is difficult to determine whether the CAC's involvement will lead to the creation of an equitable transit system to benefit Detroit's transit dependent populations.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the people of Detroit.

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Firstly, I would also like to thank the Department of Political Science, especially my advisor, Dr. Jamey Essex. His many hours of processing and editing this work has made me a better researcher, as well as writer. I am thankful to have had such a dedicated professor to not only correct my work, but mentor me into becoming an academic. I would also like to thank Dr. John Sutcliffe for his encouragement over the last several years. Without him, I would not have even considered pursuing an M.A. degree. I am thankful that he took the time to persuade me, as I feel my life has been deeply enriched by this program. Dr. Veronika Mogyrody is another professor who encouraged and supported me in the final stages of this research project. Her insightful questions and comments helped me to create a superior final product, one that I can be truly proud of. I would also like to thank Dr. Tom Najem, who also counselled me during both my undergraduate and graduate degrees. His passion for Detroit led to many inspiring conversations, many of which led me to the place I am today.

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Introduction

Speramus meliora; resurget cineribus
We hope for better things; it will arise from the ashes.

Father Gabriel Richard

I began riding the bus when I was 16. An independent and driven teenager, it became clear to me that if my parents would not take me to where I felt I needed to be, that I would indeed have to get there myself. I learned the benefits of mobility and the freedom that came along with it. However, my home town only provided a substandard bussing system, with limited access to various locations. When I first moved out as a poor university student, I was determined to save money and so, I continued my carless lifestyle. Still in the same city, I grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of service during times when I needed to get to work, or bus schedules that would only run on an hourly basis, and always ahead of schedule, in order to ensure that I would miss them. I experienced the disadvantage and the limitations with only being able to afford public transportation, instead of an automobile. Although I was not politically aware enough to begin to wrestle with what this meant for society more broadly, and more importantly, for other transit dependent peoples, this sense of frustration and helplessness left a deep impression on me. Around the same time, I had a family member living in Detroit. Having lost the ability to drive her car, she began riding the bus to get to school and work. She recounted some of the horror stories that she, too, had encountered. Only her stories were much worse. Although I had experienced limitations, she experienced devastation. I still had familial support, people I could call if I was really stuck. She was

not as fortunate. And with the appalling connections between city and suburbs, she was often stranded. And she was angry. She was trying to be a productive member of society. She was trying to continue with school and with work, but her lack of mobility severely inhibited her ability to do so. We commiserated, but beyond the surface, I began to grapple with the question of how societies could be so uneven.

When I began thinking about possible subjects for my thesis, I knew that I wanted to focus on systemic injustice, hopefully contributing in some meaningful way to the world. When I began to think about my proximity to Detroit, which was in the midst of upheaval due to political corruption and bankruptcy, I knew that I wanted a research project that could contribute to its rebirth. Even though this is only a small part of a much bigger picture, I hope that this research illuminates, inspires, and makes a difference. This is for you, D.

INTRODUCTION

In everyday life in the US, systemic inequality paints a bleak picture for many marginalized citizens. Poverty, race, and residential segregation are three demographic factors that interact dynamically with the unequal distribution of public goods, continuing the cycle of lower quality of life in urban environments. This has been termed the spatial mismatch hypothesis, wherein low-income residents often live in ghettoized urban centres without equitable and consistent access to public services and employment (Kain, 1968; Cervero, 2004; Glaeser and Kahn, 2001; Martin, 2004; Sanchez, 2003). It has become clear that poor mobility leads to limited opportunities to improve socioeconomic status. Public transportation has the unique ability of highlighting this inequality, as many

of these demographic factors merge to affect mobility and create inequitable opportunities for many communities. Accordingly, much of the previous research on public transportation planning grappled with this general question: How does the intersection of race, poverty, urban segregation, and politics affect this social service? It is clear that the political and social significance of this essential urban service is directly related to its geographic reach. The distribution of public transit and the allocation of funds to support and maintain transit infrastructure and systems has the potential to affect low-income, racial minorities for generations (Bullard, 2003; Garrett and Taylor, 1999; Sanchez, 2003).

Chapter 2 discusses these theoretical underpinnings, as well as the historical factors that lead to discrepancies in mobility. Transportation planning is fraught with these determinants, and faces challenges in alleviating these limitations. Consequently, equity surfaced as a framework for creating just cities, where the playing field is levelled towards citizens who are systemically disadvantaged. The concept of equity exists as a conceptual framework for generating a fair society that rectifies some of the historical differences and disparities. However, even if planners overtly employ equity as a framework, it is difficult to achieve due to the inconsistencies in definition and lack of formal assessment tools to determine accessibility and mobility within economically and socially disadvantaged communities (Karner and Niemeier, 2013; Mishra and Welch, 2013).

Recent issues highlight the importance of citizen participation in decision making at the neighbourhood and metropolitan levels for achieving more equitable allocation and use of funds and resources in metropolitan systems. This is especially the case for transit

services, on which many urban poor are dependent for mobility. In transportation planning, it is posited that an active and engaged citizenry is necessary to achieve equitable public transit systems that improve mobility for disadvantaged populations (Grengs, 2002a). This is due to the fact that widespread participation from disenfranchised groups is thought to correlate with a considerably more fair and equitable society.

Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical premise of justice and citizen participation. Drawing from critical urban theory that values citizen participation to reclaim power over urban space, this chapter builds on the previous one to further argue that a high level of citizen involvement is not only beneficial to creating just and equitable societies, but is necessary in order to create cities for citizens, not just for business interests. Theoretical understandings of the unevenness of contemporary urbanization decry inequities in both outcome and process. Arguably, the ability of urban communities to ensure that all residents have an equitable “right to the city” necessitates “the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization” (Harvey, 2008: 23). Without this exercise of citizen power, policy makers are not able to adequately assess whether proposed policy changes have the desired effects of improving equity and quality of life. Thus, citizen participation is defined as an active form of democratic participation wherein citizens are actively involved in the bureaucratic processes to shape the decisions towards their needs. This is often in conflict with elite bureaucratic mechanisms that value technocratic urban planning in order to be most efficient and profitable.

I chose to focus this research project on the Detroit metropolitan region due to its persistent socioeconomic inequalities, nonexistent regional transportation system, and

need to reinvest in its dilapidated public service sector. Furthermore, racial tensions divide the region and contribute to an inequitable quality of life for many African-American Detroiters. Chapter 4 examines the historical development of Detroit over the last century. It demonstrates how a confluence of systemic racial discrimination, a dominant automotive industry that has been in long-term decline, and regional divisions contribute to high levels of geographic inequality. With a defunct public service sector and newly formed regional transportation authority to tackle the issue of transit across the region, this chapter illustrates the need for an active and engaged citizenry, due to the decades of disinvestment and deindustrialization in many inner city neighbourhoods. With new interest and investment in Detroit from private investors, as well as a newly formed Regional Transportation Authority, the region is at a pivotal moment for public transportation. Renewed energy and support from the political and business communities is coupled with support and advocacy from many transit advocacy groups. A Citizen's Advisory Committee has also been created to represent citizen needs to the Regional Transportation Authority.

The connection between equity and citizen participation in public transportation decision-making is a relatively unexplored field. Broadly, does an active and engaged citizenry impact transit decision-making, and if so, does it have the potential to create more equitable transit systems? This research project seeks to discover the level of genuine participation that the CAC members have in the transit decision-making process. From these findings, I hope to make connections to equity within transit planning, while drawing broader conclusions for the citizens of Detroit Metropolitan Region.

Chapter 5 focuses on the research methodology and findings. To assess citizen participation this research study takes a two-pronged approach. Firstly, an online survey, hosted on the University of Windsor servers, was provided to members of the CAC to assess level of involvement and their perceptions of influence in the policy process. Secondly, I observed some of the CAC's monthly public meetings in addition to the RTA's Board Meetings to assess discussion of salient issues and group dynamics. At board meetings, I examined the level of citizen participation from the general public and the CAC contributions to gain a better understanding of the form and effectiveness of citizen participation within these two institutional structures.

Finally, I conclude that the CAC is an active and passionate body of engaged citizens, but are limited due to the institutional structure and the overarching authority of the RTA Board. Additionally, when drawing wider conclusions within the field of transportation equity, there is no evidence that minority, disenfranchised, and geographically isolated populations are represented within the CAC. The implications of these findings are discussed in the findings section, as well as conclusion.

Chapter 2 – Equity & Public Transportation

Transportation is a social and economic justice issue because those who most rely on transit services are disproportionately poor. Transportation is a civil rights issue because the poor are disproportionately people of color. Transportation is an economic issue because a better transit service can increase the mobility of such people, enabling them to reach jobs, schools training, shopping, and other activities. Transportation is an environmental issue because a better, cheaper, safer, clean-fuel transit service offers an alternative to the single-user automobile and can reduce congestion, pollution, and consumption of energy and other natural resources.

Robert Garcia and Thomas Rubin (2004: 223)

A theoretical understanding of the concept of equity derives from the principles of fairness, equality, and social justice for all peoples in society. A myriad of social factors, most notably, race and class, converge to produce differences in access to public and private goods in contemporary societies. These intersections and interactions need to be critically analyzed in order to generate the best possible quality of life for all people. This holds true for the field of public transportation. Equity offers an important framework for assessing these intersections and creating solutions to alleviate poverty and increase mobility, attempting to create transit systems that are fairly developed, distributed and operated (Bullard, 2004; Sanchez, 2008; Glaeser et al, 2000). Sanchez (2007) argues that “transportation equity refers to a range of strategies and policies that aim to address inequities in the nation’s transportation planning and project delivery system” (7). This chapter establishes how socioeconomic inequalities, such as those based on race, class, and location, often systemically disadvantage low-income minorities within the United States. It concludes with the current state of equity planning within public transportation planning.

Transportation and The Civil Rights Movement

Historical context is necessary in order to understand the current state of public transportation planning, policy, and implementation in the United States. Discrimination was legally accepted under the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling in 1896, after an African-American male, Homer Plessy, was arrested for his refusal to sit in a “coloured” car (Bullard et al., 2004:15). After contending that the Separate Car Act violated the US Constitution and losing his case at the state level, Plessy lost his appeal when the Supreme Court determined that a “separate but equal” doctrine was permissible, providing legal justifications for racial segregation (Bullard et al., 2004:15). These laws entrenched racial discrimination into public life, most notably, public transportation systems. This classification deeply engrained racial inequality into American society and was not overturned until 1954 when *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* struck down the former legislation (Bullard et al., 2004). Unsurprisingly, unequal transportation access became a major target of the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat at the front of a public bus, she was arrested. These actions catalyzed the Montgomery Bus Boycott, defying institutional racism through collective nonviolent direct action (Sanchez, 2003). Although this was not the first bus boycott, “Parks’s action sparked new leadership around transportation and civil rights” (Bullard et al., 2004: 16). This boycott served as a model for future organisation for African-Americans, as the Montgomery bus event was not an isolated incident (Bullard et al, 2004). In both academic and activist spheres, public transit was incorporated into the larger civil rights movement due to the connection of mobility as an area of demonstrable racial inequality and subsequent flashpoint of organization. This was one of many interrelated issues of discrimination against African-

Americans. Although there are other marginalized groups without adequate access to public transit, the fight for transportation equity originated with the civil rights movement, as its goals emanated from a wider, systemic discrimination against African-Americans within American society. Through various forms of civil disobedience, African-American civil rights groups exposed the struggles within their daily lives and argued that, transportation is an economic, civil, and human right (Bullard et al., 2004).

Civil rights activists deemed transportation a basic right for all citizens, without which many Americans were significantly disadvantaged (Bullard, 2003). They argued that the Black population's ability to travel, even short distances, is restricted due to unaffordability of automobiles and insufficient public transit, creating severe limitations in obtaining a higher quality of life. As part of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), Martin Luther King Jr. recognized the way transportation determined accessibility to jobs:

Urban transit systems in most American cities ... have become a genuine civil rights issue ... because the layout of rapid-transit systems determines the accessibility of jobs to the black community. If transportation systems in American cities could be laid out so as to provide an opportunity for poor people to get to meaningful employment, then they could begin to move into mainstream American life. ... The system has virtually no consideration for connecting the poor people with their jobs. There is only one possible explanation for this situation, and that is the racist blindness of city planners. (Quoted in Bullard et al., 2004: 17)

This movement contended that these systems represented investment or disinvestment in particular neighbourhoods, which has played a significant role in shaping economic opportunities for low-income, Black communities (Sanchez, 2008). As a public good, the allocation of funds and resources to neighbourhoods over time has painted a stark picture of discrimination and its long-term effects. In essence, systemic discrimination in public

transit illuminated the way racial inequality perpetuated social and economic disadvantages. The civil rights movement began a long battle to dismantle racial discrimination in American life, with the transportation sector at the forefront.

Bullard (2003) asserts that public transportation is still on the agenda for the civil rights movement in the US as “all communities do not receive the same benefits from transportation advancements and investments” (1183). Most urban areas do experience some sort of discrepancy when it comes to providing fair access to public transit for low-income minorities. This reality led Bullard et al. (2004) to designate the term ‘transportation apartheid’ as the uneven transportation development characterized by isolated neighbourhoods with inadequate public transit. This concept also encompasses the way federally funded highways contribute to urban sprawl, dispersed employment and the fragmentation of low-income, African-American neighbourhoods. For example, an empirical study on the access for bus service in transit-dependent neighbourhoods across four cities – Asheville, North Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina; Mobile, Alabama; and Richmond, Virginia – suggests there are still areas with inferior access and delivery for minorities (Thill and Wells, 2011). More research on other cities using this analysis would be helpful in closing gaps, as Thill and Wells were not able to make generalizations across the country. However, the relevance of this research is rooted in its ability to assess the intersection of race, low-income status, geography and employment opportunities in a specific urban region. The broader elements of race in low-income communities are still central within the literature on mobility and are necessary to understand the current problem with public transit in many American metropolitan areas.

This next section examines the common factors in urban regions that coalesce to produce unequal mobility for low-income, minority populations.

Transportation and Socioeconomic Inequalities

Broadly, socioeconomic inequalities underpin the need for public transportation, especially due to the increasing unevenness of income distribution between metropolitan households, shaped by race and geography (Sanchez, 2003). It has been found that household income level has a strong determinant influence on available transportation mode, as income levels “generally correspond with [the] ability to own a car and the type of transportation [one uses]” (Sanchez, 2003:8). In essence, low-income people cannot typically afford a car and rely on public transit. This is because “mobility makes a sharply disproportionate claim on the household budgetary resource of the poor” (Lewis and Williams, 1999:148). The role of personal expenditure on transportation for low-income households, where the median income is \$12,500, is five times as much as even a middle-income household, where the median income is \$60,000 (Lewis and Williams, 1999: 152). When a larger portion of the household budget is allocated towards transportation, low-income households have less money to spend elsewhere. This underscores the need for affordable public transit to comparatively increase mobility. Glaeser et al. (2000) agree: poverty and public transportation are correlational. Their research established a “strong positive correlation between public transportation use in the central city (relative to the suburbs) and the concentration of poverty in the central city” (3). In other words, people with less money cannot afford cars and, therefore, must rely on public transit. The

substantive connection between poverty and mobility establishes for whom public transportation should work: low-income people.

Lower income populations provide the impetus for developing affordable and accessible public transit across metropolitan areas, such that mobility becomes less limiting. In the U.S., race and poverty are often interrelated factors that affect the need for public transit in specific communities. According to an analysis of national census data from 1990 and 2000, Logan (2002) found that a ‘neighbourhood gap’ between Black and White communities exists. The income for the typical Black household in a neighbourhood in 1990 was \$27 808 compared with \$45 486 for a White household in a different neighbourhood, a gap of \$17 679 increasing to \$18 112 by 2000 (Logan, 2002; Squires and Kubrin, 2005). These numbers point to a widening racial inequality that pervades American cities. In essence, “because people of color have higher poverty rates, they also have higher rates of using public transportation to travel to work” (Sanchez, 2003: 9). This is strongly correlated with geographic segregation, wherein low-income, racial minorities tend to live in the same neighbourhoods. Residential segregation “refers to the isolation of poor and/or racial minorities that live in communities and neighbourhoods separated from those of other socioeconomic groups” (Li et al., 2013). The reasons for this segregation are diverse, yet they typically derive from one cause: racial discrimination. Whether it was overtly racist housing market policies, such as credit, mortgage, and insurance limitations, or indirect market exclusivity, such as housing prices being too high in ‘white’ neighbourhoods, Gobillon et al. (2007) found that African-Americans have been historically restricted in housing purchases. O’Connor (2001) argues that “[r]ace is woven into the fabric of residential and industrial location

choices,” which has perpetuated residential segregation over time. Together, neighbourhood and race compound the patterns of uneven development and lead to disparities between rich and poor, as well as white and minority communities.

This system of residential discrimination in urban social life was established during the post-World War II economic boom. As American cities expanded and dispersed, increased automobile usage inevitably discriminated against those who could not afford the amenity (Glaeser and Kahn, 2003). As large numbers of white Americans moved to subsidized suburban tract housing in the 1950s, there was massive growth in suburban retail and employment centers, changing the spatial form and geographic distribution of urban areas and populations (McDonald, 2008). The phenomenon of ‘sprawl’ became the new form of urban growth over the latter half of the twentieth century. Brueckner (2000) supports this premise by identifying several forces that drove this spatial expansion: growing population, rising incomes in the postwar economy and falling commuting costs. Similarly, McDonald (2008) argues,

these forces were primarily economic in nature: rapid growth in household income, which could be used to buy house and automobiles, reduction in commuting costs from the construction of freeways, cheap suburban land and low costs for building materials, and federal policies that encourages suburban development on single-family homes (104).

Furthermore, this residential decentralisation and population sprawl facilitated the suburbanization of employment (Glaeser and Kahn, 2003). In sum, spatial expansion away from the urban core fragmented and removed investment, privileging higher-income, white populations.

Squires and Kubrin (2005) note that there is no definitive agreement on what sprawl is; however, there is a general consensus that it is “a pattern of development

associated with outward expansion, low density housing and commercial development, fragmentation of planning among multiple municipalities with large fiscal disparities among them, auto-dependent transport and segregated land use patterns” (48). Some academics see sprawl as non-random and argue that its social and economic consequences stem from the inability to mitigate market failures associated with this phenomenon (Brueckner, 2000; Glaeser and Kahn, 2003). This individualistic model is predicated on the notion that households ‘vote with their feet’: one’s utility maximization is of paramount importance (Squire and Kubrin, 2005). However, this viewpoint obscures the structural impediments in choosing where to live, as well as the destructive nature of the social and environmental costs of sprawl. As the dominant form of urban growth over the postwar period, sprawl has contributed to racial segregation across many metropolitan areas. This has amounted to many urban centres being disproportionately non-white and impoverished (Squires and Kubrin, 2005). Urban sprawl is not necessarily a problem in and of itself; rather, the problem lies with the “exodus of jobs and people from the inner cities [which] have created an abandoned underclass whose earnings cannot support a multi-car based lifestyle” (Glaeser and Kahn, 2003: 2). This spatial concentration of poverty through racial segregation tends to shape opportunities and lifestyles across generations (Squires and Rubin, 2005). Uneven development limits access to employment for certain demographic groups, who have been residentially segregated.

The indirect effects of residential segregation result in metropolitan environments with dire consequences for low-income, minority populations. This is because poverty typically becomes concentrated in a specific place, as residents are not capable of moving to other higher-income, suburban areas. It is often the case that higher-income families

choose to “form separate jurisdictions for the provision of public goods such as education, public safety, and parks” (Brueckner, 2000:168). As such, suburban expansion impairs the quality of education, social services, and environmental security for many inner-city residents who do not have the financial means to ameliorate their circumstances. Therefore, transportation becomes a factor in other “quality of life indicators”: health, education, employment, economic development, access to municipal services, residential mobility, and environmental quality (Bullard, 2003: 1184). Low-income and minority groups, who are dependent on public transit as their primary source of mobility, have less access to various forms of employment, education, medical care, social functions, and food retail (Sanchez, 2003). Notably, employment is the most affected area in this regard. Holzer et al. (1999) note the manner in which demographic realities and residential segregation coalesce to affect employment:

... [L]ess-educated people and those on public assistance mostly reside in areas with high minority populations. Low-skill jobs are quite scarce in these areas, while the availability of such jobs relative to less-educated people in heavily white suburban areas is high. Large fractions of the low-skill jobs in these metropolitan areas are not accessible by public transit. Furthermore, there is significant variation within both central cities and suburbs in the ethnic composition of residents and in the availability of low-skill jobs. (1)

The geographical distance from employment centres and the need for public transportation therefore are most visible in urban areas with large minority populations.

Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis

Research surrounding poverty, segregation, and the lack of mobility established the spatial mismatch hypothesis (SMH). In 1968, Kain argued that the disconnect between place of residence and place of employment has negative effects, particularly on

low-income, racial minorities. Sanchez (2003) explains it as such: “[i]n other words, those who most need entry-level jobs (primarily people of color) generally live in central cities while entry-level jobs are mostly in suburban locations that are not easily accessible from central cities” (10). In testing the SMH to explain high levels of unemployment among African-Americans, Martin (2004) reasserted that for “a majority of Black urban workers, the increasing spatial separation of jobs and Black residences, led to higher unemployment rates with the impact being most significant for younger workers” (193). Gobillon et al. (2007) note that SMH continues to be relevant, as it focuses on high unemployment, low-wage, low-skilled outcomes for Black inner-city workers, in relation to suburban job opportunities. Arguably, this uneven social process stretches further to affect more areas of life than employment. Kasarda (1989) articulated this problem as a Black ‘underclass’: the deterioration of economic and social conditions for an “immobilized subgroup of spatially isolated, persistently poor ghetto dwellers characterized by substandard education and high rates of joblessness, mother-only households, welfare dependency, out-of-wedlock births and crime” closely associated with industrial decline (27). This definition widens the scope to address the compounding effects of poverty, segregation, and isolation from social and spatial processes. The following section examines some of the nuances of this discussion.

The SMH provides a useful framework in explaining how the decentralization of industries and suburbanization of communities has left African-Americans, and perhaps other racial minorities, with inferior access to employment opportunities. There is substantial evidence that as of 2000, “people both live and work in the suburbs”, meaning that employment and housing have both decentralized (Glaeser and Kahn, 2001: 2). This

had led to the phenomenon of ‘reverse-commutes’ where commuters from inner-city locations are forced to seek dispersed employment away from the centre. This geographical separation is in response to the “[d]ecentralisation of office-sector work, along with residences”, which has prompted a shift of increasing numbers of low-skill jobs to the suburbs, away from the isolated inner-city residents (Cervero, 2004: 181). The impacts of this phenomenon are realised most acutely in the ‘transit service gaps’ where public transportation systems fail in connecting transit-dependent residents with employment across metropolitan regions (Cervero, 2004). Although low-income residents living in relatively segregated areas are disproportionately disadvantaged in the aforementioned scenario, residents in high-income brackets also experience dispersed employment. The difference lies in the ability of higher-wage workers to choose: not only do they seek better residential amenities, such as education, safer neighbourhoods, and recreational facilities, but they also “have access to better and more reliable transportation than lower-wage workers” (Blumenberg and Ong, 1997:3). In essence, spatial disconnects across metropolitan regions limit mobility when there are no adequate transportation options. This translates into limited access for employment selection, and, in turn, a limited quality of life.

Scholars contest SMH due to its narrow, yet ambiguous question: “does the growing distance between ghetto neighbourhoods and suburban jobs explain high unemployment among African Americans?” (Grengs, 2010: 43). The disadvantage of mobility, rather than distance, further convolutes this question. Taylor and Ong (1995) argue that even though the dispersal pattern of employment over the past half century has not matched the residential pattern of minority populations, “this is not *prima facie*

evidence of a spatial mismatch”; rather, the *type* of employment and commuting abilities is what needs to be examined (1456). Due to the fact that distance between home and work for white and minority workers is similar, there is a modal rather than spatial mismatch. Their data illustrates the disadvantage of not having access to a private automobile; the inadequacy of public transit in being a reliable and efficient form of transportation places a disproportionate burden on low-income, unskilled, minority populations. This indicates that SMH is not necessarily limited to minority and low-income neighbourhoods (Ong and Miller, 2005). Suburbanites can live geographically far from their places of employment as well. Therefore, SMH “when defined simply as physical separation, is not confined to just the inner city of a modern metropolis” but is “ubiquitous” throughout metropolitan areas (Ong and Miller, 2005:43). A more correct understanding of the SMH includes the locational disadvantages residents face when they do not have adequate access to reliable transportation that is required in modern metropolitan areas (Ong and Miller, 2005). Therefore, it is important to consider travel mode in order to understand why certain communities have more difficulty accessing employment. With this in mind, some academics reconceptualise SMH to include access to transportation that corresponds with employment, instead of just geographical distance, in order to determine equity (Blumenburg, 1997; Grengs, 2010). This concept is important when considering Detroit and will be further explored in chapter 4.

Geographic disadvantage occurs when transit-dependent, low-income, inner city residents do not have adequate mobility and are unable to access employment. Furthermore, the dislocation between urban residents and their employment, as described by SMH, has been shown to negatively impact the entire community. Based on extensive

research regarding the “disadvantaged position that poor minorities suffer in the segregated urban system”, Li et al. (2013) suggest that this racial segregation has had a destructive impact on economic growth of entire metropolitan regions that extend beyond poor, isolated neighbourhoods (2655). They conclude that more research on the availability of public transit could help to better understand the spatial mismatch within metropolitan areas. In sum, SMH is a useful framework to encapsulate how decentralised spatial patterns have redistributed and entrenched socioeconomic inequalities within American society, adding to the need for effective transportation systems.

Transportation Funding, Institutions and Legislation

Mechanisms that create and sustain transportation systems are a vital area of analysis in understanding political and economic forces because they are one key way that public and private policy decisions intentionally shape cities. Squires and Kubrin (2005) argue that there has been uneven development across urban environments, where race and place are central determinants in the creation of ‘privileged places.’ Their research demonstrates how “public policy decisions and powerful private institutional actors” shape the social forces of sprawl, concentrated poverty and segregation (48). In essence, various local and federal government policies have led to the deindustrialization and disinvestment of urban neighbourhoods by encouraging “the flight of business and jobs from cities to surrounding suburban communities and beyond” (57). With all of the transition of business and residence to geographically distant areas, the rise in automobility exacerbates the difficulties that low-income, racial minorities face in accessing equitable social services and adequate employment options. When transportation policy is manipulated to serve the needs of higher-income and social

majority communities, it contributes to the inequitable opportunity structure facing many poor and minority Americans. Furthermore, due to the lack of connection between low-income, racial minorities and the highest levels of planning circles, it is not surprising that legislation and funding do not represent the needs of the transit-dependent. Bullard (2004) argues that transportation is more than just the development of physical infrastructure, since it affects the different “freedoms, opportunities, and rewards” that are offered to Americans (20). He writes: “Transportation decision-making is political. Building roads in the job-rich suburbs while at the same time blocking transit from entering these same suburbs are political decisions buttressed by race and class dynamics” (20). This section examines the federal policies that generally characterise metropolitan regions.

Emanating from the civil rights movement, research regarding the SMH, the disconcerting demographic realities of low-income, racial minorities, and the decentralization of U.S. cities, has led to several federal mandates on transportation inequity. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the first piece of federal legislation that made progress in this domain. It used “broad and forceful language” to “[prohibit] the federal government from financially supporting any program [that] operated in a racially discriminatory manner”, including environmental programs that could endanger the health of minority communities (Colopy, 1994:152-153). This federal mandate was created to ensure non-discrimination towards low-income minorities within the jurisdiction of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), which, as recipients of federal funding, develop non-discriminatory public transit across urban regions (Karner and Niemeier, 2013). MPOs are organizations of local governments legally charged “to

carry out the transportation planning process ... designated for each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 individuals” designated by the state Governor (U.S. Code 23 § 134). These organizations serve as the coordinating and planning hub for urban and suburban development across metropolitan regions.

The effectiveness and impacts of Title VI are somewhat indeterminable and disparate. In order to be in compliance with this act, the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) requires states to “have an adequately staffed civil rights unit, have procedures to address civil rights complaints, collect statistical data on protected populations, conduct annual reviews of programs, [and] provide training for staff to explain Title VI obligations” (Sanchez, 2008: 74-75). Additionally, in order for MPOs to be certified, they must adhere to a list of requirements that focus primarily on public involvement and planning in order to comply with Title VI. However, ambiguity on matters of environmental and economic impacts, as well as lack of expectations and standards in the distribution of resources across metropolitan regions has frustrated community and grassroots activist groups (Sanchez, 2008). Furthermore, the enforcement of this civil rights legislation over matters of transportation discrimination is somewhat inconsequential. The number of formal challenges to Title VI based on inequitable access to transportation, in comparison to other areas, such as race-based employment or educational discrimination, is substantially lower (Sanchez, 2008). This has resulted in a great deal of legislation that tends toward furthering transportation civil rights in name only.

In the 1990s, lawmakers created several pieces of legislation to address some of the civil rights concerns that continued to plague poor minority communities. The 1991

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and its successor, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) were both considered milestones in addressing America's transportation woes, including its reliance on automobiles (McCann, 1999). Despite this goal, TEA-21's attempt to curb sprawl actually did the opposite. McCann (1999) notes that "[b]y shortchanging mass transit and other transportation alternatives, and instead pouring money into highway improvements and new highway construction, ... Congress has defined how America will move ... and has reinforced the car, with all of its problems, as our primary means of transport" (857-58). Furthermore, these reform laws gave more direction to states to "tailor transportation plans to the realities of their distinct markets" (Katz et al., 2003: 3). For the first time, they recognised the need for regionally coordinated networks, and increased funding to secure efficient transportation systems. However, by devolving power into state authorities, Katz et al. (2003) note the way this system biases the distribution of transportation revenues; despite the increases in funding allocations to state-level transportation departments, allocation to local and urban MPOs actually declined. These laws, at the expense of funding and prioritization for MPOs, have left many metropolitan areas without the effective governance structures needed to enact equitable transportation systems.

In 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898 as a response to the growing concern over environmental impacts of transportation policies. The 'Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations' policy required federal agencies "to achieve environmental justice by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health and

environmental effects, including interrelated social and economic effects, of their programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations” (Sanchez, 2008: 80). This piece of legislation recognised environmental justice as a critical component in ensuring equity for populations across metropolitan regions. Importantly, it acknowledged the way that low-income populations, due to their geographic segregation, are disproportionately affected by highway infrastructure projects, as well as poor transit planning, as they do not have the resources to ameliorate their circumstances.

Despite these advancements, there is “no clear definition, in practise or theory, of what constitutes a fair distribution of benefits from transportation investments,” nor does a subsequent framework exist to establish standards to measure successfully equitable distribution (Martens et al., 2012: 684). As a result, the issue of ‘equity’ in public transportation policy is a semi-fluid concept and concerns multiple interrelated notions. Consequently, it is not by accident that public transportation in many urban metropolitan areas has faced substantial challenges in the past century. Lewis and Williams (1999) articulate three policy functions of public transit in practise: low cost mobility, congestion management, and urban development. These three aspects correspond to areas of public interest and converge to influence local budgets. Because public opinion typically dictates what elected officials do in office, planning directives and funding allocations do not always align with creating equitable access across metropolitan regions, as varying demographics unfairly contest how and where transportation systems should develop. Competition arises when transit faces funding shortages: low-cost services that increase basic mobility for transit-dependent communities are typically cut

instead of transit services associated with other objectives (congestion, urban development) (Lewis and Williams, 1999). Altshuler et al. write:

The primary needs of the carless poor are not for improved high speed, peak period, downtown-oriented commuter services. ... It [their mobility] can best be ameliorated by off-peak and crosstown service improvements. Such improvements, however, typically attract very low incremental load factors and almost no automobile drivers. ... Politically, such improvements attract no support from downtown business interests; they generate no construction jobs or contracts; they do not expand the base of transit system support (typically weakest in suburbs) ... In short, they have neither glamour nor significant pork-barrel value; the benefits are hard to measure; and they typically come at a rather high cost per trip served. (In Lewis and Williams, 1999: 51)

Without clear directives establishing what an equitable transportation system consists of, there is not enough public or political will to create transit systems that serve equitable ends across metropolitan regions. Upgrades and capital investments can be politically convenient, but do not often represent the actual mobility needs of communities.

Not only has the US federal government failed to give clear directives in order to redress issues of inequality within urban areas, they have, arguably, prioritised private interests. Lewyn (2001) argues that “government at all levels has systematically reduced public transit ridership by building highways that made newer suburbs possible, while often failing to create public transit service to those suburbs” (275). Adler (1993) supports this notion; his assessment of the federal transit policy rationale was seen as supporting industry-government relationships, rather than “the intra-urban travel that was the bread and butter of cities transit” (69). The limited funding that was allocated to public transit was “captured ... by the central business district activists in cities across the country seeking to enhance the locational advantages of their place in the face of increasingly intense competition from suburban business centers” (Adler, 1993:70). This means that most of the initial public transit funding was seen to support business needs

by connecting suburban centres with the downtown business districts. Furthermore, a reallocation occurred in the 1990s through the delegation of transportation funds to MPOs, giving them more power to make localized decisions (Lewis and McGhee, 2001). This was supposed to have been an advance in public transit policy; accordingly, the non-neutral atmosphere gave urban planners more control and, thus, ability to distribute funds as they saw fit (Lewis and McGhee, 2001). Rather than leading to progressive transportation initiatives, this devolution of power decreased the consistency in application of equity within transit systems across the country. Ultimately, the federal government's alternative priorities and 'hands off' policies contributed to a lack of clear, consistent strategies and frameworks for providing public transit for those who are most in need.

Equity in Public Transportation

All of the aforementioned phenomena point to the need to prioritize equity in the distribution of public transportation. Several normative questions emerge: What is the purpose of mass public transit? Whom does and should public transit serve? How should fairness and equity be defined? (Garrett and Taylor, 1999). Current research suggests that without a predetermined definition, equitable distribution of resources is nearly impossible to achieve and sustain. A justice-oriented viewpoint of public transportation sees equitable distribution as investments benefitting low-income and racial minorities, who experience a spatial mismatch and are the most limited in terms of mobility (Martens et al., 2012). Sanchez (2003) writes that the "ultimate objective of transportation equity is to provide equal access to social and economic opportunity by providing equitable levels

of access to all places” (10). Thus, the alleviation of certain historically determinant factors, such as race, class, gender, and disability, characterizes accessibility and fairness of mobility (Sanchez, 2003). Public transit is equitable when it allows for greater access and mobility across socioeconomic divides.

Due to the fact that American cities were largely created for the use of cars, the discussion surrounding public transportation as a social service adds to the notion of equity being defined as adequate funding and support for whom it is most needed (Garrett and Taylor, 1999). Garrett and Taylor (1999) critically analyze these circumstances:

The allocation of transit services between rich and poor, whites and people of color, suburbanites and inner-city residents, is not happenstance, but is directly connected to social and economic processes that have produced the current racial and economic polarization between suburbs and central cities. Mainstream planning has paid insufficient attention to the redistribution of economic and political power that is at least partly responsible for these patterns of uneven urban development. The tradition of equity planning, on the other hand, has been centrally concerned with reducing such urban inequalities. (7-8)

The goal of equitable transit rests primarily on rectifying the unequal opportunity structure created by past social and economic processes. Equity, although generally conceptualized as overcoming socioeconomic inequality, does not necessarily have a straightforward means of implementation.

It is clear that alongside an unclear/ambiguous definition of equity, the method to achieve this objective is not clear. Sanchez et al. (2007) argues that equity involves “a range of strategies and policies that aim to address inequities in the ... transportation planning and project delivery system” that meet the needs of a community by having viable transportation options (7). From this definition, equity-oriented transit planning is articulated as the pragmatic output of funding into public transportation to better communities as a whole. However, equity is often lost when planning discussions

broaden beyond adequate service for low-income groups. Garrett and Taylor (1999) argue that the “growing dissonance” between the quality of service provided to inner-city residents who depend on bus transit and the level of public resources being spent to attract new riders is both “economically inefficient and socially inequitable” (6). The tension that planners encounter between the strong demand from transit-dependents and the suburban, largely white and politically active commuters, has shifted resources and focus to the latter group (Garrett and Taylor, 1999).

The perception of public transportation as an essential social service is often implicitly contested through funding allocations, planning obfuscation, and inadequate analyses of equity. Furthermore, debates over economic efficiency confound discussions of adequate service for low-income, geographically segregated populations. Martens et al. (2012) attempt to synthesize the literature on the subject of equity in public transportation. They note that there tends to be an ideological division, where some planners advocate for service for the least mobile, while others cater to the most mobile in order to solve congestion and environmental problems caused by the increase in cars (Martens et al., 2012: 690). The underlying tension reveals itself as one between social equity and greatest economic efficiency. It is easy for the former to be lost without specific deliberation in policy planning. The tension of urban planners desiring to maximize the benefit of funding while controlling costs *and* providing equitable access is evident in the way public transit has not adequately served the needs of low-income communities across the U.S. Consequently, this debate creates a philosophical false dichotomy between creating ‘race-specific’ and ‘universalistic’ solutions in addressing inequality (Squires and Kubrin, 2005). It does not follow that an equitable transit system

is not also economically viable. It simply differs in establishing for whom the system is primarily designed. More research on this subject would be useful in uncovering how public funds could be best utilized while pursuing an equitably distributed system as its objective.

This bifurcation in public transportation planning is seen clearly in debates over bus and rail funding (Martens et al., 2012). Typically, different modes of public transportation are seen as transit ‘for’ different socioeconomic demographics: bus transit is a cheaper mode with the benefit of flexible route in low-income communities, whereas rail transit is seen as efficient service for mobile suburban commuters to travel longer distances on a fixed route (Levine, 2013). Due to their high costs, rail investments are poised to take away from bus investments, thus inherently prioritizing one demographic over the other. Additionally, rail systems “work best at connecting dense suburban residential concentrations to dense central areas. They are far less effective in connecting inner-city residents to dispersed suburban employment sites, especially without time consuming transfers” (Garrett and Taylor, 1999: 10). In a study examining rail expansion for suburban commuters in metropolitan cities in the past 30 years, new rail lines were actually found to not attract more people to public transit usage; rather, it demonstrated that “mode switching to rail, [had] the potential to represent large aggregate time savings” for current public transit users (Baum-Snow and Kahn, 2005:58). This is significant, as the investment is seen to have been at the expense of low-income transit users, who were not considered in this expansion, but have, in turn, benefitted from the system. This points to the fact that increases in rail funding can also benefit transit-dependent users by establishing greater access. This research suggests public

transportation planning across entire metropolitan areas is not antithetical to social equity. If rail investment is intentionally planned while considering low-income minorities, it can help to create an effective and accessible transportation system throughout entire regions. Martens et al. (2012) argues that a justice-oriented framework needs to be implemented by transportation authorities, so that the focus on access levels, instead of congestion, across areas and modes would contribute to cost-effective solutions for low-income, minority groups. At this point, the bus versus rail conundrum is only symbolic of the trade-offs policymakers have to make, as they do not have to be in competition with each other. It is clear that more research in this area with the goal of equity would be helpful in creating a comprehensive framework that includes both bus and rail within metropolitan regions.

Persistent Inequity in Public Transportation

Accordingly, there are several reasons for the persistent inequity within public transportation funding, planning and distribution policies. One of these is the lack of consistent methodology for evaluating equity. Mishra and Welch (2013) note that despite several federally mandated equity measures, such as Title VI, Executive Order 12898, and TEA-21, “there is no generally accepted standard framework for measuring equity in transport” (30). Without a comprehensive framework, it is easy for transit authorities to make subjective decisions and implicitly ignore the federal mandates, as there are no accepted uniform and concrete ways to measure them. Mishra and Welch (2013) thus attempted to create a tool for transit agencies “to measure the distribution of transit service among specific populations to provide better access to captive riders” when

seeking to make service changes (Mishra and Welch, 2013:40). It filled a notable gap in the research regarding the effect of inequitable transportation policies on low-income minorities. Even with this framework, there are still recognized limitations in assessment of equitable distribution across metropolitan areas in the United States (Mishra and Welch, 2013).

Arguably, the spatial mismatch hypothesis is a by-product of this reality. Even as planners move in the direction of equity transit planning as an intentional goal, there is difficulty assessing low-income communities for adequate accessibility. Sanchez (2008) attributes the lack of assessment measures to the inadequacy of resources within federal funding that have been allocated to evaluating “the effectiveness of programs that have direct social implications” (840). Of the \$3.3 billion over six years allotted under TEA-21 for research and development, the majority was spent on physical infrastructure, with “only a relatively miniscule fraction ... spent on research examining transportation’s effect on poverty and social outcomes” (Sanchez, 2008: 840). Although it is important to examine the technical engineering within transportation infrastructure, the social impact of where this infrastructure should go also deserves attention. The lack of clarity in equity research, in combination with the lack of a progressive and standardized framework to efficiently utilize funding, has made equity an obscure and elusive concept within the planning world. In essence, without academic or professional consensus among planners, or adequate funding, there is no way to assess the relationship between public transportation and disadvantaged populations within a specific region and whether measures to guarantee equity will succeed.

The failure of planning agencies to integrate theoretical advances from equity literature into transportation planning has instigated new research on the subject of civil rights, equity, and measurable effects (Karner and Niemeier, 2013). Karner and Niemeier (2013) attempt to bring together “major research from disparate fields in a critical review of transportation equity analysis” to make progress in this area of urban planning (132). In particular, social justice scholars, whose focus has been on the civil rights aspect of transportation planning, are often not considered within or alongside models put forth by planning organizations. As previously discussed, MPOs are funded federally to adequately distribute resources in a manner suitable to the mandates regarding equity. However, these mandates are vague and race was not often viewed within current equity frameworks as a determinant variable of travel behaviour, and therefore cannot successfully be used to address transportation needs (Karner and Niemeier, 2013). They note that racial factors are difficult to address and need to be identified *a priori* alongside demographic thresholds to identify concentrated disadvantage within communities. In other words,

In light of the spatial mismatch literature and evidence on the independent effect of race/ethnicity on travel behavior, the role of regional equity analysis becomes clear from a civil rights perspective: a regional equity analysis should be able to capture the extent to which racial dynamics operate in a given region, disproportionately affect people of color and other protected populations, and seek to mitigate them. (Karner and Niemeier, 2013:127)

This analysis seeks to redress existing inequality through the change in transit equity models away from those that adjust “units or thresholds until an equitable or inequitable result is found; rather, the *effect of or direction associated with* changing these factors must be incorporated into the analysis and discussed along with the other results” (Karner and Niemeier, 2013: 131, emphasis in original). Due to the fact that spatial mismatch

differs regionally, the impact of proposed policy changes must be assessed regionally, as MPOs have a specific responsibility to mitigate discrimination across entire metropolitan regions (Karner and Niemeier, 2013). One of the key conclusions was the need for an increase in public input to ensure a greater level of transportation equity.

Conclusion

It is clear that socioeconomic factors, such as race, income status, and place of residence, must be considered in the development of public transit systems in order for equity to be achieved. As numerous scholars have pointed out, the dispute over efficiency and equity tends to obscure the needs of the poor, leading to systems that do not adequately consider the needs and preferences of low-income people and racial minorities. As a public service, mandated to be non-discriminatory for racial minorities, MPOs are tasked with ensuring equity; yet, we know there is no real way to measure or ensure its provision under existing legislation and through most current models used in transportation planning. In following with Karner and Niemeier (2013), the next chapter will establish the way that citizen participation in planning processes has the potential to lead to higher levels of equity in transit systems across metropolitan regions.

Chapter 3 – Citizen Participation

If planning is a political activity, then some form of citizen participation would appear necessary in a democratic state.

The previous chapter expanded on the socioeconomic and spatial inequalities that face many transit users across the United States. Building on this knowledge, this chapter seeks to identify how the concepts of justice and equity affect urban environments. Citizen participation is often seen as a mechanism to create equitable systems because citizens actively shape the decision-making processes of government. However, due to its normative assumptions, citizen participation is considered a ‘contested topic’ in political theory (Day, 1997). Even when one accepts the necessity of citizen participation, it remains unclear what forms such participation may or should take. Despite the call for greater openness and inclusion in decision-making structures, research shows that it is these very inequalities that often deter and prevent disenfranchised groups from active participation in government.

This chapter examines the intersection between planning and citizen participation within the decision-making structures of government. The philosophical dilemma between the need for technical expertise and the need for robust citizen participation underscores the planning discipline. After a reliance on scientific, expert-led planning methods, the protest movements of the 1960s and 70s called for direct citizen participation in government processes. However, it has led to institutionalization and its acceptance has been tenuous at best. With the rise of technocratic governance, discussed in the next section, it is easy to bypass the active involvement of citizens in favour of bureaucratically-defined and oriented metrics of efficiency and productivity. Additionally it appears the conflict between bureaucracy and democracy has become more entrenched as societies have grown more technologically advanced and neomanagerial perspectives

have developed new avenues to mediate this conflict and cater to financial interests (Brody et al. 2003; Burby 2003; Nalbandian, 1999; Schacter, 1995; Vigoda, 2001). Critical urban theorists argue fervently against these approaches, insisting that “another, more democratic, socially just, and sustainable form of urbanization is possible, even if such possibilities are currently being suppressed through dominant institutional arrangements, practises, and ideologies” (Brenner, 2012: 11). The nature of justice and equity in urban contexts is important in how it determines citizen participation in the context of public administration, especially planning. Through several case studies that examine varying degrees and forms of citizen participation and their relationship to government decision-making, I posit that greater levels of citizen involvement in public transportation planning will produce more equitable systems.

Justice, Democracy, and Citizen Participation

A discussion of justice is necessary to understand the drive towards equity and why citizen participation is necessarily a part of urban governance. The term, citizen participation, widely denotes shared power between public officials and the citizenry in the decision-making process. However, ideas vary about the specific mechanisms through which participation ought to occur. Participation is typically synonymous with involvement in the policy process with the goal of influencing it. It is usually ‘direct,’ meaning citizens do not rely on elected officials to intervene and represent their needs; rather, citizens communicate them openly in the process (Roberts, 2004). The most basic rationale for citizen participation thus rests on a core tenet of democracy: government for the people, by the people. Day (1997) synthesizes the literature regarding this liberal

position: democratic participation, characterised by engaged citizens in both informal and formal participatory mechanisms, has inherent value. Pluralism within democracy recognizes the diversity of opinions and values, believing “that citizens should be considered the best judges of their own interests ... [and] citizens are capable of making better political and social decisions than they do at present” (Fagence, 1977: 30). This notion disperses power to a larger percentage of society, seeing citizens as empowered and responsible. Elected representatives and public officials carry out their duties knowing that their power is delegated from and legitimated by this group of people to whom they are accountable. Whether indirect representation or direct communication, decision-making is in the hands of the citizenry. Advocates for direct citizen participation task governments with harnessing the knowledge and voice of the collective citizenry to more substantively shape society. The theoretical premise of citizen participation is tentatively accepted in modern day governmental structures; however, its practical exercise is uneven and often does not meet many standards of direct and broad input. Across the political spectrum, the literature is divided on the optimal level of citizen involvement and the appropriate mechanisms for participation.

By contrast, conservative political theory values stability in the political system, arguing that modern, technologically advanced societies need to be governed by elite representatives. This theory of democracy is defined as elitism. Schumpeter (1942) is a definitive voice within this field and has had a profound influence on the modern, capitalist state. Representation via electoral process suffices and is the preferred democratic mechanism to include citizen participation as societies are too big and complex for individuals to assemble and manage their public affairs (Schumpeter, 1942).

Furthermore, most citizens do not have the capacity for rational politics, therefore, the “role of the people is to produce a government, or else an intermediate body which in turn will produce a national executive or government” (Schumpeter, 1950: 269). This acquiescence to rational decision-making ensured technological progress in modern societies. This elitist theory of democracy coincides with an increase in technocratic governance within the decision-making process. A technocrat is defined as “a bureaucratic expert decisionmaker who is conferred a special status by his or her peers after demonstrating a mastery over a technique or body of knowledge ... lead[ing] many to believe that [he or she] has the ability to calculate an unequivocally correct or precise answer” (Day, 1997: 430). This knowledge is often above the level of the average citizen, and it is needed in confronting complex engineering and planning. Scientific, interventionist governance was valuable in the creation of modern, capitalist societies, and necessitated experts to direct it.

During this period, Mannheim (1935) laid the philosophical foundations for planning and democracy with his *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*. In sum, he argued for expert decision-makers to plan cities on behalf of elected representatives. The societal paradigmatic shift towards modernity led to a rise in scientific rationality that would dominate the discipline for decades to come. The system could account for fairness: “Presumably goals democratically derived were inherently equitable, and the means for achieving these ends could be scientifically discovered” (Fainstein, 2010: 60). This perceived objectivity has led to a trend of delegating power of decision-making regarding social phenomena away from elected public officials to the bureaucracy. These experts “operate almost independently of democratic processes” as they are seen to be

objective in their scientific expertise (DeSario and Langton, 1984:4). The collective knowledge of citizenry is interpreted as being normative, rather than objective. It moves power further away from the citizenry, into the hands of the professional bureaucracy.

Protest movements in the 1960s and 1970s spurred a rise in scholarship surrounding the concept of justice. This movement was characterized by demands for “greater democracy, undistorted discourse, and recognition of difference [promising] greater equity as a consequence of the stronger representation of the interests of nonelite groups” (Fainstein, 2010: 29). Justice was reconceptualised to account for the way modern society had disenfranchised many low income, racial minorities, particularly in urban settings. As a result, several frameworks emerged to address the acute need for grassroots involvement in the urban decision-making process. Rawls (1971) established a new framework for understanding justice in a modern, capitalist, liberal society. He argued for “an activist and interventionist role for government, not only to promote liberties, but to bring about greater social and economic equality” (Young, 1996: 481). This point was crucial as it confronted many elitist theories, in its attempt to redress some of the ways that liberalism has not manifested equality and social justice in the political realm.

Critical urban theory emerged, rejecting the “inherited disciplinary divisions of labor and statist, technocratic, market-driven, and market-oriented forms of urban knowledge” (Brenner, 2012: 11). These theorists challenged the dominant view of capitalist urban processes. Harvey’s (1973) *Social Justice and the City* responded to the traditional liberal viewpoint of redistributive justice, popularized by Rawls (1971), by articulating new ways of thinking about justice through the lens of Marxism. He argued

that inequality and oppression within urban life was spatial, moving away from relativism as a way of understanding injustice (Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1997: 9). He re-established a degree of universality to justice, shifting from regarding “social justice as a matter of eternal justice and morality to regard it as something contingent upon the social processes operating in society as a whole” (Harvey, 1973: 15). Lefebvre (1968) argued for a shifting power and control to the inhabitants of urban spaces, recognizing the way social relations are central spatially in everyday life and should be the preeminent factor in creating urban space beyond the material environment. Purcell (2002) writes that “[t]he right to the city involved two principal rights for urban inhabitants: the right to participation, and the right to appropriation” (102). These views directly confront traditional views of liberal-democratic citizenship and capitalist production modes, giving more power to urban inhabitants in the decision-making that shapes their built environment (Purcell, 2002). Lefebvre’s (1968) ‘Right to the City’ theory underscored “how every emancipatory and empowering politics inevitably involves a spatial strategy: a struggle not just *in* but *for* space, a reconquest of spaces expressive of lived difference, of desire, and of the body” (Merrifield and Syngedouw, 1997: 13). The call for increased and radical citizen involvement stems from an immediate need to counter inequality and injustice that “underpins capitalist social formations” (Brenner, 2012:13). Despite the contested nature of justice, different viewpoints are “united in the sense that they derive their meaning through the implementation of *social power*” (Merrifield and Syngedouw, 1997: 8). Thus, the need for citizen participation in urban governance derives itself from the interrelated concepts of equity, democracy, and justice (Fainstein, 2010)._These ideas

were absorbed into planning theory, broadening the discipline to include more approaches than the traditional view.

The debate regarding the quality and quantity of citizen participation centers on the issue of power (Day, 1997). Should it be in the immediate hands of the citizenry? What if they are not knowledgeable? What if they are not engaged? What if they are disorderly? What if the plurality of interests cannot find acceptable compromise? Critical theorists have argued that complete control should be given over to the citizenry, emancipating itself from the capitalist bureaucracy, whose sole responsibility should be to carry out their wishes (Arnstein, 1969; Harvey, 1973; Lefebvre, 1968; Marcuse, 2012). A less radical view posits that at the very least “[d]irect participation requires power sharing ... it is not a form of control that enables those in authority to get citizens to do what they want them to do. Shared power is power with citizens as opposed to power over citizens.” (Roberts, 2004: 320). Instead of seeing modern elitist bureaucratic mechanisms as rational manoeuvres to maximize social good, it morphs decision-making into being a subversion of the democratic process.

Arnstein’s (1969) innovative ‘ladder of participation’ juxtaposes the manipulation of the citizenry by the bureaucracy on the one hand, with complete citizen control of the processes on the other. The middle rungs are described as ‘degrees of tokenism’ (informing, consultation, and placation), meaning that the public is involved to different degrees, not always effectively. In developing this framework, Arnstein (1969:216) concludes that:

... citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is

shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society.

It is clear that her objective is to argue for direct citizen control of decision-making as the highest form of citizen participation. This model theorizes that direct citizen participation is “valued in itself and also been considered as the vehicle through which a fair distribution of benefits would be achieved” (Campbell and Fainstein, 2012: 546). In other words, the vehicle of citizen participation is also the *locus operandi* of power to create and recreate societies (Fagence, 1977). This more radical “direct democracy” view of citizen participation argues in favour of the decentralisation of power so that citizens can govern themselves in the manner that they see fit (Day, 1997: 425). It goes beyond the administration of public services to reflect broader goals of inclusion, diversity, and most importantly, justice in society.

The reconceptualization of power is defined by the inclusion of marginalized citizens in the substantive decisions, “those that are important and critical in community life as defined by the members of the community” (Roberts, 2004: 320). The ability to obtain decision-making power within formal governmental structures is important to ensuring citizens’ needs are adequately incorporated. Day (1997) maintains that “policy and systems are democratic if they enshrine and incorporate the substantive interests of the polity, for example, class interest, race interest, or gender interest. Direct rather than representative forms of participation are assumed to maximize democracy” (423). Therefore, society is most fair and representative if all groups directly participate in the democratic process. Ostensibly, direct citizen participation refers to the ability to create

fair and just societies through communication and collaboration with all citizens in the policy process, including those that have been historically marginalized in society.

Despite a renewed focus on justice in urban settings, Campbell and Fainstein (2012) note that calls for greater citizen participation have not always materialised. The appeal to the masses as masters of their own destiny is seen an overstatement of the requisite amount of participation needed for a procedural democracy to function (Schumpeter, 1942). Participation is seen simply as part of the process, not the end goal. By allocating more power to the masses via citizen participation, the system could become cumbersome at best, and unstable at worst. Roberts (2004) critiques Arnstein's definition on the grounds that it is actually exclusive: "[a]lthough redistribution of power may be an intention or an outcome of citizen participation, it should not be a limiting factor in its definition" (319). Furthermore, the categorization between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' creates a vague false dichotomy between members of society, as it is not clear who has what. In effect, unregulated decentralisation of power could actually distort the democratic process with some voices becoming over-representative, and others being suppressed. This is the problem Arnstein attempts to address, rectifying the systemic exclusion of the marginalized and powerless in society. However, the critique still stands. Without the structure of procedural and representative forms of democracy, compensating for inequality in citizen participation is difficult, if not impossible, to measure.

The critique of the pluralist position is epitomised in Schattschneider's pejorative statement: "the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus has an upper-class accent" (1960: 35; quoted in Day, 1997:427). In other words, active citizen participation

often excludes those for whom it is needed. This is due to the existing socioeconomic inequalities that continue to create barriers in the political sphere for marginalized groups. Fagence (1977) notes that the public that usually becomes involved is not representative, but rather the portion that finds their interests to be at risk. That demographic typically “reflect[s] wealth and privilege” meaning it is, in western societies at least, usually comprised of older, white, and educated males (Callahan: 2007: 55). Callahan (2007) details the empirical evidence supporting the claim that underrepresented people groups do not participate as regularly or as fully as the general population. Racial and ethnic minorities, low-income people, as well as populations in heavily impoverished areas are usually less politically engaged than the general population and subsequently have fewer opportunities or mechanisms to voice their needs and demands. Furthermore, social and economic segregation isolates these groups from wider political and civic networks. This spatial inequality compounds within their everyday life to create systemic underrepresentation in many spheres of political influence (Callahan, 2007).

The reasons for this phenomenon are numerous. Roberts (2004) writes that “failures in direct participation could be attributed to learned helplessness and the success of a system that prevents their substantive participation in the first place” (317). Exclusion from social, economic and political networks reduces access to knowledge, resources and opportunities for involvement leading to a deficiency in civic skills (Verba and Nie, 1972). Without these skills, excluded people and groups are not able to participate meaningfully. This points to an institutional structure that favours particular groups of people based on race and socioeconomic status. Arguably, the exclusive nature of this system perpetuates inequitable participation. Callahan (2007) articulates it as such:

If poorer Americans believe that local political institutions and administrative structures are incapable of addressing their problems and if middle and upper class Americans seem disconnected from the problems and experiences of poorer citizens it is because public policy and political institutions have encouraged segregation of the classes so much so that Americans do not share the common bonds that contribute to a shared fate and a common good. (58)

The 'public interest' which public servants and technocrats are expected to serve is not only unequal, it is divided. As discussed in chapter 2 with the spatial mismatch hypothesis, this division is often geographic. However, lack of citizen participation illustrates that the disadvantage is also psychological as well. Whatever the reason for marginalized groups' lack of participation, the effects of these structural barriers amount to significant discrepancies in quality of life, because of the compounding effects of poverty and racial discrimination. The issue of power redistribution poses a significant problem if it amounts to nothing but tokenism in a democratic system. The lack of openness in political and civic processes, and the concentration of decision making power in technocratic mechanisms and relatively affluent and powerful groups, supports the argument that planners need to plan with equity in mind to correct for broader social inequalities. With the power to rectify these discrepancies, planners not only have the ability to intervene into public and political life via the built environment, but they have the ability to shape it towards more equitable ends. The rationale for inclusive citizen participation in public affairs, specifically in the planning sector, is founded on an altruistic model of fairness and justice, where citizens have the opportunity to live materially better lives through the construction of an equitable society.

Politics of Planning

In the planning world, the rise of technocratic governance has led to distance and disconnect between professional planners and the majority of urban residents. The expert planner is able to rely on models and theories outside the realm of public ideals, needs, and demands. This reliance on ‘objectivity’ has the tendency to suppress experiential knowledge that is needed for the creation of just systems. Transit planning has been no different. Socioeconomic factors, such as race and income, are often not considered in this sector, which leads to inequality in many urban settings and systems. Even with mandated citizen participation programs, MPOs have historically struggled to consult and prioritize the needs of the people most affected by their decisions. Even when equity is considered, there are no universal measurement tools that are able to properly determine if it is successfully accounted for. A robust theoretical debate confounds the planning profession while trying to determine how planners can work to better achieve and ensure equity amid increasingly polarized and inequitable urban systems. Much of this debate focuses on how best to argue for equity and community-based planning as the way to maximize democracy and advance goals of social justice through planning.

Despite its seemingly unbiased scientific underpinnings, it is clear that the planning profession in the public sector has always been inherently normative. By nature, to plan is to decide how a society should function. This means that planners and planning agencies do not make solely objective, analytical decisions on behalf of their constituents. This is due to the fact that alongside the technical logistics, they are also responsible for a range of ethical considerations, such as where resources should be allocated and to what ends. For example, in the postwar period, Fordist principles were absorbed into planning, regulating society through technology and state intervention. The

intensified rationalization of economic and social processes created state-sponsored suburbanization through the expansion of transport and communication systems (Harvey, 1990). Those decisions did not come without both economic and social costs and benefits to different socio-spatial locations and social groups, nor did they emerge from a purely objective and apolitical stance. Friedmann (1998) thus argues that “planning refers to the conscious intervention of collective actors—roughly speaking, state, capital and organized civil society—in the production of urban space, so that outcomes may be turned to one or the other's favour” (251). This ‘intervention’ into the built environment to create systems and structures has given planners a large degree of power to decide how society should function.

Friedmann (1998) notes that after nearly fifty years of “ambivalence” planning theorists have still not been able to solve the problem of ‘power,’ and that the “rational planning paradigm studiously avoided talking about any form of power other than the mind” (249). Conversely, Habermas (1984) argued the public’s involvement is rational, by nature. This viewpoint challenges the dominance of rationality, as planning theorists can now employ communicative and justice-oriented citizen participation theories in their decision-making. Contemporary planning theorists tend to fall into one of three postpositivist approaches: the communicative model, new urbanism, and the just-city model (Fainstein, 2000). Postpositivism is concerned with “how knowledge is communicated” and privileges the experiential nature of citizens’ lives in the planning process. My research project builds from both the communicative and just-city model, and will therefore focus its attention on relating these theoretical frameworks to the concept of equity in planning.

Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* is perhaps the most relevant in planning due to the way it challenges power relations embedded in scientific expertise in society (Innes, 1995). In challenging the rationalization of society, meaning the tendency to rely on credible and objective knowledge, Habermas (1984) established the way that intersubjective rationality, put forth primarily through communication, can also be a way of knowing truth. Within the planning field, this theory unleashed a new way of understanding how planners *should* act: they are able to use their technical ability to take ethical positions, recognizing that they have acquired power through knowledge (Innes, 1995). Planners are empowered to employ a type of inductive approach:

Rather than providing technocratic leadership, the planner is an experiential learner, at most providing information to participants but primarily being sensitive to points of convergence. Leadership consists not in bringing stakeholders around to a particular planning content but in getting people to agree and in ensuring that whatever the position of participants within the social-economic hierarchy, no group's interest will dominate. (Fainstein, 2000: 454)

This position centers on experience and aesthetic as fundamental to the human experience and deems "all experiences and individual interpretations ... equally valid because there are no shared criteria for discrimination" (Healey, 1993: 236). Communicative planning theory supports deliberative democracy, where planners engage with a highly involved citizenry, as those in positions of power are actively incorporating the thought processes of the marginalized in their work.

In theory, the just-city framework incorporates the views of those who are traditionally excluded: "those deprived ... of the material necessities of life ... [as well as] a broader right to what is necessary beyond the material to lead a satisfying life" (Marcuse, 2012: 31). Critical theory advocates for citizens to move "beyond sanctioned modes of participation" in order for policy to become more equitable (Fainstein, 2010:

182). This is because, in this framework, planning is seen as a mode of social control to maintain the capitalist built environment (Foglesong, 1986). Therefore, citizen participation is seen as power for residents to create cities based on their needs, in more than an advisory capacity. Planners' expertise is needed for technical issues, but the direction should be guided by the citizens. Harvey and Potter (2009) critique this approach as they do not think it is possible for real citizen power to work within the capitalist regime, as "constrained to mitigating the worst outcomes at the margins of an unjust system" (46). Planning is already coopted and participation in these processes does equivocate true material justice.

Fainstein (2000) compares the theories that advocate for alternative methods to make cities more equitable:

For communicative planning, this means practices that allow people to shape the places in which they live; ... For just-city theorists, it concerns the development of an urban vision that also involves material well-being but that relies on a more pluralistic, cooperative, and decentralized form of welfare provision than the state-centered model of the bureaucratic welfare state. (472-473)

In either case, both of the aforementioned theoretical frameworks recognize the centrality of citizens in the decision-making process, validating their claims and advocating for mechanism that give them power.

As planners operate in complex, industrialized societies there is evidence of a shift to privileging the private sector, capital accumulation, and dominant economic interests in public administrative settings in order to obtain greater levels of efficiency and productivity. External investment influences cities to plan and develop specific communities within metropolitan regions, spurring economic growth and benefits unevenly. As a result, urban life has suffered amidst racial and class conflict in many US

cities. However, what is clear is the way financial investment is often prioritized over residents' desires in government decisions. When cities suffer "from a withdrawal of capital investment", residents and government "often yield to the logic that only through subsidies to developers are any investments likely to happen" (Fainstein, 2010: 66). This leads to a variety of concessions that support private investment over public good. For example, the 2008 Great Recession, precipitated by the sub-prime mortgage crisis, was followed by billion dollar bank bailouts at the expense of taxpayers. This economic crisis had the potential to radicalize protests (as evidenced in the Occupy movement), but they were not sustained. What is important to note from this occurrence is that "urban space continues to serve simultaneously as the arena, the medium, and the stake of ongoing struggles regarding the future of capitalism" (Brenner et al. 2012: 9). If planners in the public sector agree that there is an ethical dimension to their work, they must plan societies that have equitably distributed and accessible public services, centered on the needs of the residents. This important realization has manifested itself in the face of growing inequality between rich and poor citizens, systemic racial discrimination and the rise of neoliberal urban development.

In a neoliberal city, citizens are seen as customers, which denotes a passive and merely consultative role in the policy process. This environment is detrimental to vibrant and substantive citizen participation, as it relegates it to a part in the process, rather than the foundation of the public sector's aims and the object of its policies and functions. From this perspective, citizen participation "refers to the *role* of the public in the process of administrative decision-making or involvement in making service delivery and management decisions" (Callahan, 2007: 59, emphasis added). The institutionalization of

citizen participation has become common in urban decision-making structures. The problem with this format is that it obscures legitimate expressions of citizen participation such that “achievements of neighbourhood participatory bodies are limited to modifications of pre-existing development schemes, small-scale improvement programs, blocking funding cutbacks, and symbolic recognition” (Fainstein, 2010: 66). Denhardt and Denhardt (1999) note the way that government administration has shifted towards a system wherein they are responsible to ‘steer’ rather than ‘row’ the boat of the administration of public services (549). They argue that the adoption of private-sector approaches (‘neomanagerialism’) streamlines government processes to make them more efficient. This is because low-level politics with a high degree of citizen participation are often a messy undertaking: discovering neighbourhood interests, building social capital, and creating public services that meet those needs require time and relational investment between the bureaucracy and the citizens. In turn, citizen needs and considerations of equity can easily be omitted. This turn towards efficiency through a rational and positive management has given way to individualistic, consumer-oriented values in administering public services. This shift in attitude is problematic as it sees public interest as a by-product, not the aim (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000).

In the wake of this perceived loss of democracy within urban governance, Nalbandian (1999) argues that more public administrators sense the pressure to ‘build community’ within their respective locales in order to consider equity. Acknowledging the external pressures of the market, city managers have been required to take on a facilitative role (Nalbandian, 1999). In this shift, the concept of community-building emerges. This concept values representation, individual rights, and social equity in

combination with “efficiency to form a value base for professionalism in city management” (Nalbandian, 1999: 195). This illustrates the way institutionalized participation warps the citizens’ involvement, relegating it to a part in the process. Schacter (1995) attempts to bridge this gap between efficient government and citizen involvement by arguing for the reinvention of the citizenry to see themselves as ‘owners’ rather than customers. This analysis accepts the paradigmatic shift towards a market-driven public administration, but sees the citizenry as active owners rather than passive consumers. Education is needed to create ‘efficient citizens’ ready to be catalyzed into action, so that they can “learn to care about the success of an entire enterprise” (Schacter, 1995: 535). In essence, citizen participation not only ‘fits’ into efficient and municipal bureaucracies, but is seen as necessary to make it productive, even as this model adopts the language of private enterprise and entrepreneurialism.

Similarly, Vigoda (2001) addresses the tension between these two trends and concludes that they can be harmonized. This “odd couple” blends two seemingly opposing viewpoints to create a “more responsive public administration and healthier democratic societies” (Vigoda, 2001: 273, 275). Additionally, technocratic administrations often embrace citizen participation as a way to more efficiently *know* what the citizenry desires, and to build a more open and communicative (if still largely reactive rather than grassroots) relationship with the public prior to the delivery of services. This new form of public administration has the ability to shape civic life, through encouraging structured citizen participation and community building. Friedmann (1998) writes:

This new perception of the role of civil society, along with the partial retreat of the state from its traditional responsibilities, has dramatically changed what

planners do. In this new scenario, they are no longer exclusively concerned with the central guidance of market forces or regulation. The new, emerging form of planning is more entrepreneurial, more daring and less codified. Typically, it is collaborative ... concerned with large-scale projects more than with the entire system of spatial relations in the city, it seeks to forge a limited consensus through negotiated settlements among contesting parties; it is a provider of strategic information to all participants in the planning process. In these terms, planning moves ever closer to the surface of politics as a mediating hand within society as a whole. Its expertise is increasingly being sought not only by the state, where planning powers formally reside, but also by the corporate sector and even by organized groups within civil society itself. (252)

In this new model, planners are seen to be more effective if they are strategic in catering to public demands, while balancing business and bureaucratic interests. This is in response to many planning initiatives that have been ineffective due to their lack of public support.

Burby (2003) argues that in light of the plethora of ineffective plan executions, planners must seek to include a broad array of stakeholders in the development process. Specifically, they must make significant efforts to include average citizens whose involvement “can generate information, understanding, and agreement on problems and ways of solving them [as well as] a sense of ownership of planning proposals and ease the formation of coalitions who will work hard for their realization” (Burby, 2003: 34). Beginning from this understanding, Brody et al. (2003) studied the various state mandates regarding citizen participation and found that despite “the growing emphasis on citizen participation in the planning literature, participation requirements embodied in most state growth management laws are vague, outdated, and general” (246). Despite this fact, the inclusion of the citizenry at every stage of the process, the guaranteeing of accurate representation via interest groups, the utilization of a variety of engagement techniques, and the provision of accessible planning data were proven to lead to more effective

planning design and service delivery (Brody et al., 2003). The empirical analysis illustrates the way transparency and a high level of citizen involvement are necessary in order to generate effective plans with political legitimacy. This study attempts to bridge the gap between bureaucratic rigidity and radical calls for citizen participation, but still favours efficiency over equity. Residents are viewed as a resource to be tapped, instead of the center point around which planning and service delivery mechanisms should be organized.

In light of this trend, intentionally planning with citizens at the center is needed. Equity planning is defined as a “conscious attempt to devise redistributive policies in favour of the least powerful and to enhance the avenues of participation” (Krumholz and Clavel, 1994: 1). It is the act of redirecting resources and power away from the ‘haves’ in society, to accommodate the needs and demands of the disenfranchised. It does not seek to unfairly disadvantage those who are of higher socioeconomic status, but rather seeks to create just policies for all citizens, accounting for and including underprivileged groups more intentionally. This typically requires more attention to the needs of the poor and racial minorities, as their quality of life is often strongly determined by other socioeconomic disparities that need redressing as well (such as racism). Similarly, community-based planners “pay particular attention to the needs of poor and vulnerable populations” but often do not work inside the structures of government (Krumholz and Forester, 1990: 210). This gives them the ability to contest plans and advocate for disadvantaged communities through the technical expertise of their skilled vocation. Their focus on building trust between citizens and the bureaucracy with the goal of

decentralising power is relevant across urban settings. The work of equity and community-based planners inform the perspective of this research project.

In the realm of public transportation planning, the optimal level of citizen involvement remains unclear. Karner and Niemeier (2013) affirm that the “public plays an important role in the achievement of transportation equity, and public participation forms the cornerstone of MPO environmental justice strategy” (132). However, they assert that there is a wide array of technical challenges that it poses and needs further research. Brenman and Sanchez (2012) argue strongly in favour of equity planning in light of the wide array of aggregate statistics across many urban landscapes, including geography, class, and racial and ethnic groupings, as these “inequities and disparities [in social services] ... did not happen by accident” (44). This is especially true within the public transportation sector, as planners determined its structure and were deliberate in the creation of many decentralised roadway systems as well as a national highway interstate system that often contributed to highly unequal programs of “urban renewal” in the decades after World War II. For example, in the past, the value of a vibrant civic life was not considered equally with or as important as suburban economic development. As was discussed in the previous chapter, planners have designed cities to facilitate suburban development, whereas “[h]uman services or social planning was virtually nonexistent” (Burke, 1979: 12). This has had many negative consequences. In this case, technical planning knowledge was used to facilitate a built environment that dramatically changed the fabric of social and urban life, as well as limited economic opportunities for those with low levels of mobility. Callahan (2007) notes that “[u]rban planners recognize that sprawl undermines civic engagement. Things like reliance on cars, few public meeting

places, no downtowns, no sidewalks and no porches encourages people to retreat to their private space and social capital suffers as a result [Putnam 2000]” (62). The extent to which sprawl impacts equity and participation is not generalizable and needs to be assessed on a region-specific basis (Fainstein, 2010). Because transit-dependent riders have been captive to metropolitan regional development plans, their voice is needed in understanding how innovative transportation systems can better benefit and integrate them into society. Transit plans necessitate the knowledge of those who use the system, so that they correctly network riders to the appropriate destinations. Furthermore, because transit-dependent riders are often poor, elderly, or geographically segregated, the need for redistribution of services away from a privileged general population is the responsibility of the planner to gauge and implement. For this reason, many transportation planners argue in favour of equity and community-based planning to specifically redress inequality in mobility.

Citizen Participation in Public Transit Planning

This section details a variety of case studies where citizen participation has intersected with public transportation policy and planning in urban decision-making structures. The level and type of involvement vary, as do the attitudes and outcomes of the groups in the process. It is important to note that the in-depth case studies do not provide much generalizable data that can be easily transferred across time and space within the United States and elsewhere. They serve as examples of the effect of citizen participation, how it has been undertaken and advocated for in several different cities. It also evident that a methodologically pluralist approach that analyzes the many components of equity within public transit planning is necessary to determine a nuanced

understanding of this issue. Apart from Grengs' (2010) study on transportation equity, there is relatively little research on public transportation and citizen participation in the Detroit Metropolitan Region. Furthermore, there are relatively few parallels with other deindustrialized midwestern cities. Thus, much of this research requires a level of adaptation in order to understand the current political, economic, and social environment within the field of transportation planning. In sum, these case studies illustrate different levels of citizen participation, as well as how these actions relate to equitable outcomes within public transportation planning.

Seattle

Consultative Citizen Participation

An early research study of Seattle's public transit planning reveals basic underlying assumptions of citizen participation during the rise of postpositivist approaches to planning. Even though this research was conducted nearly 40 years ago, its value lies in the ability to evaluate "the extent to which citizens and planners share congruent opinions as to what the observed and the expected role of citizens is and should be in the planning process" (Onibokun and Curry, 1976: 269). The authors determined through participant-observation and direct interview techniques that citizen input was mostly consultative as the "basic policies had been shaped *before* citizens were involved" (273). However, both the citizens and planners felt that this level of involvement achieved the goal of influencing the policies of the proposed transit system. Notably, Seattle's strategy did not seek to include regular transit users in their client groups. This is obviously problematic for achieving an equitable system that increases

mobility for transit dependent residents. Rather, the city identified the client group through voting patterns, knowing that the proposed plan would have to be approved by this relatively active portion of the citizenry. This corroborated findings that suggested “the more citizens participate or are allowed to participate, the more educated they become in the art of participation and the more they expect from citizen participation programs” (Onibokun and Curry, 1976: 275). Those who participate less were not considered, despite the fact that their input might have been essential in the creation of a more just distribution of services. In the end, the study lends credence to Arnstein’s (1969) theory: the bureaucracy “rewards citizen involvement when it remains in the context of operation policy and does not threaten the established distribution of power” (Onibokun and Curry, 1976: 273). It highlighted the way planners incorporated citizen viewpoints, influencing the process in an internal, institutionalized manner.

Collaborative Citizen Participation

A second and more recent analysis of Seattle’s citizen participation in the planning process from the 1990s extends beyond the public transportation sector. It is included because it reveals a great deal about the nature of planning when power is shared and citizens are trusted and engaged. During this decade, Seattle was experimenting with innovative approaches to neighbourhood planning “after years of open conflict over land use issues” in order to create broad consensus to respond to diverse interests (Sirianni, 2007:374). It is important to note that prior to this point, Seattle had a fairly active, organized, and engaged citizenry, who successfully blocked a 1985 downtown development plan. The municipality decided to invite participation in the 1994 plan in order to avoid conflict with the neighbourhoods. This case study examined

the way that the municipal government functioned as a civic enabler by partnering with neighbourhoods in a collaborative democratic design (Sirianni, 2007). This case study is relevant to Detroit due to the many past failed transit initiatives due to community disapproval (Nelles, 2012). Although there are different demographic and economic challenges, the results of this model have many implications for cities fraught with disagreement.

The structure and philosophy of the city's 'Neighborhood Planning Office' (NPO) included five crucial elements: "the inclusive visioning process required in each participating neighbourhood; the tools the city provided to help neighbourhood groups do good planning work; the formal review of plans by city government; and the project managers' work as relational organizers building trust" (Sirianni, 2007: 374). The combination of relational investment by the formally trained community planners and accessible resources provided by the NPOs allowed for the plans to be worked on collaboratively by the city and the neighbourhoods. Without that essential combination, there is no guarantee that the formal plans would have been accepted by the neighbourhoods. Looking at Seattle's past experiences with failed planning initiatives, the study concluded that the decentralisation of the planning process significantly strengthened the support for citywide initiatives. Furthermore, the neighbourhood planning groups made significant efforts towards diversity and equity by including residents who traditionally had been disenfranchised. However, there are no "rich ethnographic studies of specific community meetings nor citywide quantitative studies to demonstrate how successful this was[,] as the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of community-based planning after substantial investment and time within the

communities is a continued challenge (Sirianni, 2007:385). It is an area that necessitates further research in order to understand how to better include marginalized groups in meaningful ways, ensuring that their contributions are heard, validated, and incorporated into eventual plans. This experiment in municipal planning towards a higher degree of inclusive democracy did not, in fact, overrule democratic politics within Seattle; rather, it built a system that allowed for high levels of participation, while ensuring the plans were accountable to the city's bureaucracy and its elected officials.

Los Angeles

Citizen Power

The case study of the Los Angeles Bus Riders' Union (BRU) illustrates the way that community activists, mobilizing and organizing those most directly impacted by public transit policy decisions, were able to influence government planning. Ostensibly leftist in their objectives, the BRU organized low-income, working class, minority bus riders in the Los Angeles region to challenge a series of proposed changes in public transit policy, including a rail investment that overtly favoured suburban transit users at the expense of overcrowded buses in low-income areas (Mann, 2001). The political planning decisions, in this case, were seen as inequitable due to the way that the distribution of services was skewed away from those who were captive, transit-dependent riders. In 1994, the union partnered in launching a civil rights lawsuit, arguing that the metropolitan transportation authority was "establishing a racially discriminatory separate and unequal mass transit system in violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 14th amendment of the U.S. Constitution" (Mann, 2001:271). Hutchinson (2000) articulates

some of BRU's sentiments: "[t]he union's insistence that 'improving the transit system is a civil rights issue because most commuters are minorities and have low incomes' goes to the heart of how denial of transit access, attendant to the increasing privatization of public space, 'other[ing]' communities of color" (111-112). The racial and low-income demographics, as well as geographically large makeup of Los Angeles, parallels Detroit's challenges in creating a transit system that adequately serves the needs of transit-dependent riders. This example highlights the outcome of a legal battle between urban residents when the residents are well-organized and specific in their demands towards a regional transit authority.

This group was able to articulate the way race, low-income status, and geography combined to allow systemic disadvantages to persist within regional public transit. Their campaign and successful lawsuit claimed the MTA's proposed plans discriminated against low-income minorities who did not have the freedom of mobility that suburban commuters were afforded due to the socioeconomic status. The Court ordered the MTA to restructure the fare system "to assist riders who cannot afford the monthly pass", to increase the bus fleet to solve the problem of overcrowding, to establish a "Joint Working Group of MTA representatives and bus riders to ensure implementation" and lastly, a court appointed mediator to resolve disputes between groups (Grengs, 2002a: 170). In many ways, a clear articulation of these circumstances demonstrated the reasons why equity within public transit planning needs to be considered with the least accessible and mobile populations in mind, as they will be most affected. There are many implications for equity planning as a result of this case.

Grengs (2002a) analyzes the BRU's actions in order to understand how they succeeded in making substantive changes in public transit policy. Ultimately, he determines the links between the politics of grassroots volunteers and the mobilization of citizen participation to affect the MPO was the key to their success (Grengs, 2002a). This was an example of how the MPO qualified equity differently than a large majority of the L.A. transit riders. The former would have succeeded in their proposed transit changes had the process not been interrupted by citizens who thought otherwise. The importance of marginalized and transit-dependent groups' voice in determining equity in the Los Angeles region cannot be understated, as their activism strongly shaped the further development of the metropolitan public transit system. This research suggests that "even though a social movement can be a viable route toward achieving more equitable outcomes in planning, the BRU's success resulted partly because Los Angeles was a place of unusually favorable local political opportunities" (Grengs, 2002a:175). Therefore, community-based planning is not only more apt to strive for equity because it provides a more grassroots-oriented approach to strategic decision making, but it is more able to manoeuvre into political openings to create equitable systems, when formal political institutions do not sufficiently account for these factors.

Louisville

Placating Citizen Participation

This pilot study endeavoured to blend a quantitative design tool, known as Casewise Visual Evaluation (CAVE), and public opinion to create a built transit environment that would satisfy the needs of a low-income community in Louisville,

Kentucky. The Transit Authority of River City (TARC) wanted to develop a light-rail transit line to connect Louisville's downtown with the surrounding suburbs (to the south). The Smoketown/Shelby Park neighbourhood was the targeted neighbourhood where TARC was conducting extensive outreach to ensure the community was informed with the project (Bailey and Grossardt, 2004). The researchers studied the effects on the surrounding area, to assist the participants in identifying the preferred design criteria. Even though it was not specifically stated, this research demonstrates equitable objectives in wanting to include low-income, geographically isolated individuals in the creation of a light-rail transit system. It has preliminary implications for other cities wanting to include specific neighbourhoods in transit development plans by demonstrating how a visual tool can be used to help communities give substantive input in the decision making process.

Furthermore, "the approach chosen was based on an expert system paradigm, in which the meeting participants were regarded as possessing the requisite knowledge. Their liking, or *preference*, for visual scenarios had to be quantified and translated into liking for specific design elements" (Bailey and Grossardt, 2004:124). It showcases the way in which 'expert' skills can be harnessed and used to directly respond to citizen demands. Although brief and preliminary, the project has received positive feedback from the residents (Bailey and Grossardt, 2004). It can be categorised as 'Placation' within Arnstein's (1969) framework as the initiative "allow[ed] citizens to advise or plan ad infinitum but retain[ed] powerholders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice" (Arnstein, 1969: 220). The targeted neighbourhood of geographically concentrated low-income individuals illustrated an improvement in relationship developing between the design partners and the community. This allows for continued

delegation of power, as citizens become more knowledgeable in how to participate in the transit policy process. Further research could be conducted to determine if similar future projects can be conducted in such a manner, evaluating for improvement and context-specific equity to satisfy the needs of its surrounding transit riders.

San Francisco Bay Area

Therapeutic Citizen Participation

Approaching their study through the lens of planners as ‘persuaders,’ Machell et al. (2010) examine Transit-Oriented-Development toolkits to identify best practises in communicating *to* the public, as opposed to communicating *with*. Specifically, they tested powerpoint presentations, brochures, and interactive activities, created by non-profit organizations and government agencies and used to generate discussion and education surrounding transit-oriented development, in focus groups across the San Francisco Bay Area (Machell et al., 2010: 2-3). This study operates in the framework of planners as ‘experts’ who have the requisite knowledge of how to develop plans for the needs of a seemingly homogenous community. Therefore, it is premised on discovering the best way to communicate this knowledge to the community and generate the greatest amount of public satisfaction. They discovered that ‘humanizing’ the message by building a relationship with the audience is most effective. This happens mostly through dialogue and communication of the most basic and relatable information, as well as inclusive context-specific benefits for the neighbourhoods. Although it is clear that building trust between planners and the citizenry is one of their findings, the objective of changing the minds of the citizenry and “countering resistance” reveals its true purpose. Arnstein

(1969) titles this level of participation as ‘Therapy:’ it seeks to adjust the opinions of citizens so that they are more in line with the bureaucratic desires. This is a clear example of how technocratic planning methods are employed to generate efficient results but not necessarily to produce more equitable outcomes.

Kansas City

Informing Citizen Participation

Wood (2014) provides a parallel case study of a Midwestern city with several failed public transit initiatives in the recent decade. Additionally, its geographic and political landscape mirrors that of Detroit: “vast, auto-oriented city with a history of suburbanization, frequent car use, and scepticism of public transportation” (Wood, 2014: 42). However, voter attitudes in relationship to public transportation differ from one region to the next, necessitating place-based research and an understanding of local specificities. The study examined the relationship between direct public participation in the transportation planning process and its subsequent impact on support for citywide transit initiatives in Kansas City. A survey was administered through neighbourhood and community associations throughout Kansas City with the goal of measuring both the quality and quantity of citizen participation, as well as examining the relationship between city planners and the neighbourhoods. Furthermore, it included a diagram of Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation (1969) in order to ask which category best suits the level of participation that the citizens had. In many ways, this empirical analysis of citizen participation in Kansas City blends a great deal of planning literature with actual findings that many theories purport to be true. In concluding that relationship building

between the city and community centered around the trust of the citizenry, the implications for planners corroborates other findings (for example, Brody et al. 2003).

Wood (2014) writes:

Building on the notion that one productive meeting that can result in substantial dialogue is more effective than ten mere “information sessions,” planners must reorient their public-outreach efforts away from simply informing the public to a more open-ended stance that encourages public input and a genuine dialogue between political equals. If residents feel empowered by the process, and feel as though they have a personal stake in the system being planned, then they are much more likely to be engaged during the planning process and likely vote in favor of the project on election day. (69)

This analysis does not measure equity, nor seek to determine the differences across race and geography. However, its findings support the notion that opening up the process to citizens and being willing to discuss and modify plans is paramount to the success of planning in terms of voter acceptance.

Santander, Spain

Partnership Citizen Participation

In response to environmental problems, including roadway congestion and atmospheric pollution, Ibeas et al. (2011) aimed to study public opinion using an aggregate of various qualitative techniques. Although this city does not face the same urban challenges as a North American city, this research project analyzes a mechanism for citizen participation to understand how to include residents’ input at a project’s inception. Their overall objective was to study citizen involvement by knowing “what people think about the general workings of transport (both public and private) to determine the possibility of introducing a model of sustainable mobility through the promotion of sustainable alternative modes of transport” (Ibeas et al., 2011: 475). The

researchers conducted ‘mega focus groups’ with an average of 40-60 people, moderator, guidelines and additional workshops, under the premise that social discourse in a group setting will produce different ideas than if the individuals were interviewed alone. Rather than being consulted after a plan has been already developed, this study demonstrated that citizen participation can take shape in and through large focus groups to adequately measure public opinion to give citizens a platform to speak into the process. In achieving their objectives, they conclude that citizen empowerment was an inherent part of the policy development. It is worth noting that due to the European context, its objectives were not to account for equity, wherein incorporating socioeconomic factors played a role in the makeup of focus groups. Instead, environmental concerns dominated the discussions, with sustainability through bicycle use as a large part of the end result. In a way, this study indirectly highlights the importance of place-based discussion, wherein residents shape the concerns of the plans. Despite the difference in purpose, its methodological contributions are important to consider moving forward. The creation of suitable mechanisms for measuring not only public opinion (Does the public approve of a proposed plan?), but to accumulate public input in the process (What plan does the public envision when it comes to sustainable transportation?) can be adapted and applied in different ways in other geographical contexts.

Salt Lake City

Crowdsourcing Citizen Participation

Lastly, Brabham’s (2012) research analyzes how new media tools can be used to measure public participation in transit planning. Specifically, he examined the federally-supported Next Stop Design project in Salt Lake City, Utah, by interviewing participants

to understand their motivations in a crowdsourcing model. Crowdsourcing “leverages the collective intelligence of online communities for specific purposes” (Brabham, 2012: 307). In this instance, the model was designed for users to submit designs for a bus stop shelter, and then subsequently rate and comment on other submissions, with the goal of determining the most-liked design. It is important to note that this crowdsourcing model originated in the business sector, as many companies employ this tool to vet products through a public approval process. It is unclear whether crowdsourcing is an effective form of contribution in political process. The participatory nature of crowdsourcing, user-generated content models stems from a diverse set of motivations: “to make money; to advance one’s career; to be recognized by peers; to meet new people and socialize; to contribute to a collaborative effort; to have fun; to learn new skills and knowledge; to challenge oneself with a difficult task; and to express oneself” (Brabham, 2012:315). Sifting through the online interview data, the results demonstrated that there are various motivations for participation in crowdsourcing initiatives. Therefore, they conclude that practitioners must “consider the diverse ways online communities are motivated to engage a project and incentivize participation accordingly” (Brabham, 2012:324).

This research project does not consider equity or citizen participation as inherently valuable; rather, it seeks to understand how and why people participate in engagement activities in the 21st century. By connecting public participation in transit planning with technologically advanced models, the author discovers that multi-faceted approaches to gather public involvement in planning and design. Although this assessment may be true, the crowdsourcing mechanism can also be exploited by technocratic interests. It only sees the public’s input as valuable, insofar as it aids in the

creation of a product, in this case, a bus stop design. For this reason, it is an important case study to consider because the planning profession will continue to be presented with technology to improve its connection to the public. It must ensure that the citizens' collective voice is not obscured, manipulated or relegated to a part in the process. More research within this field is necessary to bridge the philosophical work relating to equity and citizen participation to the constantly evolving mechanisms that planners use.

Baltimore

Delegated Citizen Power

Inspired by the Los Angeles Bus Riders Union, the Transit Riders League of Metropolitan Baltimore formed in order to increase broad-base participation of transit riders in the decision-making processes of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) (Menzer and Harmon, 2004). Out of frustration with the BRTB's policies that seemed to be fuelling sprawl instead of investing in current transit service, which was lacking in many communities, the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, having previously sponsored many citizen-led initiatives, felt it was a natural extension to develop the Transit Riders Union. Without an organized group advocating for actual transit riders, their needs were being neglected. Notably, they contrasted themselves with the local Baltimore Citizens Advisory Committee who, as a small appointed body of "well-intentioned transportation planners and citizens supportive of more transportation choices" did not substitute "for hearing from transit riders themselves" (Menzer and Harmon, 2004: 146). This is important when considering the role and responsibility of Detroit's Citizen Advisory Committee within the RTA structure. In many ways, the *type*

of person on the SEMCOG RTA's CAC is seemingly similar to the BRTB's CAC, which could indicate a potential disconnect between the transit community and the direction of the MPO. The Baltimore Transit Riders Union felt it important to define themselves as a community of interested citizens, dedicated to bettering transit service and quality, rather than as a committee subsidiary to the regional board (Menzer and Harmon, 2004).

Although this analysis is over a decade old, Menzer and Harmon (2004) detail some of this group's accomplishments, noting that a consistency in priorities has led to their establishment as “an important force in shaping the politics and economics of transit funding in the Baltimore region and across the state” (157). In one instance, they successfully campaigned for a ‘Seven-Day Rail’ proposal in 2000-2001, to change one subway line’s hours on Sundays. The Transit Riders Union articulated how, regardless of race, age, income, ability or location, transit riders’ “time is restricted and regulated by availability, frequency, and reliability of transit service”, an experience uncommon to car users (Menzer and Harmon, 2004: 155). By being closed on Sundays, one African-American community (Sharp-Leadenhall) was particularly disadvantaged, as they were unable to travel to certain suburbs for work or recreation. By spearheading this initiative and garnering political support, they were successful in expanding this service, as well as securing additional funding for new transit services. However, a change in government reversed several of these decisions. Menzer and Harmon (2004) end on a hopeful note that the Baltimore Transit Riders Union could still increase their power and influence by remedying the myriad of transit inequities that exist in the region.

This case study is difficult to place within Arnstein’s ladder, as the Union’s position seems to be strong, yet tenuous, as they are still without complete citizen control

to direct the transit investments in the region. Based on this analysis, the ‘delegated power’ rung seemingly fits best, as “citizens hold significant cards” in certain plans, though their capacities are not widespread across all decisions (Arnstein, 1969: 222). Along with the BRU, this case study connects citizen participation with equitable transit systems, noting the way organized advocacy by transit riders themselves has the ability to contest alternative interests, such as suburban commuters, that redirect funds away from creating equitable services, benefiting those who are systemically disadvantaged.

Conclusion

The aforementioned research advocating for community involvement in transportation planning is critical in understanding the disconnect between federal mandates, MPOs, and an equitable distribution of transportation services in many urban areas across the United States. A common theme throughout the literature on citizen participation is fostering trust between the community and the local government in order to create lasting plans. Importantly, these cases demonstrate the necessity and effectiveness of active citizen participation, especially by low-income, marginalized, and transit-dependent people, for achieving more equitable planning processes and transit systems. Whether residents have perceived or actual power, honest and open dialogue with community leaders provides more opportunities for residents to ‘buy in’ to the bureaucratic proposals. Some academics advocate for the need to make planning language more accessible. Others translate that information as the need for ‘persuasion’ in order for planners to garner widespread support for their initiatives. The latter suggestion unearths an underlying sense of manipulation as it gives less control to the

citizenry, but still creates ‘successful’ plans that can be supported via the ballot box. A more pertinent question arises: does the citizenry have actual power, or is it the illusion of power that is given to the citizens when their input in decision-making is mandated and influenced via specific and orderly avenues? The implications of these studies have the propensity to affect the lives of many citizens as a new generation of planners seek to implement findings from academic research and the kind of case studies presented here.

Not surprisingly, the rationale for equity in public transit correlates with high levels of substantive citizen participation in the policy process. Despite the ambivalence regarding its role in a democratic system of government, it is clear that active and broad-based citizen participation in the planning process is a crucial component for public acceptance of service distribution. The aforementioned case studies demonstrate the different ways planning has included citizen participation in transportation development. The methods and outcomes vary in terms of substantive involvement and equity, but more importantly, the findings set the context for this research study. As I seek to determine the level and substance of citizen participation in the Detroit public transportation planning process, it is important to consider how robust participation has the potential to influence planning initiatives towards equitable ends, and whether and how those people and groups actually participating understand and engage with the planning process.

Chapter 4 – Detroit

*The gates are chained, the barbed-wire fencing stands,
An iron authority against the snow,
And this grey monument to common sense
Resists the weather. Fears of idle hands,
Of protest, men in league, and of the slow
Corrosion of their minds, still charge this fence.*

*Beyond, through broken windows one can see
Where the great presses paused between their strokes
And thus remain, in air suspended, caught
In the sure margin of eternity.
The cast-iron wheels have stopped; one counts the spokes
Which movement blurred, the struts inertia fought,*

*And estimates the loss of human power,
Experienced and slow, the loss of years,
The gradual decay of dignity.
Men lived within these foundries, hour by hour;
Nothing they forged outlived the rusted gears
Which might have served to grind their eulogy.*

Philip Levine (1970)

This chapter provides a history of the Detroit region in relation to racial discrimination and geographic mobility. It discusses how the confluence of economic processes and racial segregation impact public transportation policy developments, hampering the pursuit of equity. Firstly, the automotive industry has long dominated the economy of the Detroit metropolitan region, as it structured both the labour market and the city's built environment and spatial structure. Dominant corporate interests privileged white workers at the expense of their African-American counterparts. Furthermore, racial segregation and income disparity characterized the dynamics shaping Detroit's urban landscape. This has created a deep divide between poor, black inner-city residents and more affluent, white suburbanites. Research shows residential segregation along racial lines is still the reality today. Thus, when the industrial sector left the Detroit

metropolitan area the economic decline began to expose the pre-established fault lines which eventually erupted into violence.

Eisinger (2013) writes about the frequent misdiagnosis of Detroit: “In a popular version of history, despite evidence to the contrary, Detroit was a prosperous and vibrant place until the terrible violence of the summer of 1967” (3). This viewpoint is misinformed, as a more complete understanding “suggests that most of the city’s fiscal and governmental distress is a function of crippling structural changes, including severe and long-term loss of population and jobs that began well before 1967 and had little to do with that absence of competent leadership” (Martelle in Eisinger, 2013, 3). Current economic calamities, such as severe depopulation, deindustrialization, and bankruptcy, have cascaded into widespread crisis across the social service sector. Therefore, the ineffectiveness of public transit is not isolated in its situation, but rather is, arguably, a result of racial discrimination and mismanagement across many sectors.

Persistent racial divides in Detroit underwrite the inequitable living conditions for many low-income, African-American citizens. The city’s history of pervasive residential segregation and racial tension, coupled with a regional economy centered around a handful of manufacturing companies have led to a fiscal crisis and impotent public sector. The chapter will demonstrate how this inequality has manifested itself within public transportation in Detroit due to deindustrialization, racial discrimination, and regional fragmentation (Thomas, 2012).

Laying the Foundation: 1900s-1930s

At the turn of the twentieth century, many African-Americans migrated from the South, eagerly leaving the unbearable social conditions that followed emancipation from slavery in the 19th century (Tompkins Bates, 2012). Southern African-American workers' desire to earn decent wages coincided with the auto industry boom fuelling migration during this period of rapid economic growth (Perlmutter, 1988). Known as the Great Migration, this period began with World War One's industrial intensification and lasted until 1929. The war opened up "unprecedented opportunity for industrial employment" as the US closed its borders to European immigrants while simultaneously ramping up domestic war production (Tomkins Bates, 2012: 17). The population growth was fuelled by migration, with migrants accounting for 412,000 of Detroit's 528,000 residents in the 1910-1920 period (Zunz, 1982). When African-Americans arrived in Detroit, only a few companies allocated a small number of jobs to this minority group, mostly concentrated in menial service positions or dangerous, uncomfortable jobs in furnace rooms and foundries (Sugrue, 2005). These jobs were typically non-unionized, and found in peripheral factories. In the automotive industry, "black workers in Detroit were overwhelmingly concentrated in the lowest paid and most menial jobs" (Ewen, 1978:113). Additionally, this population growth corresponded with a geographic expansion of Detroit's territory, annexing farmland around the borders to accommodate the increase. Zunz (1982) notes the way the automotive and manufacturing industries were at the center of the establishment of the city, with no predefined factory districts. Designed around industry, the city had five wide arterial avenues to allow for quick movement in and out of the city center (Sugrue, 2005). It was during this period that

rapid economic growth would drastically change social processes in response to mechanized industrialization.

Known as the Motor City, the history of Detroit over the last century is dominated by one sector: the automotive industry. Around the turn of the century, Henry Ford established a new system of production with the inception of mechanized assembly line technologies, which were demonstrated in some of the largest industrial complexes including the River Rouge Plant along the Detroit River (Sugrue, 2005). His systems set precedents across many industries, most notably the automotive sector, and became known more systematically as “Fordism.” Broadly, Fordism is characterized by “universal mass production, corporate concentration, collective bargaining, and state regulation” (Schumacher and Rogner, 2001: 52). Increased standardization in Ford’s factories led to higher productivity and the de-skilling of labour processes (Harvey, 1990). This product standardization and the mass production of automobiles also “led to economies of scale, resulting in falling unit costs which permitted price reductions, expanding the market and leading on to further economies of scale in an endless virtuous cycle” (Tolliday and Zeitlin, 1992: 2-3). In sum, this mass production increased profitability exponentially within the industrial sector due to its detailed efficiency.

Economic rationalism merged with industrial production in Detroit’s burgeoning automobile companies to create novel production principles that extended beyond mechanized technology (Schumacher and Rogner, 2001). The assembly line altered corporations’ relationship to their workers as the latter became subjected to the systematization of the production process. The principles of scientific management were rationally applied to all facets of corporate activity even beyond production (Harvey,

1990). A highly centralized capitalist system emerged in which mass production was regulated to match mass consumption within a “relatively closed national economy” (Jessop, 1993: 9). Governments were deeply involved in this process, creating policies to support demand, including subsidized mortgage policies and minimum wage laws. Most noticeably, the numerous factories provided a solid base for the national war effort.

The development of Fordism in the Detroit metropolitan region produced a distinct type of labour relations that corresponded with increased productivity (Harvey, 1990). This was done through a ‘mass production/mass consumption’ ideology that characterized Ford’s system. The “Five Dollar Day Ford Profit-Sharing Plan,” in which workers were paid an above-average wage for an eight hour day, ensured that employees had sufficient income and leisure time to dedicate towards the consumption of products that they assembled. At the same time, Ford wanted to ensure stability within the workforce. This “profit-sharing plan” was the lure Ford used “to alter the behaviour and control the lives of Ford workers in ways determined by and considered appropriate by Henry Ford” (Tomkins Bates, 2012: 24). In light of these above-par wages, employees accepted oversight, as Ford felt they needed to be “trained” in how to behave and properly spend their money (Harvey, 1990: 126). This was part of Ford’s ‘Americanization Plan’: foreign-born employees were transformed into American workers through English lessons, civic classes, and correction in living conditions (Tomkins Bates, 2012). Zunz (1982) notes that: “[i]ndustrialists were staunch advocates of a new social order which they tried to promote through large programs of welfare capitalism” (309). The underlying goal was to merge self-interest with American national interests, changing the relationship between workers, mass production, and the state. Ford

was generally successful, and by taming the workforce, his plan was modeled across industries to counter growing union sentiments in the early period of Fordism. These actions resulted in segregated racial patterns across the city of Detroit (Sugrue, 2005). Ewen (1978) notes that these patterns remained largely unaltered over the next several decades.

Ford's greatest concern was labour unions: he saw black workers as loyal to company and country, and wanted to keep them away from turning "red or radical" (Tomkins Bates, 2012). This inequality would later be replicated by the other auto companies and proved to be a persistent tension, and later, conflict, within the Detroit area labour industry. With a growing and radicalising union movement in Detroit, Ford sought to counter this force by being "the only major automobile company to hire blacks in large numbers" (Perlmutter, 1988: 18). After WWI, upon completion of the colossal River Rouge Plant, Ford was in desperate need of workers. The hiring of more than one quarter of Detroit's African-American population and the forging of relationships with prominent African-American leaders resulted in favour towards Ford and anti-union sentiments within the African-American community (Perlmutter, 1988). Ford began to actively recruit African-American workers from the "vast reserve labor force" in the South to consciously pit them against white workers (Ewen, 1978: 118-119). By opening up economic opportunities for African-Americans, Ford transcended racial barriers by exploiting them (Tomkins Bates, 2012). The costs for African-Americans of working in dangerous and uncomfortable jobs, such as the River Rouge foundry, were outweighed by the rewards of "attaining broader social citizenship" via the automotive industry (Tomkins Bates, 2012: 68). Their loyalty to Ford remained high, resulting in a distanced

relationship between African-Americans and unions during the 1920s. These actions laid the foundation for white superiority in labour unions in Detroit, as black workers were initially excluded from organizing (Ewen, 1978).

Despite Ford's intentions, the emergence of a strong union presence was pivotal in securing rights for the working class. The Fordist system resulted in highly centralized collective bargaining in Detroit, with the creation of the UAW in 1935. Regarded as the "most important labor battle in American history," the Flint Sit-Down strike (1936-37) was a pivotal moment in the history of the national automotive industry (Dandaneau, 1996: 1). This 44-day strike in several General Motors factories changed the tone and nature of labour relations, with the UAW securing \$300 million in wage increases and subsequently growing from 30,000 members to 500,000 members (Dandaneau, 1996). The UAW initiated the organization of the modern labour movement, emboldening workers across several other industries to stand up in the face of the automotive industry's corporate excess. Mast (1994) articulates that its "militant bargaining improved the standard of living of thousands upon thousands who had come to Detroit to better themselves" (209). In the 1930s, the UAW comprised many radical leftist groups, characterizing it as a 'hotbed for radicalism' and was touted as a model for the protection of the rights of the working class (Mast, 1994). The inception of this powerful union redefined labour relation structures, with the establishment of national wage regulations and limitations of local work-rule bargaining mechanisms of the national union (Katz, 1992). In addition to this, Roosevelt's National Labor Relations Act, passed by Congress in 1935, "boosted the confidence of workers across industrial American because they saw these events as the beginning of an era of aggressive union organizing" (Tomkins Bates,

2012: 206). Overall, these events legitimized the strong working class as an identity, as well as a stakeholder, and unified the workers' distresses in the face of dominant corporations.

The UAW's overall effectiveness in improving conditions for the entire working class is still arguable in light of the aforementioned substantive gains. Notably, "even though this struggle established a powerful industrial union in a previously open shop industry, it did not, however, expand to a more ferocious plane such as could precipitate a social or class revolution to alter the basic property relations of American capitalist society" like some of the members desired (Dandaneau, 1996: 3). It was clear that the automotive industry's desire to counter unionism was accomplished through dividing the workforce along racial lines. Prior to World War Two, the UAW largely represented the white working class. Nevertheless, some white workers knew that "unless blacks could be brought into the union, their militancy and strength would be seriously undermined" (Ewen, 1978: 119). In essence, economic realities superseded racial divides as workers realized that the creation of a unified class struggle was paramount to achieving substantive gains for workers in Detroit.

This system privileged white workers, as the benefits of Fordism were not evenly distributed across racial, gender, and ethnic lines (Harvey, 1990). Initially, the growing presence of a black community in Detroit posed problems to the housing market when housing construction decreased during World War I (Tomkins Bates, 2012). This led to "atrocious" housing conditions for blacks who were restricted in housing choices, and were subsequently directed to crowded and unsanitary slums on the city's East Side (Tomkins Bates, 2012: 32). Ironically, Ford's 'New Social Order' omitted African-

Americans in this sector. By choosing to initially locate his firm outside of the downtown area, “Ford built his plants alongside White-only worker housing in suburban Dearborn” (Ross and Mitchell, 2004: 687). This denial of “privileged work in mass production, [ensured] large segments of the workforce were equally denied access to the much-touted joys of mass consumption” (Harvey, 1990: 138). This inequality was replicated at a residential level, as racial discrimination permeated the housing market.

Consequently, housing policies had profound impact in dividing the population along racial lines, shaping the quality of life for decades to come. The ‘Color Line’ in Detroit was established during the period of the Great Migration, when an economic boom sent “land values soaring in the downtown commercial district” where wealthier whites lived, entrenching settlement patterns across the region (Tomkins Bates, 2012). As African-Americans could not afford the rising prices, a ghetto of black housing was established to the east, known as the East Side Colored District. Contrary to southern cities, where the industrial revolution had not yet transformed urban areas, northern cities experienced new forms of spatial segregation and the geographic entrenchment of new demographic hierarchies. The housing shortage, as well as racial prejudice, allowed landlords to drive up rent prices, restricting blacks to overcrowded parts of the city (Tomkins Bates, 2012). The optimism of African-Americans' entrance into the industrial workforce was tempered with the intense racial segregation both within factories and urban settlement patterns (Zunz, 1982).

Several barriers contributed to African-American exclusion from the housing market: finances, neighbourhood deterioration, shortage of housing, and discriminatory federal housing and real estate policies and practises (Sugrue, 2005). As black workers

were hired last and paid less, they could not afford housing in better neighbourhoods. Despite being overpriced, rental housing in certain neighbourhoods were the only places where blacks could realistically live. As more blacks gained blue collar positions in the postwar environment, they were systematically shut out of the real estate market. This was because “[b]ankers seldom lent to black home buyers, abetted by federal housing appraisal practices that ruled black neighborhoods to be dangerous risks for mortgage subsidies and home loans” (Sugrue, 2005: 34). Tomkins Bates (2012) demonstrates that in 1924, the Detroit Real Estate Board formally adopted exclusionary policies; in order to preserve property values, realtors were prohibited from “introducing into a neighbourhood ... members of any race or nationality ... whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.” (105). These racially restrictive housing policies kept undesired populations out of white neighbourhoods, curtailing social interaction and freedom of opportunity (Tomkins Bates, 2012). Even a few decades later, policies such as the New Deal’s commissioning of public housing to remedy some of the substandard housing problems for inner-city blacks, was met with fierce resistance (Sugrue, 2005). This debate continued up until the late 1950s, and ultimately resulted in deepening racial segregation and inequality. By organizing to keep black public housing out of certain neighbourhoods, white private-sector businesses thwarted the federal government. This is an example of official sanctioning of inequality via public institutions (Sugrue, 2005: 86-87). It is not an accident, nor indirect market patterns that generated residential segregation along racial lines; rather, it was a direct result of market intervention and government policies by whites wanting to preserve racial integrity in their neighbourhoods.

World War II: 1940 – 1967

With the United States' entry into World War Two, the 1940s ushered in a high demand for “mass production of military hardware, airplanes, tanks, and other vehicles, making metropolitan Detroit one of the birthplaces of the military-industrial complex” (Sugrue, 2005: 19). Detroit became the ‘arsenal of democracy’ as many of the factories were used for wartime production. Not only did the wartime environment entrench a strong relationship between government and the automotive industry in this highly centralized Fordist system of production, but it also opened up new employment opportunities for African-Americans within it. With the federal government espousing a wartime rhetoric of equality, pluralism, and civil rights in the face of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, politicians and the UAW alike opened even more doors for African-Americans on the domestic front (Sugrue, 2005). Demand for labour surged as a chronic shortage of labour opened up jobs in the ‘Big Three’ factories that had been previously unavailable to African-American workers (Sugrue, 2005). Black advancement organizations began to change their tactics: it can be argued that “these shortages made possible the improvements in job opportunities for Negroes that occurred during WWII” (Meier and Rudwick, 1979: 112). The pattern of using African-Americans as strikebreakers stopped when the UAW started promoting “interracial unionism in the automobile industry [which] hindered employers’ strategies of fragmenting the work force by race to curb union militancy” (Sugrue, 2005: 26). Furthermore, federal support was crucial in promoting labour equality. The inception of President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 8802 eliminated discrimination in war industries. This mandate curtailed employers’ discriminatory actions, creating an uneasy grouping between the white and African-American working classes (Sugrue, 2005: 27).

The civil rights movement grew in strength and power and American society was confronted with the uneven economic, social, and political realities for African-Americans. As the deterioration and destruction of black neighbourhoods continued to be problematic, displaced African-Americans began to move beyond the boundaries of their own neighbourhoods, which their white counterparts fiercely and strategically resisted (Farley et al, 2000). It was clear that “the walls keeping all black Detroiters confined to a narrow geographic area could not contain their aspirations to participate as equals” (Tomkins Bates, 2012: 113). Although the ‘right to homeownership’ for African-Americans was generally accepted by the public, it would not be at the expense of dismantling whites’ privileged position in society (Sugrue, 2005). This racism was engrained into white identity, and many whites felt entitled to their homeownership due to their superior work ethic. They worked closely with realtors to fight against integration, as both groups saw themselves with different, but “equally strong stakes in the future of their communities” (Sugrue, 2005: 220). Even the small minority of blacks who attained some level of upward mobility were unwanted in white neighbourhoods (Tomkins Bates, 2012). Racism within Detroit society was not arbitrary, but it was deeply ideological. Geography had been used to established control over social relations and housing issues foreshadowed the unrest that eventually overtook the city.

In 1943, riots in Detroit exposed these underlying tensions and foreshadowed future racial flashpoints as the auto industry’s grip began to loosen over the region. After 50,000 African-Americans migrated to Detroit in search of wartime employment, the increase in population further exacerbated the less-than-standard living conditions. Another population boom in the 1940s added to the expansion of “black Detroit ...

outward from the prewar concentrations of Detroit's East Side and the outlying enclaves" (Sugrue, 2005: 183). In contrast, the demand for labour ceased, resulting in a 42 per cent unemployment rate by 1942, causing a great deal of unrest among African-Americans who became increasingly vocal about being mistreated (Sitkoff, 1969). It is evident that this "agitation and violence then burst into an epidemic of race riots in June, 1943" after whites refused to concede adequate housing, jobs, recreation, and transportation facilities to blacks (186-7). In essence, the sudden entrance of African-American workers into the automotive industry added pressure to the crucible of racialized labour relations.

Although many external factors, such as preoccupation with a world war and promotion of a rhetoric of self-determination within international affairs, contributed to these riots, it is clear that black Detroiters were becoming increasingly intolerant of their second class citizenship (Sitkoff, 1969). These dynamics would quickly emerge as a potent factor in the post-war political and industrial climate.

A geographic reorganization of Detroit was underway in the postwar environment laying the foundation for segregated communities up until the present day. Expressway construction dramatically expanded in the 1950s due to the federal Highway Act in 1956, which footed a majority of construction costs for local municipalities (Thomas, 2013). Industrial centers decentralized, as the federal government encouraged new plant construction outside of the center, in case of air attack during the Korean War (Sugrue, 2005). As many families began moving outside urban areas, municipal governments supported these projects in order to connect the downtown central business district with the outlying suburban regions. Despite being marketed as positive developments for the city, the postwar construction of highways devastated many black neighbourhoods

(Sugrue, 2005). The human costs of these projects were tremendous. Sugrue (2005) argues that undoubtedly, this infrastructure construction was at the expense of black Detroiters and did little to disturb the middle-class white families. The displacement of large groups of African-Americans in order to raze large areas of black neighbourhoods further compounded the housing crisis. In the end, Thomas (2013) writes these “expressways were counterproductive” to their original goal of connecting the suburbs to the downtown, as they helped “shoppers and workers become even less tied to the central business district” (72). Furthermore, these highways encouraged the mass exodus of the white middle class, who sought to preserve the racial integrity of their neighbourhoods by moving to the suburbs. Many of Detroit’s neighbourhoods transitioned from white to African-American composition: the white population fell from 1.5 million to 414,000 between 1950-1980, while the African-American population more than doubled in size, from 300,000 to 750,000 (Farley et al, 2000: 151). The decentralization of Detroit beginning in the postwar period contributed to a burgeoning spatial mismatch between black workers in the inner city and employment opportunities that began moving out to the suburbs.

Additionally, systemic discrimination persisted in the automotive industry in postwar Detroit. This was a reflection of the political fragmentation that occurred outside of the factories. Sugrue (2005) argues that there were a myriad of forces that contributed to the conditions of African-American employment: workers’ cultures and attitudes coalesced with employer preferences as well as company dynamics and labour market structures. African-Americans were arbitrarily distributed throughout factories in the area as employers and UAW locals formed unpredictable hiring practices that made African-

American workers “well represented in certain plants, and underrepresented in others” (Sugrue, 2005: 95). This underrepresentation furthered an already tense process of deskilling in the automotive industry, and exacerbated divisions between skilled and unskilled workers. African-American workers were largely concentrated in the unskilled departments, causing underrepresentation in local union chapters. This allowed employers to foster occupational insecurity and removed any chance of upward mobility (Sugrue, 2005). Prior to the war, African-Americans accepted these positions; however, with many African-Americans now represented within a union that was openly promoting equality between races, they increasingly became uneasy with this discriminatory division. African-American workers began to put pressure on the union to change these conditions.

Although the UAW “set the bargaining agenda for scores of other American unions” and pioneered novel management practises, it proved to be active in the civil rights movement in word only (Thompson, 2001: 7). With the election of the right-of-centre president Walter Reuther by a very slim margin in 1946, alongside the growing civil rights activism around the country, the next few decades illustrated the political fragmentation that permeated the shop floor. Thompson (2001) notes that “worker actions in the 1950s and thereafter would prove that a left vision of postwar labor relations was not abandoned” despite the Reuther caucus assuming power (15). Many African-American community members joined the automotive industry workers in challenging the discriminatory practices in the workplace, among other facets of life, with demonstrative strength in numbers. The postwar political climate moderately contained these racial tensions through the rigidity of the Fordist compromise. However, this

structure was about to undergo a series of external changes that would intensify employers' leverage and rupture the fragile racial compromises within auto factories.

The transition to a post-Fordist socio-economic system is "characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation" (Harvey, 1990:147). As a prominent manufacturing centre, the Detroit region was situated in the reorganization of the world system of capitalism. New technology and communications allowed for flexible production in foreign countries, and cutting production costs quickly became the solution to the lack of economic growth. Fordism's static and geographically bounded production, as evidenced in large, in-house assembly plants, were being replaced by way of adaptable associations as a result of increased "satellite communication and declining transport costs" (Harvey, 1990: 147). This reorganization eroded corporate centralization and state-protected markets. At a macroeconomic level, globalizing markets signalled an impracticality in protecting national producers in order to maintain competitiveness (Schumacher and Rogner, 2001). The connection between regulated mass production and mass consumption was lost in the global search for locational advantages and increased flexibility. In other words, the large, in-house, assembly factories that distinguished the Fordist period, and in effect Detroit's industrial makeup, were becoming obsolete.

Within a post-Fordist framework, socio-economic relations were also altered. This is most noticeable through the devaluation of labour associated with increasing exploitation of previously untapped industrial labour forces in developing countries, which could be paid significantly less (Froebels et al., 1980). This process directly altered

labour relations, affecting “first and foremost, unemployment and the devaluation of skills for workers in the traditional industrial countries” (Froebel et al., 1980: 19). Simultaneously, intensified global competition eroded the automotive industry’s need to manipulate labour in the workforce (Trachte and Ross, 1985: 195). In the past, the deliberate discrimination of races was utilized by the automotive industry to ensure the subjugation of the working class. This practise was seen in Detroit, as employers had deliberately divided privileged white workers and overloaded African-American workers. However, discrimination perpetuated and stabilized by the dominant industries within Fordist structures would come undone, as the “civil rights movement in the United States spilled over into a revolutionary rage that shook the inner cities” (Harvey, 1990: 138). Cooperation with a stable union was becoming increasingly unlikely within the United States, due to the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement.

The loss of 130,000 manufacturing jobs between 1948 and 1967 as a result of the end of the war foreshadowed the chronic job loss that would plague the city in the following decades. Detroiters soon realized that “[s]eemingly secure jobs could be eliminated without notice when a plant automated” (Sugrue, 2005: 143). Blacks bore the brunt of the restructuring economy, as they did not often have the seniority that was needed due to their late entrance into the unions after WWII. Furthermore, as unemployment grew, frustration amongst workers pervaded the shop floor. This was evident in Detroit, especially in light of employers deliberately dividing the workforce through privileging white workers and overloading African-American workers. In order to increase production, the ‘Big Three’ automakers, naturally augmented the tempo and standards of the industry, with a myriad of smaller factories following suit. Notably,

Chrysler became the primary employer of African-American workers post-World War Two due to the geographic density of factories in Detroit's inner-city (Thompson, 2001). These factories were not recipients of the same technological investment as other 'whiter, suburban' factories, and African-Americans worked on the "most labor-intensive, most extraordinarily dirty, and most unsafe operations within Chrysler's decrepit foundry, stamping, and paint facilities" (Thompson, 2001: 59). As workers were forced to work faster and harder due to global competition, management instructed the foremen "to tighten the reins of shop-floor control and to repudiate unionism in any form" (Thompson, 2001: 60). It is clear that the pressures of the global economy transitioning to post-Fordist production modes were being unleashed on the African-American working class.

The infamous race riots in 1967 highlighted the deep divisions between races and desperation of African-Americans Detroiters to achieve equality in American society. On July 23, a police raid of an afterhours drink bar precipitated violent outbursts, where black Detroiters felt that law enforcement's actions constantly crossed boundaries and were a symptom of racial discrimination (Fine, 1989). This incident prompted a swift and angry response within the African-American community. Small groups began to form large crowds, provoking looting and arson in response to this continuous brutality (Fine, 1989). The reasons for the riots were altogether different than previous times. Sugrue (2005) writes that whereas "the riot of 1943 came at a time of increasing black and white competition for jobs and housing[,] by 1967, discrimination and deindustrialization had ensured that blacks had lost the competition" (260). Georgakas and Surkin (1998) argue that these events synthesized African-Americans frustrations. They acknowledge the

violence that erupted was not between races, but rather blacks against capitalist exploitation tinged with racism (Georgakas and Surkin, 1998). Known to the African-American community as the ‘Great Rebellion,’ these riots were a “product of the black movement of the 1960s, and that in turn had been a direct consequence of the frustrations and unkept promises of the post-war era” (Georgakas and Surkin, 1998: 155). Whites viewed the riots altogether differently: they saw it as a result of criminal anarchy (Fine, 1989). This further polarized the city like never before. In the end, differing perspectives on the riots shape the aftermath and their impact on the city’s composition and stability.

Deindustrialization: Post 1967

Detroit’s socioeconomic indicators painted a bleak picture in the 1970s: Not only had it become “one of the most racially divided cities in America, but its unemployment rate hit 13.1 percent in 1976,” compared to 7.4 percent nationally, and “90% of those unemployed in Detroit were minorities” (Longo, 2006: 89). This next phase of Detroit’s history is characterized by the decline in the automotive industry, juxtaposed with new development to reinvigorate the city. The worsening of the economy “devastated the city in many ways that mere looters and arsonists never could” (Fine, 1989: 458). The aftermath of mistrust between races, lack of opportunity for employment, and declining quality of life would accelerate the depopulation, with many whites moving to the outlying suburban areas.

It is important to note that the federal government, responding to a nation-wide civil rights movement attempted to fight urban poverty and racial discrimination through several mandates a decade earlier. For example, in 1968, President Nixon appointed the former Governor of Michigan, George Romney, as Department of Housing and Urban

Development to curb the effects of urban ghettos (Farley et al. 2000). The Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, which was designed to expand housing opportunities for low-income minorities. However, Romney's plans for implementation were not supported by Detroit's surrounding suburbs and ultimately failed to gain any traction in light of desiring to secure midterm election support in 1970 (Farley et al., 2000). Prior to this legislation, President Johnson committed to urban renewal programs a decade earlier, in response to Detroit's distressed situation, with the city receiving \$15.7 million in 1967, fifty percent more than the previous year and more than the national average based on population size (Thomas, 2012). However, much of this funding did not have clear plans, nor the resources to address the systemic problems enveloping Detroit. The riots tainted much of the progress towards racial integration and assistance in addressing the systemic inequality facing African-Americans. Instead, many of the suburban communities employed successful strategies to keep blacks in the city (Farley et al., 2000). Thomas (2012) notes that "[n]o amount of money could have changed 'ingrained attitudes' leading to racial conflicts or eliminated the 'social and racial inequalities' ... Society continued to invest in suburban development and away from the inner cities" (133). Structural imbalances would continue despite the attempts to curb Detroit's social and economic problems.

Around the same time as tensions erupted and conflicts multiplied, the automotive industry continued to move out of core industrial regions. Extreme job loss plagued Detroit, with about 200,000 disappearing between 1968 and 1977 (Feagin, 1998: 174). Georgakas and Surkin (1998) argues that corporations observing the changes within the post-war economy saw a chance to profit from cheap labour by moving to countries

without a strong union presence. This devalued the many gains made by the UAW in the previous 30 years. This resulted in a weakened labour movement for both whites and African-Americans (Thompson, 2001). With the threat of losing employment looming over their heads, the UAW acquiesced to management demands to control the shop floor (Georgakas and Surkin, 1998: 30). Serrin (1974) argues that a ‘civilising’ process in relations began to occur, with stability and predictability in labour relations being at the forefront of the corporate agenda. This occurred in order to try and keep employment within the Detroit metropolitan region. The UAW ousted many African-Americans as a consequence of participation in unauthorized ‘wildcat’ strikes in several Chrysler plants, and did not harness their radical dissent against the automotive corporations, and instead sought to delegitimize these actions. The UAW's attitude reveals the change in atmosphere that workers had to face. (Thompson, 2001). Managing workers became the priority. Georgakas and Surkin’s account of the last major strike in 1973 states that “the UAW had once led the same kind of flying squads to keep factories shut. Now, they had come full circle and saw the task of the union as seeing that the plants remained open” (231). These actions signalled the decline of industrial labour unionism in the face of racial discrimination both on and beyond the shop floor. The devaluation of labour in a post-Fordist system no longer allowed for a militaristic, cohesive union against capital. Rather, the union feared for its existence in the face of international competition. In the end, this period is marked by the loss of Detroit’s manufacturing base, first moving into the greater metropolitan region, and then on to other sites in the United States and the world.

Changing labour markets significantly impacted African-American workers, as the elimination of blue-collar jobs created fewer and fewer employment opportunities for lower-wage, unskilled workers (Farley et al., 2000). Kasarda (1989) argues that whereas “jobs requiring only limited education ha[d] been rapidly increasing in the suburbs, poorly educated blacks remain[ed] residentially constrained in inner-city housing” (26). This is especially true within the Detroit Metropolitan Region, as differences in education and skill between black and white workers meant that when these blue collar jobs migrated to the suburbs, white Detroiters were better able to withstand these changes (Farley et al., 2000). Additionally, the disinvestment from Detroit’s industrial base was followed by disinvestment in infrastructure and socioeconomic opportunities. In addition to losing a significant tax base, Detroit also lost much of its professional, civic and economic services when white residents moved to the suburbs (Woodford, 2001). This led to an overall poorer quality of life in Detroit, affecting access to public services, high school dropout rates, number of commercial establishments, and crime. In sum, “[b]lack workers remained to a great extent confined to decaying center-city neighbourhoods, trapped by invisible barriers of race. As industry fled the city, a large number of white workers were willing and able to follow” (Sugrue, 2005: 177).

In contrast to the deterioration of the economic and racial system, the political system had not completely dissipated. In 1973, Detroit elected its first African-American mayor, Coleman Young. Communicating optimism, he won five consecutive terms due to his ability to reach across radical, liberal, racial and labour political divides within the political system. Upon election, Young inherited a developing fiscal crisis, coupled with a white bureaucracy and police force, which he committed to dismantling in light of the

racial tensions from the previous decade. Although the election of an African-American was seen as a progressive step forward, in many ways, Young “symbolized the racial, and the city-suburban, polarization of the 1970s and 1980s [as m]ost whites thought he consistently espoused the kind of black power they feared” (Farley et al. 2000: 47). In contrast, African-Americans generally supported Young, even though the bureaucracy was not trusted. Rich (1989) argues that Young was largely successful due to his relationships with both the African-American community and local Republican businessmen, who represented a stronghold of white capitalists. This situation is representative of the deep division between the more prosperous, mobile whites, and then low-income, ghettoized African-Americans.

Within this new political landscape, economic and racial struggles were masked with a hopeful optimism that circumstances could not deteriorate more than they already had. Therefore, redevelopment projects became central to reinvigoration. City officials attempted to lure corporate investment in order to revive the lagging economy. With much of the regional economy still centered around an eroding manufacturing base, Detroit needed new ideas to capture American business that was poised to automate or move elsewhere. “Redevelopment in much of Detroit after 1970 reflected new public-private relationships dominated by the belief that attracting capital was the chief responsibility of municipality governments” (Longo, 2006: 90). These partnerships often manifested themselves through “impressive and tangible monuments that demonstrate their civic activity while creating profits for the private sector” (Longo, 2006: 91). An example of this was the construction of the Renaissance Center, which would become the ‘symbol’ of rejuvenation in Detroit (Desiderio, 2009). Private investors worked together

to “bring the suburbs to the downtown” by reshaping the core of the central business district, which had lost many offices and businesses during the ‘white flight’ after the 1967 riots. Desiderio (2009) notes that instead of the ‘fortress-like complex’ being welcoming, it kept out many ordinary Detroiters, and did not generate the financial investment that it was intended to attract. In an attempt to assuage many corporate interests that Detroit was not embroiled in an ‘urban crisis,’ it ironically contributed more to the problem, due to its high costs and inability to attract business to the towers. Further riverfront development was encouraged and supported by Young, as well as other business leaders, such as Henry Ford II, even though it was widely thought to be an “illusory” comeback (Thomas, 2012: 149). This focus on new development by obscuring past events was a “romantic interpretation of American mobility, [and] served as an alternative explanation for Detroit’s depopulation” (Longo, 2006: 104). Detroit’s reality would only get worse.

Apart from studying Young, there remains a research gap about the local political system due to the fact that the city has long been understood as dominated by labour interests (Rich, 1989). Sugrue (2005) argues that deliberate decisions of policymakers and corporate executives in Detroit have shaped the postwar landscape. He writes about the way that these decision makers “who controlled the city’s industry determined the range of employment opportunities through their labor policies and their long-term corporate planning strategies” (Sugrue, 2005: 11). Their economic power was vast, as they were able to disproportionately affect thousands of workers with one decision (Sugrue, 2005). Ewen (1978) illustrates this historical trend and argues that the collusion between a small group of industrial capitalists largely governed Detroit’s economic

landscape over the last century. Ultimately, “[i]ndividual white Detroiters challenged and reformulated local and federal policies both in the workplace and in their neighbourhoods, and contributed to the racial and socioeconomic division of metropolitan Detroit” (Sugrue, 2005:12). Thomas (2012) concludes that the pattern of decision-making and cooperation between economic and political interests cemented an elitist model of governance. The centralized economic power allowed for many structural imbalances to become embedded within Detroit along racial and socioeconomic lines. As a result, after the 1967 riots, city planners were also discredited, seen as villains and “lackeys of an oppressive political system, perpetrators of wrongs against central city residents” (Thomas, 2012: 141). The mistrust emanated from citizens’ exasperation with the centrally planned development strategies, without sufficient or substantial participation by African-American Detroiters. This fact created further division between races in a city whose largely white bureaucracy was not supported by the remaining African-American population.

In keeping with the layered narrative of Detroit, the effect of deindustrialization on Detroit contains many gaps (Boyle, 2001). Fine (1989) argues that the events of 1967 “sped up the white exodus from Detroit that was already underway” while shortening “the time leading to black political control of the city [but] economic power continued to be in white hands” (458). Residential segregation was a fierce and organized form of oppression in Detroit, as it was structural and interconnected with so many facets of life. Sugrue (2005) writes about the impact of race as the deciding factor in the separation of neighbourhoods:

The consequences of the creation of a divided metropolis were profound. The physical separation of blacks and whites in the city perpetuated inequality in

housing and access to jobs, but no less significantly, it reinforced the ideology of race held by northern whites. The ‘ghetto’ was not simply a physical construct; it is also an ideological construct. Urban space became a metaphor for perceived racial difference. (228-229)

Ultimately, the confluence of race, deindustrialization, sprawl, and impotent political leadership during this period created systemic barriers for many African-Americans in residentially segregated neighbourhoods.

Detroit, the ‘Failed City’

In the decades that followed, industrial decline, changing labour markets, and pervasive racial discrimination did not give African-American Detroiters “the option of following the exodus of employment” as it had for white Detroiters (Sugrue, 2005: 262). By consequence, African-Americans were on the economic margins and were severely lacking in geographic mobility from the immediate postwar period into the 1990s (Sugrue, 2005: 262). Even with a prosperous national economy in the 1990s, concentrated unemployment, poverty, and crime in inner-Detroit was still high, especially in comparison to the surrounding suburbs (Farley et al., 2000). Segregation impacted all areas of life, and as such, creating a spatial mismatch that has dominated the development of Detroit over the last 40 years.

Contemporary research on the city of Detroit reveals that it is still highly segregated: “[t]he central city of Detroit is unique because it is the largest predominantly black city in the United States” while at the same time it “has maintained a high segregation index over a period of 30 years ... even after passage of the Federal Fair Housing Act” in 1968 (Darden and Kamel, 2000:10). The study demonstrated that both the inner city and the suburbs remain highly segregated, despite the broad differences in

socioeconomic status between the two areas. Additionally, despite the progress of national civil rights legislation, the labour market in Detroit is still rife with discrimination, as black Detroiters continued to be underrepresented in private sector white collar employment (Sugrue, 2005: 268-269). Research indicates a pervasive inequitable disadvantage exists for many low-income communities in the inner city. Farley et al. (2000) chronicle the persistent racial divides in Detroit, noting that “many whites still hold negative stereotypes about blacks,” which contributes to ongoing “discriminatory practices in housing and employment” (248). It is clear that historically engrained patterns are still help explain barriers for African-American Detroiters.

Moreover, Li et al.’s (2013) research shows that residential segregation is “consistently detrimental to both cities and suburbs ... [and] that its impact has grown stronger over time” (2643). Similarly, Farley et al. (1993) reveal that “socioeconomic status has little influence on the high level of black residential segregation” in Detroit, and that if income used to play a part in determining the racial makeup of a neighbourhood, there is evidence suggesting that is no longer the case (Farley et al., 1993: 9). Even with the increase in black suburbanization across the Detroit metropolitan region, the study still found high levels of segregation and isolation correlated with race. These findings are useful, as they reveal that the SMH can still be used as a framework for analysis. With severe residential segregation along racial lines, access to public services is a critical necessity for many of poor, ghettoized neighbourhoods. Farley et al. (2000) postulate that “racial attitudes, the structure of local government financing and political authority, and private economic interests all create barriers that have to be overcome to implement ... an urban revitalization strategy” (253). Notably, there has not

been a great deal of research on how these divisions affect public transportation across the region. Ultimately, this context is ripe for research on public policy, planning, and access to various social services and employment throughout the metropolitan area.

After losing half of its population, procuring 30,000 vacant lots, and closing half of the city's public schools, “Detroit has entered the global imaginary as the quintessential poster child of the havoc wreaked by deindustrialization and global restructuring, with increased media attention to its unemployment, poverty, crime, and perceived despair” (Pedroni, 2011: 205). More recently, Detroit is known for being the poster child of a ‘failed city’ due to its continued economic decline, resulting in a declaration of a state of financial emergency since 2013, and subsequent filing for Chapter 9 bankruptcy, the largest American city to do so (Davey and Walsh, 2013). The recent financial woes are not indicative of a single tumultuous decade, but rather point to the city’s long history of economic decline and social inequality. Since many major industries eliminated the majority of automotive jobs, coupled with ‘white flight’ relocating higher tax bases to suburban areas, many low-income, unemployed black Detroiters became trapped in the city, unable to keep up with property taxes. The city of Detroit became increasingly unable to keep up with its large geographic territory and largely disinvested in public infrastructure. Rehabilitating Detroit has typically been shaped by focusing on regaining its peak population of two million people (Detroit Future City, 2012: 5). However, this goal is wildly flawed as it is much too late to make changes to combat the systemic problems of a mismatched urban economy and decaying infrastructure after decades of disinvestment.

Detroit's geographic makeup has drastically changed. Factories that once formed a dense industrial landscape are largely decrepit and, for some observers, evoke an eerie quietude as remnants of its past history (Binelli, 2012). As Ryan and Campo (2012) explain, "[t]he automobile plants that once knit the physical, economic, and social fabric of Detroit together are mostly gone, along with the thousands of jobs they provided and, in many cases, the thousands of homes that once surrounded them" (97). Deindustrialization has affected more than just employment and socioeconomics. There are several pieces that have photographed the changes in Detroit's landscape, noting the way the city is characterized not by what is present, but what is no longer (Herscher, 2012; Woodford, 2001; Ryan and Campo, 2012). The images demonstrate the "cumulative effect of these changes has been the relentless erasure of the city's industrial heritage and an overall deurbanization of the Detroit landscape" (Ryan and Campo, 2012: 97). By understanding the history and that loss, residents, policy makers, and planners can mobilize the assets that currently exist, creating something altogether new and representative across income levels.

As Detroit moves forward, private interests have filled the economic and political vacuum, with large investors, such as Dan Gilbert and The Kresge Foundation entering into the urban redevelopment process. By proposing to raze and build afresh many of Detroit's vacant areas, the political and economic elite are erasing the land physically and discursively of its 'blackness' and all of its accompanied history (Pedroni, 2011; Weber, 2002). For instance, in wanting to attract "kids from Harvard or Georgetown", Gilbert has created 6,500 new jobs downtown, catering to "young entrepreneurs who are making the most of cheap real estate" (Ferozhar, 2014). This forces out pre-existing populations,

appealing to distant investors, as well as prospective young, white homebuyers, as a clean slate corresponds with low risk, and readily receives public and private investment. These actions reorganize the city spatially, supplanting “the present dominant racially-coded narrative of Black, chaotic, crime-ridden industrial hulk with a vision of the metropolitan region as a gleaming, dynamic, hip (and discursively white) global hub of emergent mobility technology” (Pedroni, 2011: 213). These current developments within the city’s power and spatial dynamics reveal the way that Detroit is trying to move forward: without the substantive voice of the citizens who remain.

Binelli (2012) presents a scathing portrayal of many of the austere proposals to rebuild the city:

[B]y quietly denying the most distressed neighborhoods basic services (new streetlights, home improvement grants, tax breaks for developers, abandoned-property demolitions, road repair) in order to entice those residents to decamp to more stable locations ... the bold reinvention of the city had devolved into an austerity plan that would impose sanctions on its poorest citizens. (292)

The influx of new residents seeking to take advantage of the ‘blank slate’ that Detroit offers obscures the reality of the more than 600,000 other residents already there, many of whom are low-income and completely disconnected from these newfound employment and cultural hubs. “Many of the outsiders who made their way to Detroit in the wake of the auto industry’s near collapse came bearing suggestions of how the region might replace the jobs that were never coming back” (Binelli, 2012: 173). For example, this includes transforming the city into a techno-urban-health care hub even though many of the residents have low literacy levels. This highlights the way many ‘plans’ for Detroit’s renewal do not align with the city’s current demographics. Herscher (2012) writes that “for many in Detroit, hope for the city’s problems to be solved by others has not been

relinquished so much as ignored as in utter contradiction to the city as both history and lived experience” (8).

In many ways, developing better public transit fits within a new narrative. For instance, the new M-1 rail along Woodward Avenue is an example of this public-private partnership, with various firms contributing \$160 million to its development, to be later donated to the city, ignoring the lack of cooperation across the city-suburb boundary (Foroohar, 2014). Although it will be successful in linking the central business district to the New Centre neighbourhood (close to the university district centered on Wayne State University), it will do very little for the many low-income, isolated, outlying neighbourhoods. Potential business investors see this simply as an economic development generator, rather than an issue of equity for low-income, segregated populations.

Mobility and Public Transportation in Detroit

The spatial relationship to employment accessibility for low-income, inner-city residents is an important factor in understanding transportation needs in Detroit. It is not by accident that automobiles trumped public transit, despite the latter being a more efficient mode of transporting large groups of people. Hyde (2006) provides a comprehensive analysis of the triumph of “Autopia” in the 1960s noting the way that intertwining the economic, political, and geographic factors that led to Detroit’s reliance on cars. He writes that “[t]he failure to build an ‘improved’ mass-transit system for metropolitan Detroit to replace the inefficient and overcrowded system was a result of the growing popularity of the personal automobile, the increasing diffusion of Detroit’s population, and the structuring of tax revenues to favour highway funding” (Hyde, 2006:

95). This analysis largely omits the African-American perspective by focusing on the seemingly benign factors that contribute to a decentralized metropolitan region. The impact of poor mobility for geographically segregated, inner-city minorities would not be realized until several decades later.

The persistent lack of coordination between Detroit and its surrounding suburbs means that public transportation is not regarded as an important issue of equity for low-income populations. “One reason why bus transportation from the central city to suburban jobs remains so difficult is that racial mistrust and tensions have prevented the coordination of Detroit’s bus lines with those of the surrounding suburbs” (Farley et al., 2000: 253). Beyond a functioning public transit authority, regional governance has continuously resulted in gridlocked decision-making, rendering it ineffective. Thus, it is not surprising that a regional governance body has always struggled to create an effective transit system. Thomas notes that “[r]egional transportation remained an active effort ... under SEMCOG [South Eastern Michigan Council of Government]. ... however, the region remained fragmented. SEMCOG never gained the clout necessary to enforce cooperation” (214). The resistance of affluent, white suburban communities to revenue sharing with poor, black, inner-city neighbourhoods would result in decades of failed regional governance, and by extension, the lack of a functional transit system. L. Brooks Patterson, suburban Oakland County’s chief executive, has repeatedly denounced cooperation with Detroit, openly opposing any form of mass transit between his constituency and the city (Binelli, 2012; Williams, 2014). His actions, among other wealthy suburban leaders still currently in power, continue to be detrimental to forming a regional transportation system. Ultimately, establishing an overarching and cooperative

regional governance is essential to creating an equitable transit system that will provide increased accessibility to those with poor mobility.

Nelles (2012) corroborates the theory of regional fragmentation to understand the failure of transit policy planning decisions across the Detroit metropolitan region. Looking at the history of the region, she argues that “[c]ontextual and structural divisions have entrenched conflicts between city and suburban actors, preventing the emergence of a strong and coherent horizontal coalition in support of metropolitan transit” (Nelles, 2012: 222). Her research examines the differences between failed transit proposals in 1967 and the 2000s, both created in response to a promise of federal funding. She finds that “current debates over regional transit have closely followed historical patterns where initial local support for regionalism has been followed by fragmentation of interests and failure to achieve consensus on metropolitan transit institutions” (Nelles, 2012: 222). In this case, weak horizontal partnerships across the metropolitan region resulted in a lack of collective action to make use of federal transit dollars to carry out public policy. In sum, this research is important in detecting the significance of failed regional cooperation in establishing an equitable regional public transit system.

Notably, Nelles’ assessment corroborates Lewis and McGhee’s (2001) conceptualization of how federal funding is rendered ineffective when local actors become embroiled in conflict. This is relevant to Detroit, as the failure of public transit governance through a regional authority in Detroit is a persistent reality and has been tenuous at best (Nelles, 2012). The creation of the Detroit Area Regional Transportation Authority (DARTA) was devised to configure the public transportation system across the city and the suburbs (Nelles, 2012: 230). It has been clear that the Detroit Department of

Transportation (DDOT) bus system in the city has not successfully coordinated with the suburban bus system (SMART). For this reason, there are severe limitations to public transportation in Detroit. As a result, a 2008 Comprehensive Regional Transit Service Plan was introduced to solve this problem. However, the tenuous partnership between municipalities showed its true colours: “both the city and the suburbs objected strenuously to the proposed legislation over the distribution of federal funding, labor regulations, the fear of hidden costs of a merger, and concerns over local autonomy” (Nelles, 2012: 232) This led to a withdrawal of federal funding, as well as promise towards a regional system. In 2012, SEMCOG resurrected a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

The effect of poor mobility and lack of inner-city employment in Detroit is consistent with the SMH. For example, it is posited that structural barriers to employment were more common among welfare recipients living in the central city of Detroit, than those in the suburbs (Allard et al., 2003). Allard (2002) builds off of existing literature on SMH to “assess whether proximity to jobs is related to work rates among women receiving welfare in Detroit” (1046). With a high amount of residential segregation for welfare recipients, who are largely African-American, they wanted to see if accessibility to employment affected welfare recipients’ earnings. The study found that “greater access to job opportunities leads to higher reported earnings rates among welfare recipients” (Allard, 2002: 1059). This likewise means policies targeted to “enhance mobility, ease the burden of complex commutes, and increase access to job opportunities, particularly low-skill opportunities in outlying suburban areas, become increasingly important to

achieving welfare-to-work goals” (Allard, 2002: 1060). These studies set the context for understanding how low-income residents interact within their city.

Grengs (2010) provides a different conclusion to Detroit’s SMH. He argues that the physical structure of Detroit and its history of deindustrialization, means that it is now a ‘hollowed-out region’ and no amount of investment in public transit would solve the ‘equity problem.’ This is fundamental to understanding urban residents’ connection to their employment. Guided by a wider understanding of SMH, these findings do not necessarily contradict the theory, but add a more nuanced understanding of urban transit development. Grengs (2010) finds that “the inner-city is not disadvantaged by its location, but that substantial differences exist within the inner-city itself”, and in light of this revelation, a “modal mismatch” is a more correct term for these circumstances (44). A modal mismatch refers to whether residents in the inner city have access to a car, instead of access to public transit, indicating that accessibility for employment is only achievable via vehicle. The uniqueness of Detroit’s infrastructural landscape contributes to this phenomenon. Grengs (2010) describes it as such:

The results of this study suggest instead that in a place like Detroit, accessibility by transit is currently so low that no amount of transit investment could be implemented fast enough to address the urgent problems of joblessness and poverty. The car’s advantages in job accessibility are so extreme, and the prospects for serving the most disadvantaged people with public transit are so limited, that the problem facing poor people in Detroit is a “modal mismatch” rather than a “spatial mismatch”. Transportation planners and engineers have deliberately built metropolitan regions to accommodate the private automobile. A problem with recent efforts to reduce inner-city poverty with new public transit service is that public transit does not work well in cities made for cars. (52)

He notes that this may not be true for other metropolitan areas, and that more research on affordability and environmental trade-offs is necessary. Ultimately, these findings

challenge a conventional understanding of SMH and equitable public transportation within the broader research literature.

Conclusion

The story of Detroit's decline must be set in the context of history, the structural changes in capitalist development, and urban race and class relations. As the hegemonic sector in the Detroit region, the auto industry translated the effects of changes in the capitalist economy into the racial and labour makeup of the region. The emergence of globalized production precariously positioned the city, as the Fordist system was no longer effective in maintaining stability in race relations. When "capital mobility ... undermined the bargaining power of organized monopoly sector auto labour," the African-American working class was most affected (Trachte and Ross, 1985:209). In many ways, the previous socio-economic system contained the racial tensions that existed within the working class. However, the post-Fordist global forces no longer had the power or desire to diffuse this racial divide. Divisions that had been present all along ceased to be contained. These fault lines erupted into violence in the community and would go on to entrench discrimination and residential segregation for the next forty years.

A new vision inspired by private investment captured city leaders in the 1970s-80s in an effort to revive the city. By redeveloping the cityscape, a new narrative developed to exclaim that Detroit "was both unique and all-American ... [not] a pariah that represented the American experiment gone horribly wrong" (Longo, 2006: 117). This narrative continues to compete with the previous realities of the 'Motor City,' racial strife, subsequent disinvestment, and deindustrialization. The lack of city-suburb

cooperation, coupled with the economic crisis, makes it difficult to achieve an equitable system across the region of Detroit. Thomas (2012) argues that “[m]any of the problems Detroit faced came from the failure to view the metropolitan area as a unified community, where everyone was responsible for the good of the whole” (212). Ultimately, the lack of an effective regional planning organization translates into default public transit policy, as they do not have the authority, nor the funds, to make significant changes towards equity in mobility.

Chapter 5 – Methodology & Findings

Detroit is at a critical point in its history and serves as an apt case study. Plagued with a hollowed out manufacturing industry, bankruptcy, and a debilitated social services sector, the city is in the midst of many proposed changes to rebuild and rebrand itself as more liveable for its citizens. Public transportation is one of the areas in flux, as many Detroiters and suburbanites alike have voiced concerns over the ineffectiveness of this service. Detroit Future City’s strategic framework plan was commissioned by Detroit Works Project, an initiative led by the Detroit Collaborative Design Center at the University of Detroit Mercy and was “charged with developing meaningful and inclusive engagement strategies to gather the expertise of the community and combine it with the technical analysis ... and then produce a strategic framework plan for our future” (Detroit Collaborative Design Center, 2015).¹ It recognized transportation as the “highest priority for systemwide change” and advocates for a transformation of the transportation network as it responds “to the largely unplanned restructuring of the city that has taken place in the recent decades [while also used to] promote and support planned economic restructuring” (Detroit Future City, 2012: 189). This strategic framework, although not all-encompassing, nor binding to the City of Detroit, was successful in raising awareness and bringing attention to the areas that citizens identified as needing to change across the region.

There is a noticeable level of citizen participation surrounding these changes, with transit advocates being incorporated into an institutional structure to help fix these problems through the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Examining the CAC more

¹ For more information on this project, visit <http://www.dcdc-udm.org/projects/strategies/dwltp/>.

closely can help us understand the level and effectiveness of citizen participation in relation to proposed policy changes to determine effectiveness in addressing equity needs in public transit planning. As was discussed in chapters 2 and 3, various academics in the transportation planning field theorise that equitable transit systems and robust citizen participation are inextricably linked, an area that is ripe for more research and greater understanding. By examining the institutional dynamics between government structures and the public, as well as the latter's perceptions of capacity and ability to influence the decision-making process, this research project hopes to draw meaningful conclusions about the influence of community involvement on urban planning's effectiveness.

In 2012, the South Eastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) formed the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), a governing body tasked with creating a regional transit plan to coordinate public transportation between the City of Detroit and the surrounding counties of Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne. In 2012, The RTA resolved "to establish a Citizens Advisory Council [also referred to as Citizens Advisory Committee] (the 'CAC') to advise the RTA board of directors on the development of its regional master transit plan, on coordinating transit service between providers, including plans for specialized services, and on other matters concerning public transportation in the region as requested by the board" (RTA of Southeastern Michigan, Res. No. 5). Additionally, the RTA called for a "balanced membership" with the CAC being comprised of "users of public transportation, senior citizens and people with disabilities, business, labor, community and faith-based organizations" (RTA Res. No. 5, 2013). This action indicated that the newly instated RTA's goal was to have representative public involvement in the decision-making process. This section examines

whether this advisory committee, comprised of members of the general public representing transit users across the Detroit metropolitan region, is included, effective, and influential in the transit policy process. In so doing, I connect these findings to the theoretical assumptions within the equity planning field, adding to the body of literature advancing the connection between equitable transit systems and effective citizen participation.

In order to examine this premise, I employed a mixed-methods design, heavily relying on qualitative primary data to uncover perceptions and attitudes of members of the Citizens Advisory Committee, and the operations of the CAC in its regular meetings. A two-pronged approach, combining a Likert-type survey and direct observation, was used to collect relevant data regarding the level and type of citizen participation. The CAC is a non-random population sample as this research does not seek to be generalizable to an overall population, and is therefore not representative of the Detroit metropolitan region. There are 50 members on the CAC, each serving a one-year term beginning in January and ending in December of each calendar year. They represent various local civic organizations, non-profit groups, transit advocacy organizations, as well as the academic community within the Detroit region. Because the goal of this research is to gain greater insight into the individual perspectives of the members of the CAC, the sample size did not need to be large, as survey results are not used to generalize to any greater populations. Based on monthly attendance at open and public CAC meetings and positive responses and support for this research project, 11 responses to the survey were collected. These survey results are coupled with observation of public meetings, so that there is greater potential to draw meaningful conclusions as information

gathered from the surveys can be assessed against points made and processes observed at these public meetings. This secondary method of direct observation of both CAC and RTA meetings allows for a greater amount of information regarding group dynamics, context, impressions, and tone of conversations during discussions. There are 10 members on the RTA board who were not surveyed. Although additional research could be conducted to understand board members' perceptions of citizen participation, this project seeks to uncover the perceived level of power that engaged citizens feel they have in the decision-making process, rather than those who are already in positions of power.

The CAC was chosen as a research subject for several reasons: its newness, its mandate, and its relationship with the RTA. Based on initial discussions with CAC members in summer 2014 and the opportune timing of this project (the CAC completed its first term in December 2014), there was sufficient support for and interest in the project to proceed. A newly formed body, the CAC does not carry institutional baggage of past failed transit proposals (Nelles, 2012). Although it is possible and likely that some of the CAC members will remember or have participated in past transit proposals and processes, the CAC has a unique ability to negotiate a new relationship to the recently formed RTA. For example, if members feel that they do not have adequate representation or ability to express concerns over transit proposals, they are able to ask and advocate for changes, as no history or conventions exist to dictate otherwise. However, its mandate is explicit in its mission of advising the RTA based on the desires of the citizenry (Public Act 387, 124.546, Sec. 6.19, 2012). The institutionalized relationship means that not only does the CAC have legal standing, but also the responsibility to advise the RTA on matters pertaining to transportation. Additionally, the RTA was legally mandated to be

deliberate in searching for a comprehensive group of individuals, from a wide range of populations across the Detroit Metropolitan Region: 20 percent of the CAC needed to be senior citizens and persons with disabilities, and 40 percent of the CAC needed to be individuals representing “business, labor, community, and faith-based organizations” (Public Act 387, 124.546, Sec. 6.19, 2012). The RTA was also required to seek out various regional representation from across the counties. Functionally, the CAC created several sub-committees to divide this work: Policy Committee, Community Engagement Committee, and the Seniors and ADA Committee. As the RTA seeks to develop and implement a regional transit master plan, they publicly acknowledge that citizen participation, through the CAC, is necessary to formulate effective plans.

Survey Instrument

An online survey, hosted on the University of Windsor Fluid Survey platform, was provided to members of the CAC to assess members’ level of involvement and their perceptions of influence in the policy process (see Appendix A). Questions surrounding the committee's perceived versus actual role in the planning process, attitudes and perceptions of the structure of the committee and whether their constituencies’ and the public’s priorities and needs are being incorporated into final transit plans were formulated into a Likert-type scale. The participants were asked these questions in order to gauge their level of involvement and influence in the transit policy process. They were also asked a series of demographic questions to collect basic information on the composition of the Citizens Advisory Committee, in order to compare representativeness against the general population of the Detroit region. This included questions regarding characteristics such as gender, age, employment sector, and geographic location they

represent. This general demographic information was collected to understand the composition of the Council. Due to the small sample size and number of responses, I did not include an isolated presentation of this information in the findings section. Rather, I incorporated the responses in the analysis to draw meaningful conclusions in conjunction with observational data.

Direct Observation Data

Secondly, for approximately four months between September 2014 and December 2014, I observed the regular monthly public CAC meetings, as well as the public RTA Board meetings to assess how these bodies discussed salient issues and group dynamics. By engaging in naturalistic observation of these open public meetings, I was able to observe the often undocumented features of meetings that are not recorded in public meeting minutes. I endeavoured to gain further insight into the CAC's group dynamics, particularly whether and how they function effectively to identify and enact their goals for public transportation policy. Specifically, at RTA board meetings, I examined the level of citizen participation from both the general public and CAC members to gain a better understanding of the form and effectiveness of citizen participation within these two institutional structures. No direct quotations are used from these observations, but the tone and contours of general discussions and committee and board operations are incorporated into the final analysis.

Limitations

Due to the small sample size and scope of the project, any conclusions drawn are limited to the public transportation sector in Detroit, during a specific time period, and for

a specific group of people. However, this does not exclude these conclusions from being useful. As part of a larger theory that seeks to connect abstract concepts of equity within urban planning to pragmatic processes within urban environments, an updated, relevant case study on how specific governmental institutions (the RTA and CAC) within a specific geographic context (Detroit) handle citizen participation is useful in bridging some of this gap. This research is not meant to stand alone; rather, alongside other case studies of groups in different sectors and contexts, a more nuanced understanding of equity and citizen participation will emerge.

Without a research collaborator with formal transportation modeling knowledge, this project became an exploration of the relationship between urban planning and community involvement within the city of Detroit, rather than a comprehensive assessment of the transit system's empirical level of equity. This is important to note because several academics have noted the difficulty in modeling equitable transit systems to determine transportation needs without input from residents (Karner and Niemeier, 2013; Mishra and Welch, 2013). In creating a deeper understanding of effective citizen participation for this specific group (the CAC), this research hypothesizes that the way in which equity occurs, is through the citizenry voicing their needs and subsequently, having them met via the social services sector. For the people of Detroit, understanding how their transportation needs can be met in an empirical sense is important. However knowing that they have an influential voice in the planning process is just as critical. This research focused on uncovering the latter.

Analysis

To answer the research question the discussion of the observational and survey data are filtered into several categories. Firstly, I identify the role, structure, and organization of the CAC to help determine its level of influence in the transit decision-making process. Secondly, the CAC's relationship to the RTA Board, both perceived and actual, is of paramount importance in determining the shaping of transit planning in the region. Thirdly, the CAC's specific resolutions, actions, and input into the RTA Board's planning process, mainly through policy recommendations, is examined. In sum, these different factors reveal that the CAC has a moderate, yet limited level of involvement and impact on the transit planning process. Survey answers, as well as topical discussion at both RTA Board meetings and CAC meetings reveal the extent that regional issues dominate the discussion, whereas race or income levels were not even mentioned once. This revelation is substantial when thinking about the *type* of citizen participation in transit decision-making, as those who are most disadvantaged are seemingly excluded from the realm of discussion. Although it is impossible to make wider generalizations regarding the impact this involvement has on levels of equity across the Detroit Metropolitan Region, it can suffice to say that the formal CAC, although enthusiastic and knowledgeable, lacks substantial power within the rigidity of the bureaucratic structure to address the broader systemic socioeconomic conditions that have produced inequity in transit and urban mobility in the Detroit region.

Role of the CAC

The role of the CAC was of preeminent importance for both RTA Board and the CAC. Being in the first year of operation, the CAC needed to determine its form and

function in order to be most effective in its overall mandate. It is clear that the bare minimum, federally mandated provision of some type of committee comprised of citizens to represent the public was not desired by the CAC. This was demonstrated through the self-reflective discussions at both the CAC and RTA levels surrounding meeting procedures, organization, and overarching role in the community. Firstly, the composition and capacity of the CAC at initially 50 members was seen by the RTA to embody the larger population's desires. The process of selection to the CAC is through an appointment process vetted through the RTA Board. Members of the RTA Board Selection subcommittee contacted county politicians, policymakers, and more prominent leaders of local organizations in order to ensure the CAC included members according to the aforementioned requirements. Although this format is efficient in ensuring geographic representation alongside proper and diverse qualifications being represented on the committee, it has the potential to bar other citizens who may have valuable input and experiences. Survey responses confirm that this may be the case. While survey participants felt that they had the requisite technical skills to participate in transit decision-making, they were slightly less positive about agreeing that the committee represented the Detroit area at large.² When seeing the CAC as an extension of the public, providing a degree of citizen representation to the RTA board, it is important to consider *who* that public is. The survey results indicate that the CAC is comprised of a majority white, highly educated population with over 80% having obtained a postgraduate degree. While I did not ask the CAC members in which part of the Detroit metro region they resided to prevent any potential personally identifying information from being included, this could have been useful to draw conclusions regarding the

² Survey question, page 3 and 4.

committee's correlation with the spatial mismatch hypothesis. Even without this information, knowing the history of Detroit, it can be assumed that a highly educated, majority white group of people do not represent the low income, racially segregated populations within the region that are typically located in Detroit and who have the least access to affordable and effective public transit. It would naturally follow that the RTA's recruitment process of contacting prominent community members through county policymakers would produce this non-representative group of people, as they did not reach out beyond formal avenues to achieve their quota. Without a specific legislative requirement to include low-income, racial minorities, there wasn't a deliberate effort to reach out to these populations. Although there was only limited demographic information collected in the survey, making the impact on transit equity difficult to determine, it is clear that the RTA did not seek out underrepresented transit-dependent groups in non-traditional ways to participate within the CAC.

In contrast, the observational data revealed that there was slightly more diversity of people on the CAC than the survey data indicates. This was due to the fact that accessibility was often a topic of discussion and a concern for many CAC members.³ For example, there were several individuals who had a physical disability and required accommodation to fully participate as a CAC member. Their presence could be correlated with a more active Seniors and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Committee who produced a comprehensive and highly praised ADA Standards of Practise document on the subject of accessibility that the Board valued and would adopt into their policy considerations. However, the question of whether the CAC is able to meet the needs of

³ Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, September 22nd, 2014, 4:00pm to 6:00 pm; p2.

Detroit's isolated low-income population is an altogether different challenge that the CAC does not obviously address.

Many CAC members saw their role as being representative and were involved due to their other areas of community involvement. They noted how they first got involved:

“[I] saw an application and decided I had something to offer on the matter (... [background] in urban planning, worked at the MPO, worked on other regional and city issues).”

“[Through] community activities.”

“Our organization has always been involved in seniors and AWD transit issues. I applied to the CAC to make sure that seniors and AWD needs/views were heard.”

“Saw invitation and wanted to represent the needs of young families via my organization.”

“Through my organization, which deals with regional revitalization through public-private partnership.”⁴

These responses are corroborated with high levels of additional community involvement, with 73 percent of CAC members dedicating at least 2 hours a week to other volunteering commitments, and 50 percent of that subset committing more than 8 hours a week. When asked their motivation for being a member of the CAC, most participants responded by noting their desire for an effective regional system. For example, one participant felt that this was the “opportune time to get transit ‘right’ in our region with more progressive planning and investment.”⁵ Additionally, many respondents connected this regional motivation to equity. Others commented:

“Good transit benefits a region socially, economically, health-wise, and personally. Lack of good transit has hampered the personal lives of many Southeast Michigan residents and hobbled the economy, worsened area health, and trapped many residents in a cycle of poverty, hopelessness, and anger.”

⁴ Survey, page 7.

⁵ Survey question, page 7.

“[T]ransit for all citizens of the region that is affordable, safe, clean, reliable, on time, and available to all citizens.”

“Transportation is crucial to quality of life. This is especially true for seniors and AWD who are not able to drive and depend on transportation for all of their needs. A coordinated regional transportation system will give everyone access to reliable, and affordable transportation.”

“To ensure transit planning works with and enhances non-motorized transportation infrastructure and planning.”

“Improving transit & mobility options in Southeast Michigan.”

“To foster a better Southeast Michigan region, one that is more inclusive and one my son wants to stay in when he gets older.”⁶

It is clear that CAC members saw their role as being motivated by the desire to improve transit across the entire Southeastern Michigan region by being representatives of the larger population to the RTA Board.

Central to this self-reflection was the CAC’s discussions and policy recommendations regarding the RTA’s relationship to the public. This means the level of community engagement, the amount of public involvement, and the education of transit developments for which the RTA is responsible. For instance, some Board Members saw the CAC as an extension of the public.⁷ Therefore, the CAC’s inherent purpose is seen as representing the public interest, which accomplishes the RTA Board’s due diligence to engage the public through actively communicating with the committee.⁸ It was noted that the CAC’s role was advisory, while also representative of the broader communities.⁹ By contrast, the CAC saw it as their role to recommend effective community engagement

⁶ Survey, page 7.

⁷ Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, November 17th, 2014, 4:00 – 6:00 pm; p3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, October 15, 2014.

policy to the Board. This, in turn, would help the RTA be generally more effective, as they would be, in theory, crafting policies that would be more representative of the public's desires. These discussions about community engagement revealed that many members felt that it was in their mandate to help the Board better engage with the community, not just simply be the community for the Board to engage with. Some members expressed the need to represent people who didn't have a voice in transit decisions, recognizing that intellectual ability and surrounding circumstances may prevent them from participating in the way that CAC members were able to.¹⁰ These sentiments were debated often over the course of the months of observed meetings, pointing to the dynamic and evolving nature of the CAC's relationship to the RTA Board and the wider community.

During the period of observation, the CAC's first term was ending, and a new term was beginning for 2015. As the body responsible for appointing the CAC, the RTA Board discussed at length its composition, reflecting on its successes and challenges. This process seemed fairly open, as one Board Member on the ad hoc Selection Committee noted that the CAC provided valuable input because any changes would affect them first and foremost.¹¹ Therefore, the seeking of input into how the CAC's composition could be altered to be a more effective advisory committee represented a type of power-sharing that would potentially allow for a larger amount and more substantial public involvement into the decision-making process. For instance, one of the factors that many CAC members disliked was the size of the committee. They felt that 50 people was slightly

¹⁰ Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, November 17th, 2014, 4:00 – 6:00 pm.

¹¹ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, October 15, 2014; p2.

unwieldy, and that 35 people would be enough for representation of different demographics, but small enough to be efficient. By allowing the CAC to shape their size and composition, it gives them more power to participate in a way that they deem most effective.

In combination with this fact, various members of the Board reiterated that they wanted to give all interested and qualified individuals the opportunity to apply while balancing the need for regional representation.¹² The application process was comprised of a short form asking for credentials and motivations for being on the committee. This form was then vetted by several RTA board members, who were then tasked with ensuring federal regulations were balanced with diverse representation and qualifications. It was both a competitive, yet flexible process; the RTA wanted to ensure the right people who wanted to be there were allowed to participate, thus they chose to not be limited by a set number, but strived for a general target. Importance was placed on engaging the counties' political decision-makers, by asking them to encourage individuals with the qualifications and desire to apply.¹³ It was noted that certain groups were underrepresented: regular transit users, youth, and the business community.¹⁴ This minor observation is actually a very critical one when considering equity. When thinking about creating an equitable transit system that connects transit dependent people to dispersed employment, it is clear that the substantive involvement of those individuals has not been actively pursued, nor has their participation been fostered. In contrast, survey results

¹² Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, December 17th, 2014; p4.

¹³ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, October 15, 2014; p4.

¹⁴ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, October 15, 2014; p5.

indicated that changes to transit plans *do* affect the members of the CAC, with every participant responding in agreement or in strong agreement with this statement.¹⁵ This would imply that many of the CAC members are, in fact, transit riders. Perhaps they are not transit dependent, but are nonetheless invested in the future of transit in the region for their own use. While developing a regionally connecting transit system between dispersed neighbourhoods and various employment centres is a critical component of meeting equity requirements, it is also true that a regional interests could dominate and lead to a transit system that does not meet the needs of low-income, geographically isolated individuals. However, the desire for regional cooperation is encouraging, as past underlying tensions have led to unequal opportunities across the region. By including suburban voices, there is potential to positively impact the current poorly functioning transit system by regionalizing user input and perhaps even funding sources and allocation.

Relationship between CAC and RTA Board

The relationship between the CAC and RTA Board was observed as being generally cooperative, as both bodies expressed the intention to be approachable and responsive to one another in order to create effective transit policies. This was observed through the tone and frequency of interactions between Board and CAC members, as well as the level of communication and involvement that CAC members feel that they have at the RTA Board level. Survey respondents were generally in agreement that the CAC's contributions are valued by the RTA.¹⁶ Relatedly, they are slightly less confident that

¹⁵ Survey Question, page 3.

¹⁶ Survey question, page 5.

their interactions with RTA Board members and city officials are productive, indicating a slight disconnect in the working relationship between these various regional and municipal institutions. Overall, the survey responses in conjunction with the observational data indicate a constructive relationship that is optimistic about the future, despite a few setbacks and missteps in the CAC's first year of operation.

During the period of observation, the RTA introduced a new Chief Executive Officer, who is the lead staff member responsible for “carrying out the [Regional Transit] Authority’s mission, for the planning, coordination, development and operations of all RTA efficient local and regional services” (Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan, 2015). Michael Ford was the former CEO of Ann Arbor Transit Authority, and was observed as being enthusiastic and proactive in his first months on the job with the RTA. Ford attended the three CAC meetings upon starting in his position as CEO (October, November, and December) and he noted on several occasions his appreciation for all of their hard work. His presence was well-received by the CAC members, which he reciprocated by communicating a desire for a strong working relationship with the committee, citing public engagement as one of his top priorities.¹⁷ On other occasions, several other RTA Board members attended CAC meetings and were able to directly communicate on specific items, for example, CAC transition applications and questions regarding legal ramifications of transit providers’ alteration of services.¹⁸ Although the CAC is only in its first year of operation, the RTA’s effort to lay a foundation of good communication is clear, even if is generally on their terms with room for improvement.

¹⁷ Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, October 27th, 4:00 – 6:00 pm; p2; Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, December 15th, 4:00 - 6:00 pm; p1.

¹⁸ Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, October 27th, 4:00 – 6:00 pm; p2.

One of the ways that the RTA Board sought to engage the CAC was through a request to provide recommendations of goals for the newly hired CEO in his first year of office. The CAC responded with a robust list of recommendations:

- Effective Coordination between RTA Board, Committees, and Staff;
- Pro-Active External Communications;
- Comprehensive Public Engagement in RTA Decision-Making;
- Robust and Visionary Transit Planning; and
- Transit Service Improvement Through Enhanced Coordination.¹⁹

These goals reveal the CAC's desire for substantial progress in the areas of communication and equity to involve "traditional and new audiences ... including current riders, seniors, people with disabilities, disadvantaged populations, and underserved parts of the region" in the conversation.²⁰ Moreover, the creation of these goals reveals a heightened level of trust between the RTA and CAC, as in this instance, the latter is given permission to shape the actions of the RTA leadership.

At the Board level, it is clear that various members of the CAC endeavoured to be present and communicate at formal Board meetings, to which there was a mixed reception. For example, several members of the CAC expressed their frustration at the disallowance of public comment on specific issues, even from members of the CAC.²¹ On multiple occasions, members of the CAC discussed this frustration at the CAC meetings, noting that the lack of opportunity for real public comment and interaction at RTA Board meetings was counterproductive to establishing a strong relationship with the general public.²² This frustration was communicated to the RTA Board. In one specific

¹⁹ CAC Document: "Draft Recommendations for RTA: Goals for the RTA CEO's First 12 Months."

²⁰ CAC Document: "Draft Recommendations for RTA: Goals for the RTA CEO's First 12 Months."

²¹ Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, October 27th, 4:00 – 6:00 pm; p4.

²² Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, October 27th, 4:00 – 6:00 pm; p4.

instance, the RTA's relatively hasty and opaque decision regarding the Gratiot Corridor Alternative was an object of concern by many members of the public, other stakeholder groups, and even RTA Board members themselves.²³ The lack of public notice and availability of documents contributed to low levels of public input, which was deemed as unacceptable and disappointing to certain Board members who did not feel that the RTA Board did its due diligence in engaging the public on this particular decision. Since then, the RTA Board passed a Public Comment Policy that formally included the form and parameters of a public comment session, which is now conducted at the beginning of Board meetings. The impact of this policy change is unclear in determining whether this structured public comment period with enhance or stifle participation.

Conversely, the RTA Board invited several presentations by CAC members over the couple of months of observation, which were highly praised and well received by the Board members. The ADA Standards of Practice document, completed by the CAC's Seniors and ADA Committee, was presented by a CAC member, providing a comprehensive guidebook on accessibility within public transportation.²⁴ Several Board members thanked him for his work on behalf of the CAC, and had meaningful discussion surrounding the impact and importance of this document on future Board decisions.²⁵ Notably, the CAC is leading the RTA in the construction of progressive and inclusive policies that seek to make transit more accessible for people with disabilities in the region. At the last Board meeting I attended in December 2014, the CAC Chair presented

²³ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, October 15, 2014; p1.

²⁴ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, December 17th, 2014; p3.

²⁵ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, December 17th, 2014; p3-4.

a year-end review of the CAC's activities, noting their accomplishments and areas of improvement.²⁶ Having achieved success in meeting procedures and decorum, he noted that increased RTA support would be an area of improvement for the CAC's second year of operation. Again, this presentation was appreciated and well-received by the RTA Board.

It is clear that when given opportunities to formally participate in RTA Board meetings, the CAC's contributions are valued and considered. The relationship with the RTA Board delineated power into the hands of the RTA, granting the latter with the ability to determine when and how the CAC and general public could participate. Bureaucratic mechanisms, meeting procedures, and habitual lack of providing public notice and materials for discussion items limited informal and timely public involvement. Overall, the CAC was open and honest with the RTA. Survey results indicate that CAC members were generally positive and optimistic that their input was valued and sought to communicate it both formally and informally with the RTA wherever possible. This level of openness was reciprocated, but generally only through formal, pre-determined mechanisms, as the RTA determined the parameters of the relationship.

CAC policy recommendations

The area of policy drafting and recommendations is perhaps the one that reveals the most about the CAC's desired versus actual level of participation. Through observation and survey results, it is evident that members of the CAC feel that they are qualified to be more deeply engaged in policy formulation, and that they are empowered to express thoughts and opinions on policy freely at CAC meetings. For example, 91

²⁶ CAC Presentation at Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, December 17th, 2014; Powerpoint document.

percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had the “appropriate technical skills that relate to transit decision-making.”²⁷ In addition to this, when asked what they felt was their biggest achievement in the first year of the CAC’s operation, 55 percent noted some aspect of the creation of policy recommendations. Another 36 percent felt that the creation of the CAC’s structure, organization and regular meetings times were the biggest success. Both of these responses indicate that *action* was at the forefront of what they considered a success.

At the same time, many members responded that they were significantly less confident that they have sufficient involvement in the construction of basic transit plans overall.²⁸ Although there was not a follow-up question to further extrapolate why CAC responded in this way. This is encapsulated in this survey respondent’s comment:

Establishing a sense of trust between our group and members of the RTA board/executive staff [was the biggest area of achievement this year]. Without credible standing with those individuals our work would not have any effect on policy decisions. They come to us and trust our work, which I hope continues and grows stronger.²⁹

This answer reveals a perceived disconnect or lack of trust in the relationship between the CAC and the RTA. It points to the perceived need for the CAC to establish and prove itself by being technically qualified, while not realizing that the experience of transit riders is already valuable, despite its inability to be communicated via formal RTA channels. Overall, the several policy recommendations created by the CAC revealed the committee’s enthusiasm and ability in this area, but without receptivity from the RTA Board, it is unclear if these policies will be incorporated into formal RTA transit decisions.

²⁷ Survey, page 3.

²⁸ Survey, page 4.

²⁹ Survey, page 7.

Generally, all three subcommittees were active and well-regarded by their peers. In particular, the Policy Committee was often commended for its ability to render technical planning information understandable for the rest of the CAC committee. This respect was demonstrated through their various recommendations, due to the quality, tone, and intention of their discussions surrounding different policy issues. For example, when discussing the Woodward Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Locally Preferred Alternative policy recommendation that focused on the alignment of bus rapid transit alongside the M-1 rail south of Grand Boulevard, the CAC judiciously debated the technical and political possibilities of their recommendation. One member asked the Policy Committee whether the draft recommendation was feasible. Other members answered that the CAC is not being asked to determine technical feasibility, in terms of transportation engineering, but rather deciding if it is a *good* decision for the citizens of the metropolitan Detroit region. Several members commented on the efficiency of the recommended policy, achieved by modeling it after other multi-modal transit lines in other cities, with one person noting that Detroiters deserve high quality transit options as well.³⁰ In the end, the policy recommendation was passed unanimously. This discussion underscores the way that even formally organized and active citizens struggle with advocating for certain policies, due to technical issues. By several members reiterating that this was a political decision, and that it is not the CAC's responsibility to concern themselves about technical transportation planning, it revealed the perennial debate between the technical and the political; in order to achieve systems that represent true public desire, the former must come after the latter.

³⁰ Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, November 17th, 2014, 4:00 – 6:00 pm; p4.

One theme that dominated policy recommendations at both the CAC and RTA levels was regional transit. The RTA Board formally considered this topic and during the period of observation entertained a formal Request For Proposal (RFP) to create a Regional Master Transit Plan. However, due to a lack of transparency in previous RFP processes, certain concerns were vocalized by members of the public. One concern centered on the need for greater service enhancement to better service certain neighbourhoods. Additionally, and more importantly, it was noted that the RTA needed to take this opportunity to develop a plan centered on community and stakeholder involvement, instead of involvement in the process being a side note. Although the formal RTA has the authority to drive the policy-making of regional transit in the region, the CAC was very proactive in adopting several policy recommendations to influence their decision to improve transit in the region.³¹ Their recommendation enumerated these values: reliability; affordability; accessibility; efficiency; equity; regional revitalization; safety; and customer orientation. It is clear that in word and in action, the CAC positioned themselves to influence the decision regarding the Regional Transportation Master Plan, even if the impact of their efforts remains unclear and they are only seen as fulfilling an advisory role.

Another policy recommendation put forward by the Community Engagement Committee was “Enhancing the Effectiveness of Public Involvement in Public Transit Decision Making and Planning” to assist the RTA Board in the creation of a Public Involvement Plan for the people of Southeast Michigan. The discussion surrounding this document continued for several meetings, as CAC members made revisions to make the

³¹ CAC Document: “Values for Regional Transit”; CAC Document: “Vision and Objectives for Regional Transit.”

document more useful for the RTA Board. For example, one conversation centered around the articulation of examples, underscoring the need to explain not just that the RTA *should* employ meaningful participation techniques, but also that it would be pertinent to include *how* they could achieve this. It is noted that the committee began with the federal Department of Transportation's five step guideline, but that after substantially adding to it, this recommendation requires the RTA to do much more than what the law requires. Additionally, it was suggested on several occasions that adding a portion on public education in transit affairs would be useful, citing the lack of transit culture in Southeast Michigan as contributing to a small scope of knowledge.³² Members thought that the public did not always have the wherewithal to provide feedback on transit plans they do not understand, highlighting the need for accommodation of low income, undereducated populations. It was acknowledged that the CAC would play a critical role in assisting the Board in connecting with the wider community, as they help them construct an engagement employing a bottom-up grassroots approach.³³

One thing that the RTA Board and CAC had in common was the need for public involvement in their policy decisions. The re-creation of the RTA website was central to this philosophy, as both the staff and Board members believed that this would communicate their commitment to serving the public by having an easily accessible and more transparent mechanism to communicate information.³⁴ The discussion surrounding community engagement was often centered around the simplification of message, as well

³² Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, October 27th, 2014, 4:00 – 6:00 pm p3; Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, November 17th, 2014, 4:00 – 6:00 pm ; p4.

³³ Notes from Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda, University of Michigan Detroit Center, Monday, November 17th, 2014, 4:00 – 6:00 pm ; p4.

³⁴ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, December 17th, 2014; p3.

as measuring user satisfaction.³⁵ In the Gratiot Corridor Alternative Analysis, the most contentious issue in the process was when board members debated whether there was enough public involvement in the overall RFP process, as some board members did not feel that the public was adequately included. When one board member pressed the issue, calling into question the due diligence of the board on this matter, another board member responded by noting that part of the RTA's role was to balance the desire for public participation with the integrity of the business proposal process.³⁶ This revealed the RTA's focus on its responsibility to consider the needs of the business community as a stakeholder in the transit-decision making process. In addition to this, it was noted that if the public doesn't give feedback, then they are free to move ahead. Members of the public did not sympathize with this comment and communicated (through frustrated interruption in the meeting audience) that it is not acceptable for the RTA to assume that no feedback is good feedback. This policy decision at the RTA Board is significant, as it sharply contrasted with not only the values of the CAC, but was also other members of the public, who noted at later meetings that the RFP selection was too hasty and not transparent.³⁷ Overall, there was a slight disconnect in the verbiage of both groups: the CAC desired broad-based, grassroots community engagement, whereas the RTA was ambivalent about the type of public involvement and seemed inexperienced in engaging with the wider community.

³⁵ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, December 17th, 2014; p3.

³⁶ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, October 15th, 2014; p4.

³⁷ Notes from Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan Board of Directors Meeting on Wednesday, October 15th, 2014; p1.

Power of the CAC in transit planning process

Unsurprisingly, when considering the dynamic role of the CAC, their friendly, yet submissive relationship to the RTA Board, citizen participation to construct an effective transit system is limited. Many members spoke of the desire for transit plans to be centered on residents' needs, not having to sell plans to the public after they are *fait accompli*. This is connected to the CAC's differing desires to serve, to represent, and to be the public in transit decision-making. Relatedly, only 36% of survey respondents felt that the term 'activist' applied to their position.³⁸ Those who answered 'no' felt that it didn't apply for several reasons: they felt that the term was too negative; they preferred other terms, such as "steward," "advocate," "supporter," as they saw the term as "too agenda-driven," whereas being a CAC member is just part of one's duties as a citizen.³⁹ By contrast, those who responded positively towards seeing their role as an activist did not connect these sentiments with any sort of desire for more 'citizen control,' where the RTA policymakers needed to defer decision-making to those who were affected most by this service (Arnstein, 1969). They still felt it necessary to work alongside the RTA, through the institutional mechanisms of the CAC committee. One CAC member commented:

The CAC provides a good communication channel to decision-makers who may or may not be aware of either the cost of poor transit or what a good transit system looks like. It is a constructive approach to the problems of the region, as opposed to many other less effective, or more violent, methods.⁴⁰

Another member wrote:

Each of us serves as an agent of collaborative change. While we are not an "activist" in the sense of direct lobbying action, we are activists in the sense that we are engaged in policy craft and issue advocacy (related to transit) on behalf of

³⁸ Survey, page 7.

³⁹ Survey, page 7.

⁴⁰ Survey, page 7.

the greater public, whose concerns we attempt to address through our work with the RTA.⁴¹

This comment suggests a desire to work within the RTA's bureaucratic structures on behalf of the greater population. Whether embracing the term 'activist' or seeing it as inapplicable, members of the CAC feel compelled to work with the RTA, even if they do not have final say, nor ability to have more influence in the decision-making process. By not seeing themselves as empowered to be more emphatic, and even forceful, in representing citizens' needs in transit decision-making, there is a potential for a greater disconnect between underrepresented people groups and equity, as the structures do not foster this type of participation.

The survey question that asked members to select the categories that applied to the CAC's relationship to the RTA Board according to Arnstein's (1969) eight rung ladder revealed the most about these power dynamics (See Table 1). Overwhelmingly, over 90% of survey respondents felt that the category of 'Placation' best represented the overall relationship between the two bodies. This category falls into what Arnstein (1969) deems 'degrees of tokenism' where citizens do not have true power, but are given symbolic influence in decision-making structures. The second most common response was 'Consultation' with 64 percent. This category was a rung lower, where citizens are asked for their opinion, but no other mode of participation is taken into account. Thirdly, 55 percent of respondents also selected 'Partnership' which is higher on the rung towards more overall citizen power in decision-making, but is still limited.

In addition to these responses, observation at both CAC and RTA Board meetings confirm these sentiments. Even though the CAC tends to be fairly active and self-assured,

⁴¹ Survey, page 7.

both in self-reflection regarding group structure and policy recommendations, they are limited to making recommendations, not decisions, about what would best meet the public’s needs. Although there are inconsistencies in role and relationship to the RTA, one fact is very evident: the RTA Board holds the power.

As the CAC grows to be more cohesive, and hence, assertive in its relationship with the RTA Board, this has the potential in shifting power balances within the RTA. This would hopefully translate into a relationship of equals, where the RTA would go so far as to defer decisions to the CAC and would feel comfortable voting in this way, knowing it was both

Table 1

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage
Manipulation	2	18%
Therapy	0	0%
Informing	4	36%
Consultation	8	64%
Placation	10	91%
Partnership	6	55%
Delegated Power	0	0%
Citizen Control	0	0%

representative and true to citizens’ desires. However, without the CAC having this overt goal, as evidenced in other groups like the Baltimore Transit Riders Union, the committee may never grow to attain greater influence and power. Even if that were to occur, the CAC would also need to be more obviously representative of low-income, African-American populations, for whom an equitable transit would be most beneficial. As was previously discussed, it is important to note that the selection of CAC members is under the purview of the RTA Board, meaning the CAC does not have a final say in the composition of the committee. Therefore, it is not the final arbiter in deciding whose

voice is needed or missing from the CAC. Despite the CAC's pure intentions, its fight for higher levels of community engagement, and declaration of equity as part of its values in creating a regional transit system, it must work within the constraints outlined and enforced by the RTA.

Implications for equity in public transportation in the Detroit Metropolitan Region

Due to the fact that this research project was not centered on determining overall empirical equity across Southeastern Michigan's transit system, at best, these conclusions can only speculate as to connections between level of citizen participation and equitable transportation systems. With that being said, in determining level and substance of citizen participation in Detroit's RTA decision-making, it sheds light onto how Detroit citizens are and are not engaged and considered in transit decisions.

Firstly, the institutionalization of the CAC is a central factor in determining the level of citizen participation in the transit decision-making process. In many ways, many of the survey responses and observational data corroborate Fainstein's (2010) assessment that formal participation tends to be symbolic rather than determinant or formative in nature, obscuring its true value and power. This is true for the CAC and is evident through their actions, which were largely advisory via policy recommendations. Additionally, when given opportunities to formally participate in RTA proceedings, the CAC's perspective was well-received and considered more seriously. Although the CAC participation was genuine and progressive in nature, it is limited due to the institutional constraints imposed by the RTA. This tension manifested itself several times in meetings when CAC members desired to move beyond the pre-authorized boundaries (for example, expressing concern over the lack of public comment during RTA Board

meetings), but did not have the power to redefine the relationship. As the CAC grows in enthusiasm and clarity of purpose, it is possible that this will become more of a pressing issue if the RTA continues to stifle what CAC members consider meaningful participation. From this assessment, the CAC within the RTA is most akin to Seattle's Consultative Neighbourhood Planning case study, discussed in chapter 3, where citizens are satisfied with the level of participation they are given, but over time grow in skill and influence. At this point in time, both parties expressed optimism in both establishing a strong relationship between the two bodies and in engaging the wider community. Recognizing that this participation is institutionalized is helpful for both parties to know how to navigate the system, while also knowing where it is limiting them.

What is more critical when thinking about what would create an equitable system is determining *who* is participating and *what* they are talking about. Unfortunately, this research did not directly ask survey participants their income levels, nor their geographic representation within CAC, but other indicators shed light onto composition. As was previously mentioned, in answering racial/ethnic identity, 64 percent identified as white, 18 percent African-American, and 18 percent preferred not to answer. The CAC was also highly educated: 100% of respondents had at least a university degree, and 81% held a postgraduate degree. In general, CAC members were highly qualified individuals from around the region. This study is limited in being unable to determine accurate representation of the low-income, geographically segregated Detroit population.

However, this demographic information coupled with the topics of discussion during CAC and RTA Board meetings, or more accurately, the lack of certain topics, reveal a great deal about equity. For example, during all of the observed meetings, there

was never any substantial mention of race or specific geographically underserved neighbourhoods. Focus on regional transit systems dominated discussions, without once mentioning employment disconnect, spatial mismatch, or geographic segregation. The concept of equity was declared to be a value in the CAC's policy recommendation document, and community engagement was discussed at length with the goal of including a wide variety of populations.⁴² This observation can be extrapolated to mean that CAC members were in favour of creating equitable transit systems; however, without the disenfranchised and spatially segregated African-American voice, in conjunction with the agenda being set by the RTA, there is no guarantee that transit plans would meet their mobility needs. It is important to note that although this research only observed a total of seven meetings between both bodies, and it could have missed critical discussions in policy committee meetings, there was still a noticeable lack of this perspective in the primary regular monthly meetings of RTA and CAC.

This observation leads me to several questions: Where were these marginalized individuals? Were they present, but their concerns were downplayed or amalgamated into other discussions? How can a regional transit system adequately support this population's needs in conjunction with business interests, and suburban requests? This research supports Callahan's (2007) assertion that systemic underrepresentation in many spheres of political influence is often linked to spatial inequality within everyday life. Without a clear voice from Detroit's marginalized populations it is hard to know whether their needs are being met. When considering Grengs' (2010) 'modal-mismatch hypothesis' in combination with the new public-private partnership narrative focused on bettering transit to increase business in the region, the investment to construct a transit

⁴² Document: Policy Recommendation "Values for Regional Transportation"

system that would adequately service the low-income, outlying neighbourhoods that have been historically disenfranchised, will most likely not materialize. This is especially the case if those low-income populations are not meaningfully and equally incorporated at the forefront of advocacy to reform transit planning and policy. Future areas of research that focus specifically on this population would be difficult to conduct, but would add a great deal to the pursuit of equity within a transportation system.

In conclusion, it is encouraging that the relationship between the CAC and RTA Board has fostered a moderate amount of participation for citizens to shape transit policy. However, it is unclear how much substantive input they have in the decision-making process since the CAC does not set the agenda for regional transit. Despite this, one encouraging development is the buy-in and cooperation from regional municipalities within the overarching RTA. This has the potential to connect inner-city Detroiters with outlying suburban employment centres. Again, this could also not materialize into any substantial increase in mobility for disenfranchised individuals, as there is a speculated lack of inclusion at the CAC level. Widespread citizen participation, and successful community engagement strategies through the CAC has the potential to adequately include these voices, but the observation of the RTA Board meetings did not show that to be the habit of the RTA Board.

Conclusion

No one can say that I haven't paid my dues in life.

James Robertson, Detroit's 'Walking Man'

When I began this research project, I was unaware of the complexity of employing a multi-disciplinary lens. While the political was always driving the research question, I was unable to proceed without significant input from research in urban planning, geography, and history when considering the many facets of Detroit's transportation system. As such, these findings build from and contribute to several disciplines. Moreover, beyond academia, several audiences can incorporate these findings into their everyday work: CAC members, RTA Board members, transit advocacy organizations in Detroit, neighbourhood improvement groups, faith-based groups, and unorganized citizens. This chapter explores recommendations and areas of future research in order to translate these findings into usable material for transit communities.

As this project examined a certain facet of decision-making within municipal politics, it endeavoured to draw conclusions regarding equity and citizen participation, by determining the level of genuine power the CAC had within the RTA. Unfortunately, as with many areas of social science, it is next to impossible to draw universally and empirically true conclusions, due to the nature of human behaviour. With that being said, this project is able to report findings that add to the body of literature, drawing more connections between equity and citizen participation within public transportation. Although the findings presented in chapter 5 are not generalizable, they are significant to Detroit, to the RTA, to the CAC, and to the residents of Detroit more broadly.

While there are characteristics and challenges that are unique to each region, there are broad similarities in terms of the need for equity and finding ways to include meaningful participation. In balancing the needs of diverse populations and in coordinating the political, economic, and technical aspects of transit planning, different mechanisms exist to represent residents' needs, whether they are citizen or government led. The case studies discussed in chapter 3, highlighting the variance in level of participation across several American cities, bear witness to paths that Detroit's transit population could take. For example, when thinking of the Louisville case study, it illustrates the way that citizens can be 'placated' by giving them a voice in the process, but one that is symbolic and tailored to fit formal processes, instead of substantive. This is the case for Detroit's CAC, as their terms and contributions are controlled by the RTA, decreasing their level of influence and power. Similarly, the 'consultative' level of citizen participation was another self-identified category of the CAC, corresponding to the transit survey in Seattle. Again, although citizens are consulted for their perspective in the planning process, it still obscures their true power. Transit riders unions such as those found in L.A. and Baltimore contrast the other case studies, as they demonstrate how citizen-led groups, outside of government structures can better represent and advocate for the needs of transit dependent individuals. The CAC does not mirror these groups, as it is institutionalized and not obviously representative of these people groups. However, Detroit's transit population as a whole could move in this direction if it saw themselves and their viewpoints as worthwhile.

In sum, these findings reveal the CAC has a restrained amount of overall influence in the RTA's decision-making process. Despite the RTA clearly having the

upper hand in terms of controlling the direction of proposed transit changes, the CAC was able to make some policy recommendations, with the goal of working towards greater public involvement within the RTA. However, without much substantial discussion of racial or income-based inequalities by the CAC or the RTA Board, nor observable representation of Detroit's disenfranchised communities in these bodies, it is unclear whether the CAC's influence will significantly impact the creation of an equitable transit system to benefit these groups. There are some indicators that it could be a part of future CAC undertakings. For example, as the CAC seeks to embolden the RTA to move in the direction of including true, substantive public involvement as the cornerstone of their future transit proposals, there is a chance that engaging with the population of Detroit could include the voices of these geographically isolated minorities, if they have an interest in transit developments and seek out participation mechanisms. However, this is unlikely. With this in mind, the next section suggests areas of research that have the potential to create more connections between equitable transit systems and citizen participation. Furthermore, I make recommendations for the CAC, the RTA, and the Detroit area population in order to stimulate thought and action towards greater equity.

Areas for future research

In the wider field of urban planning, these findings continue to present new questions about how to define and how to measure equity within cities. Specifically, how much does citizen participation matter? Certain voices within the literature advocate for citizen-centered urban planning, meaning that the only path towards equitable societies is through a clear articulation and understanding of the collective public will. Therefore,

allowing the individual and shared experiences of residents to inform and direct policy decisions has the potential to create more equitable public transportation systems.

Although the connection between equity and higher levels of citizen participation has been explored from a philosophical standpoint (Arnstein, 1969; Fainstein, 2010; Lefebvre, 1968), only a limited amount of literature exists ostensibly linking equity with public transportation and citizen participation (Mann, 2001; Grengs, 2002a; Menzer and Harmon, 2004). There are several aspects of this connection that deserve more attention.

The results of this study loosely indicate that certain subsets of Detroiters do not have adequate representation within the Citizens Advisory Committee. In light of this information, understanding why that is that case, in conjunction with how to resource these disenfranchised neighbourhoods in Detroit, and how that can translate into higher and more meaningful levels of participation within public transportation decision-making is critical. Which bureaucratic, ideological, or material structures impede their participation the most? How can they be better resourced to participate? As Callahan (2007) suggests it is largely due to the lack of resources, networks and connections. It may be true that they don't know their experience is valid, and that they need to communicate it in order to change the current system. Within public transportation, the more people who speak about the ineffectiveness of its service, the inaccessibility of stops, or the barriers that exist for a large portion of its ridership, the more likely change will occur. However, if this discourse does not occur, the policies will never deliberately change to benefit the captive, transit dependent riders. More research in the area of how to better resource neighbourhoods, who do not traditionally participate in politics, is needed in order to examine the connection between equity and citizen participation.

Additionally, this study is relevant to emerging technology that has the potential to collect and aggregate large amounts of public opinion data electronically, saving planners and decision-makers time and money. Although it is true that now, more than ever, citizens have the ability to express political opinions and have them reach a wide audience, creating structured, meaningful participation mechanisms to collect citizen participation without obscuring or misrepresenting the residents' voice, is still somewhat unexplored. Brabham (2012) examined how technology has the potential to make participation more efficient, such that planners can get the direct and exact answers that they want with limited resources. However, this shift towards efficiency tends to favour bureaucratic and business interests. With this potential pitfall in mind, discovering how planners can make use of technology as a tool to enable citizen participation, to simplify the process and reach groups traditionally underrepresented in policy considerations and processes (i.e., youth) has the potential to drastically increase substantive participation. I would agree with Wood's (2014) notion:

Social media outlets have already proven their ability to connect individuals and demographics not traditionally associated with political activism. The ways in which cities might use social media tools to bring residents, particularly those non-traditional political participants, into the planning process are bound to grow in number and complexity over the next few years.

This is especially true with public transportation planning as mapping technologies and social media tools have only grown in significance and have the power to ameliorate the circumstances of many low-income populations. More research on how to resource disenfranchised neighbourhoods with new technology will be critical for equity planners.

Additionally, it is necessary to measure how increased and broad-based participation fundamentally impacts the political process within public transportation

planning and delivery. Therefore, cross-examining this research with empirical levels of equity (i.e., access to transit services, frequency of service, distance and time of travel) between different classes, races, and geographic areas will benefit political theorists, urban planners, and citizen activists. In this case, producing a comprehensive analysis of Detroit's regional transit system would significantly bolster much of these findings. With only knowing cursory and anecdotal levels of accessibility and mobility in Detroit, I can only speculate as to how this citizen participation is impacting the overall decision-making process. A more comprehensive analysis of service gaps between neighbourhoods and employment centres would be useful in bolstering residents' experiences, as planners would have quantitative data alongside the qualitative and be more capable of understanding the changes that are required to make the system more equitable.

When it comes to Detroit, an important consideration is which approach to transit equity is most valuable to planners. Building from Grengs' (2010) 'modal mismatch' hypothesis, a reconceptualization of the spatial mismatch hypothesis, it is acknowledged that accessibility is so low for various Detroit neighbourhoods due to nonexistent transit infrastructure, the only way to solve chronic mobility issues is through increasing access to automobiles for low-income individuals. In contrast, this research sought to understand how equity could be better achieved through examining citizen participation within an institutionalized bureaucratic structure. My findings do not in fact contradict Grengs, but rather provide a nuanced picture of the region. As some individuals (i.e. CAC members) are passionate about building and upgrading transit to better connect neighbourhoods to various employment centres, other community activists could be working to both

understand and grow accessibility for car shares, microtransit, and private automobile ownership. Rather than having to choose one travel mode or the other, low-income transit dependents will instead have a wide variety of options, with the potential of increasing their mobility several times over.

In many ways, the conclusion that acquiring the use of a car is the only way to remedy these discrepancies, both frees and constrains policymakers. On the one hand, as Grengs' (2010) research overtly suggests, they could be made to believe that no amount of investment will matter in bridging transportation gaps for low-income, racial minorities. On the other hand, policymakers may be inspired to devise unique and creative solutions to address transportation gaps. My research suggests that public transportation is still on the agenda for Southeastern Michigan, as both the CAC and RTA work on building a system that will benefit the region. However, the impact on low-income segregated neighbourhoods is not entirely clear. Therefore, an exploration of citizen participation in creating innovative strategies that make cars and car shares more available in addition to transit services only adds to creating an equitable system if that is an identified need from the residents themselves. In addition to this, researching how equity is measured between different modes of transportation, to see if it meets the needs of citizens it is intended for is crucial. The next step would be to seek to understand residents' needs through citizen participation mechanisms, endeavouring to create a system that addresses these needs through the mode that fits them best. Although Grengs' findings point to the comprehensive necessity of automobiles, his research uses 2000 census data, which should be necessarily updated in order to account for the new developments in Southeastern Michigan. With recent transit investments in Detroit and

surrounding suburbs, heightened levels of cooperation through the Regional Transit Authority, and growth in the central business district, regional transit may in fact play a greater role than it did five years ago.

Recommendations

Firstly, although many of the CAC members do not consider themselves activists for a variety of reasons (see chapter 5), perhaps if their position were understood to be more an agent of social and political change, they would be more empowered in this regard. Departing from the majority of survey answers regarding the term ‘activist,’ one CAC member expressed it as such:

Each of us serves as an agent of collaborative change. While we are not an "activist" in the sense of direct lobbying action, we are activists in the sense that we are engaged in policy craft and issue advocacy (related to transit) on behalf of the greater public, whose concerns we attempt to address through our work with the RTA.

If this understanding permeated the rest of the group, they could potentially attain greater responsibility and power with the RTA due to their emboldened position. Having laid the foundation for conducting effective meetings in their first year of operation, the CAC was able to build a relationship with the RTA Board and write several policy recommendations in 2014. With this experience, perhaps the CAC can begin to request more power, moving towards a partnership with the RTA, rather than continue to exist as a subordinate committee.

The recommendations for the RTA are twofold: create and employ a comprehensive public engagement plan that takes direction from the CAC, and broaden the terms of participation to better include a variety of people groups within the CAC. The issue of community engagement is clearly on the agenda for both the CAC and, more

importantly, the RTA. However, it is clear that the CAC has a more neighbourhood- and rider-centered focus. As such, RTA Board members and planners should listen to the CAC and let them drive the public engagement portions of the RTA's work. This way, there is more opportunity for genuine participation, where the RTA is actually responsive to the needs of the community, rather than presenting transit plans that appear to be or actually are a *fait accompli*. In addition to this, RTA Board members can continually strive to not just make information available to the public, but to build an open relationship with transit riders, so that, not only do they know their sentiments regarding proposed service changes, but their perspectives and experiences are substantively incorporated into the plans. This relationship building is not easily come by, and the RTA and CAC must be committed to long-term community engagement as the foundation for their actions. This recommendation is especially directed at RTA Board members, who have many considerations in approving transit plans, but need to remember the real, systemic challenges that many riders across the region face on a daily basis. Additionally, although it was stated by an RTA Board member that there is a need to ensure representation from a variety of people groups across the region, the CAC Selection Committee must broaden its search and expand the parameters to appoint 'non-traditional' members who do not have obvious qualifications, such as a background in transit planning.

Lastly, citizens need to be encouraged to more boldly and directly advocate for their neighbourhoods and for themselves. Although it is quite possible that this thesis will have minimal impact in Detroit and among Detroiters, CAC members will find it useful for better understanding their pivotal role in both advocating for these disenfranchised

groups, while also empowering them to speak loudly and participate more regularly and more dynamically. The people of Detroit, especially the regular transit riders who urgently need transit to be a viable mode of transportation, need to be empowered to see themselves as arbiters of their own destiny. Using other organized groups as models, such as the Baltimore Transit Riders Union or the Los Angeles Bus Riders Union, residents have the ability to become educated about the current transit system, set transit priorities, and advocate through shared experience in this time of dynamic change. By seeing themselves as a critical component in the political process, they are able to build partnerships with other groups, and mobilize residents of various neighbourhoods towards the creation of an equitable transit system for years to come.

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Appendix A - Survey

Please answer the following questions based on your experience as a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). (RTA stands for Regional Transit Authority.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Public transit is an important public service.					
2. You are personally affected by changes in public transit.					
3. Your contributions make an actual difference in the future of Detroit's regional transit system.					
4. You have the appropriate technical skills that relate to transit decision-making.					
5. The CAC represents the Detroit area population.					
6. The structure of CAC meetings facilitates active participation.					
7. You are able to express opinions, ideas, and thoughts freely at CAC meetings.					
8. The size of CAC membership is appropriate.					
9. Members of the					

CAC know and uphold the committee's bylaws.					
10. The CAC communicates effectively with the RTA Board.					
11. The CAC's level of involvement in the construction of basic transit plans is sufficient.					
12. Current transit developments established by the RTA reflect the citizens' desires.					
13. You are confident that your contributions are valued by the RTA.					
14. You have productive interactions with RTA Board members and city officials.					

15. How much time on average do you dedicate to CAC participation in a week?

- 0-2 hours
- 2-4 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 6-8 hours
- 8+ hours

16. Are you involved in other community, religious, or civic groups?

Yes No

17. If yes, how much time a week do you dedicate to community involvement and/or activism outside of CAC?

- 0-2 hours
- 2-4 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 6-8 hours
- 8+ hours

18. How did you become involved in the CAC?

19. What is your motivation for being a part of the CAC?

20. Do you feel that the term ‘activist’ appropriately describes your role on the CAC?

Yes No

21. Why or why not?

22. Overall, what is the biggest accomplishment you feel the CAC has achieved?

23. According to Arnstein’s ‘Ladder of Citizen Participation’ (1969), below are several ways of describing citizen participation in public policy decision making. Please mark all that you feel apply to the CAC in relationship to the overall RTA.

Manipulation (not given opportunities for genuine participation)

Therapy (CAC is educated and pressured to make decisions based on RTA’s wishes, participation is one-way)

Informing (CAC is informed of their right to participate, but follow through is stunted)

__ Consultation (CAC is asked for their opinion, but no other mode of participation is taken into account)

__ Placation (CAC's participation is encouraged, but final decision-making power lies outside of their control)

__ Partnership (CAC is given some decision-making responsibilities and structures allow for shared planning)

__ Delegated Power (CAC holds a large amount of power, collaboration is frequent and RTA Board willingly holds joint accountability)

__ Citizen Control (CAC members have complete responsibility and power to make decisions on behalf of citizens within the RTA)

Demographic Questions

24. What gender do you identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to answer

25. What is your age bracket?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-50
- 50-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to answer

26. What is your race/ethnic identity?

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian Indian
- Black/African American
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese

- Korean
- Native Hawaiian
- Other Asian – Please Specify _____
- Pacific Islander – Please Specify _____
- Vietnamese
- White
- Prefer not to answer

27. What is your highest level of education?

- Some high school
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Some college and/or university courses
- College and/or university degree
- Some postgraduate work (including professional programs and licensing)
- Postgraduate degree (MA, LLB, MBA, PhD, etc)
- Prefer not to answer

Vita Auctoris

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