



CITY HEIGHTS

Community Development Corporation

SANDAG RTP Public Outreach

Final Summary Study (November –December 2006)

Submitted by

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The City Heights CDC conducted public outreach in the community of City Heights. The community is mostly low-income and highly transit dependent. Our outreach consisted of discussion workshops; a comprehensive transportation survey was developed to focus input. The survey used ranking, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Using these methods, we engaged 133 people about the elements of the Regional Transportation Plan and San Diego transportation issues.

Several events were held at different CDC properties, including regular resident meetings and special workshops to solicit input about transportation and have residents fill out the survey. We also engaged high school youth with the survey, neighborhood associations, and participants in City Heights CDC job programs and other services. The largest interactive transportation workshop was held at the 120-unit Metro Villas apartment complex with 43 participants.

The results of our survey and comments from residents are summarized in the following sections. The first section details survey results. The second section details qualitative input given at the various workshops and events.

I. SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was translated into Somali and Spanish. Survey questions asked people to rate their priorities in terms of transportation problems, solutions, funding, and commute times. Resident respondents to the survey and attendants at the workshops were

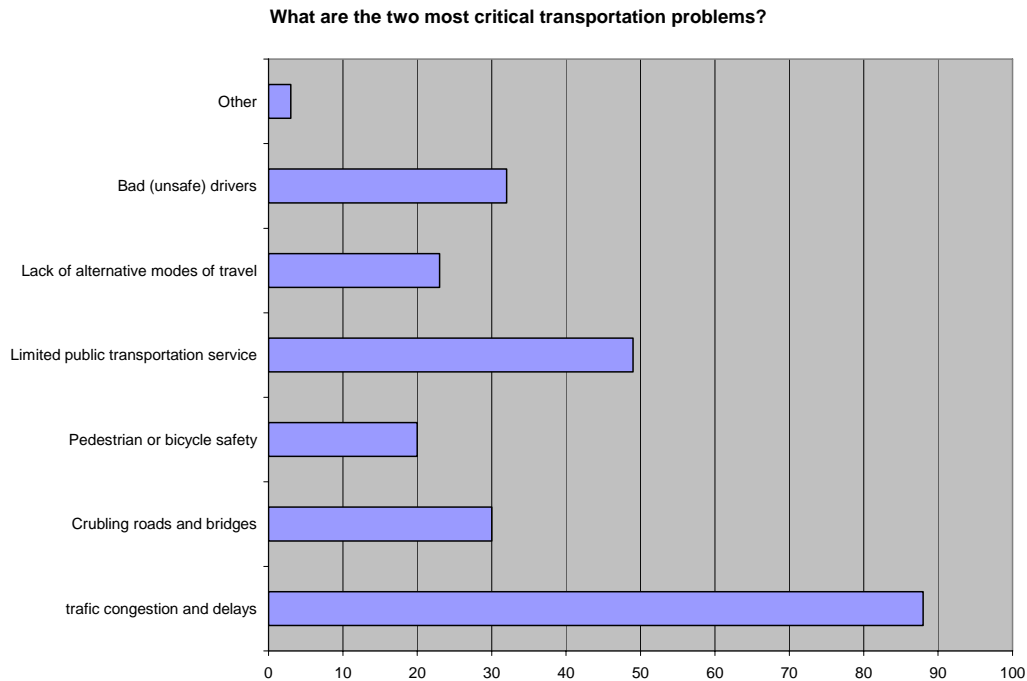
ethnically diverse with 37% Hispanic, 26% Black, 17% Other, 10% White, and 3% Asian. Many of the residents we surveyed were new immigrants and low-income.

More than 20% do not drive, and 40% drive once or twice a week, while nearly 40% drive several times per day.

Participants were asked what transportation problems they felt were the most pressing for the San Diego region. According to respondents, the two most critical transportation problems are

- “traffic congestions and delays” (88 respondents) and
- “limited public transportation service” (49).

The table below shows how respondents rated other transportation problems/elements.



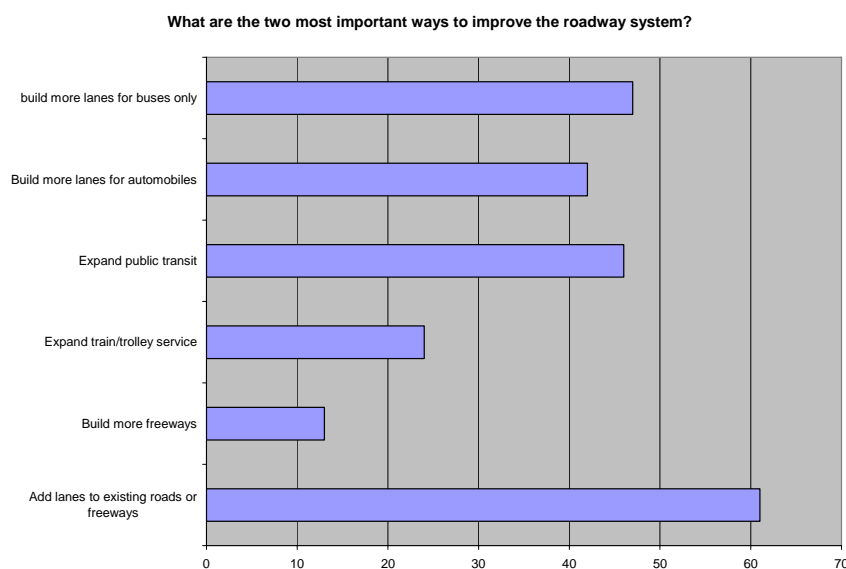
When asked how such issues should be addressed, residents agreed that the most important ways to improve roadway systems are to

- add lanes to existing roads or freeways,
- build more bus-only lanes

- expand public transit.

An important solution the surveys indicate is the increase of morning, evening, and weekend bus hours. One respondent summarizes this need on their survey: “The solution [to over-crowding] is rapid transit, less cars on the road.” Another respondent suggested creating school bus “safe lanes.”

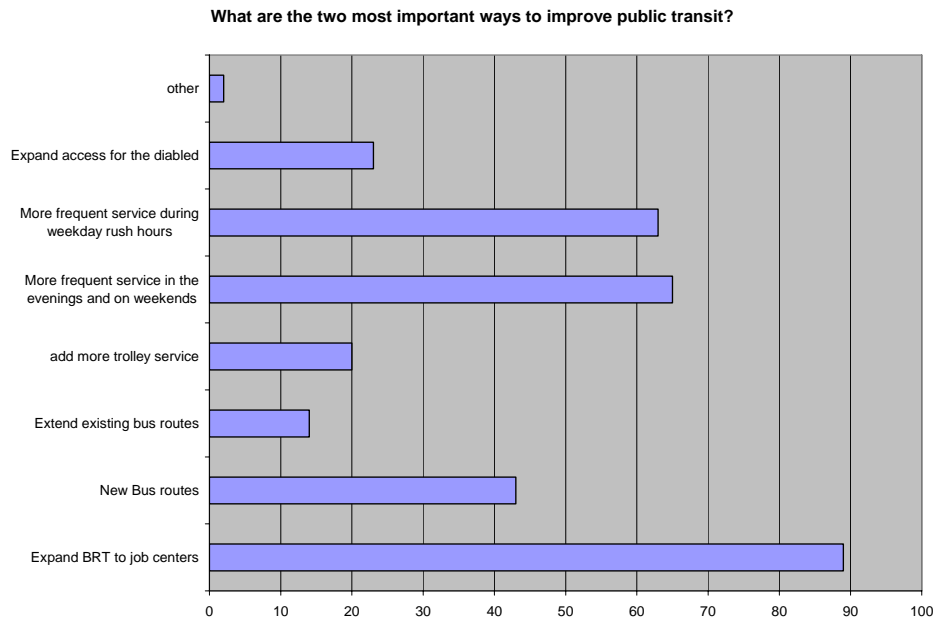
The table below summarizes responses to the question regarding improving the roadway system.



Public transportation improvements stood out as one of the most critical issues for this population.

- Nearly two thirds felt that public transportation can be improved by expanding Bus Rapid Transit services lines to job centers (89 respondents) and
- Increasing frequency on nights/weekends and during holidays and rush hour.
- 37% of people felt that it was important to add new bus routes.

The table below shows how residents felt about methods to improve public transportation.



Specific written requests were taken for locations of the new bus routes from Mid-City area to Mira Mesa, Old Town, North County, South East and South Bay San Diego, Chula Vista, Spring Valley, and more bus routes to and from North Park.

Also, Nearly half said they would use Bus Rapid Transit daily if it were made available to them to reach North County and Downtown.

Specific streets where residents suggested new routes were on Texas Ave, Fairmount, along University to South East San Diego, a route to College and 70th, and add routes on more roads in City Heights.

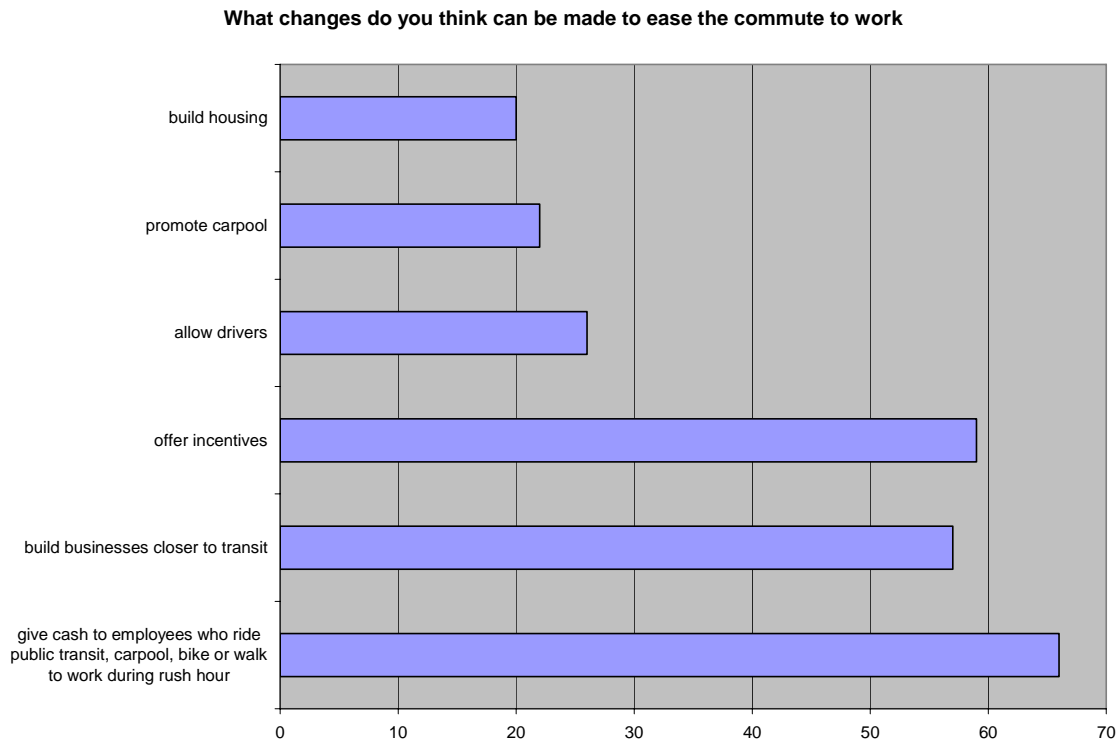
Another solution to transit problems was made to generally *extend* the existing bus routes and increase the frequency of bus stops on University Ave, Route 10, and highly used areas. Over half of the residents surveyed expressed that they would use Bus Rapid Transit daily if it were made available going north and south along the I-15.

Residents also indicate the need to increase frequency of pick-ups to every 15 minutes on highly used routes.

In order to ease the commute to work, residents suggested:

- Cash should be given to employees who ride public transit, carpool, bike, or walk to work during rush hour and
- We can offer incentives to businesses for flexible hours, as well as
- Build businesses closer to transit.

Other ideas expressed a desire for vanpools from Metro to downtown and beaches. One respondent wrote that in order to assess where the city needs to improve flow of transit, the Regional Transportation Plan should examine where people work and what their public transit needs are. They should also assess where there are the most businesses and ease access to those. See table for summary.

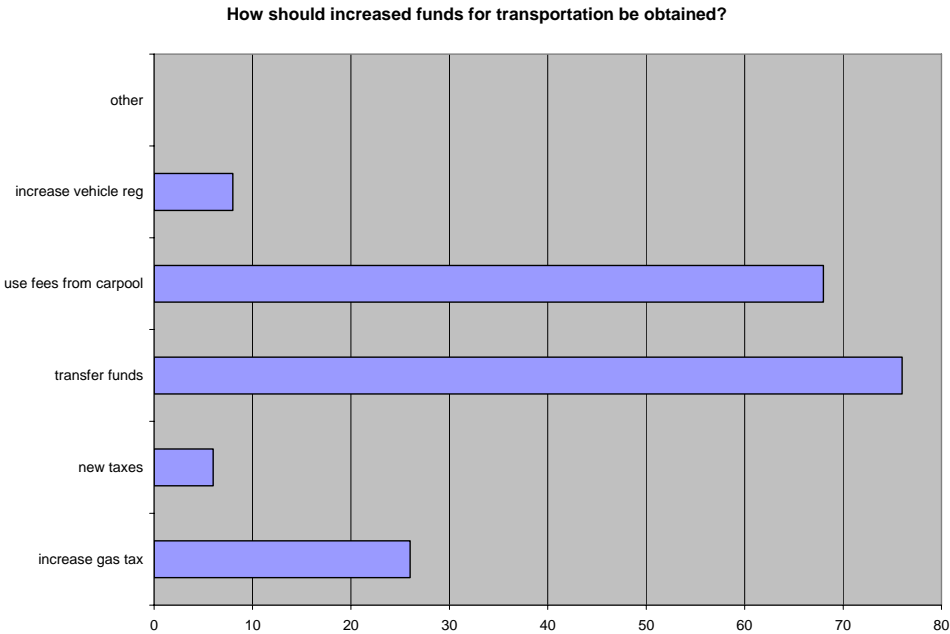


A vast majority (74%) of the people we surveyed supported increasing funds for transportation. When asked where these funds should come from, the top two responses were by transferring funds from other uses (57%) and fees from carpool lane tolls (51%).

Areas of transportation that need the most funding, according to residents, are Bus Rapid Transit to Job Centers (46%) and better buses and trolleys (44%)

Specific locations residents indicate they want trolleys to go are to

- City Heights, around the Metro Area,
- North County, from Oceanside to Escondido, and
- South East San Diego.



II. WORKSHOP DIALOGUE

An overarching concern expressed by residents during workshops was that lower-income communities like City Heights are under-funded in terms of transportation projects. Many said that new bus routes and transit improvements should be completed in communities with the most transit riders. One resident pointed out that City Heights has the busiest bus route, number 7, in the County of San Diego and needs better frequency and buses. For example, residents at Metro Villas Apartments held a general discontent over congestion on University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard. They stated they want a bus-only lane or elevated trolley on either one of these streets.

Residents also want buses that go direct to shopping centers and extended hours that coincide with the hours of the centers to which the buses travel. Particular locations mentioned were to Walmart, Mission Valley and Fashion Valley Mall. Most residents wanted increased frequency of buses. In addition, residents want bus routes that travel to job centers up north, including the major call centers such as SDG&E and SBC off of Claremont Mesa Blvd.

When asked what types of transit improvements residents would like to see, many called for bus-only lanes and trolley or Bus Rapid Transit extensions.

Residents desire lane additions at the 15-805 merge, 94 freeway, 8 freeway, 163 towards Balboa, the 805-5 merger, I-15. Residents also desire a faster route connecting the 805 North-East to Highway 78. This came out of sentiment that the East-West connectors to Highway 56 & 52 are not a working solution in connecting San Diego East and West and making travel faster north and south. From this we infer that better concepts need to be designed to connect San Diego that travel on a North-East and South-west path.

At one meeting, 20 people supported more car and vanpools, and shared Flexcars. Twenty-two People supported new technologies, such as travel time update displays along the freeways similar to those in Los Angeles, self-driving vehicle lanes, accident indicators. Residents placed particular focus on the need for public transit improvements to reduce congestion and increase accessibility to jobs. A couple of attendants spoke of bus route expansions from Poway to Ramona, Mid-City to East County, and to the Qualcomm Stadium area. One resident suggested one bus should do a full loop from City Heights that would go north, south and then return.

There was overwhelming support for extending morning, evening and weekend hours and increasing frequency of bus pick-ups along Mid-City bus routes. A resident expressed his approval of a test plan to increase bus pick-ups along El Cajon Blvd from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes. He stated it would reduce crowding at bus stops and also expressed the need for more covered bus stops and benches for waiting riders. An elderly resident also spoke about how greater access and outreach was needed for disabled riders of MTS, particularly to get residents to doctor appointments.

In summary, outreach conducted by the City Heights CDC expressed dialogue around the following major themes:

- *The most important transportation problems are traffic congestion and limited public transit service*
- *The most important solutions for San Diego transportation are adding lanes to existing roads, especially for “buses only” and carpool*

- *It is critical to expand public transportation, especially in City Heights, including increasing frequency of busiest routes and adding Bus Rapid Transit to job Centers*
- *Incorporate Smart Growth concepts like building homes closer to businesses*
- *Offer incentives to employees and employers who use and encourage transit and alternative modes of travel*
- *Communities with the most transit riders and fewer transportation choices should be a priority when it comes to improving public transit services and infrastructure improvements*