

Sustainable Food Systems Perspectives on Transportation Policy

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Basic Premises

- Sustainable food systems support healthy diets for all.
Also:
 - Economically viable
 - Ecologically regenerative
 - Socially just
 - Democratic
- Health of persons, communities, natural environments, and planet connected
- Transportation shapes and underpins regional land development, economies, and operations

Crises and Opportunities

- **Rising food costs**—increase proximate access to healthy foods; build localized food systems to reduce transportation costs
- **Diet-related disease**—increase healthy food access through land use and transportation alternatives; regional farm-table linkages, including mobile infrastructure
- **Climate change**—reduce GHG emissions from agri-food transportation sector (and ag practices)
- **National energy security**—reduce transportation energy costs; build more regional, neighborhood food systems
- **National food security**—build more localized food systems by improving regional transportation linkages, infrastructure

Neighborhood Environments and Healthy Diets

- “Deserts” and “Swamps”: Neighborhood food environment matters to healthy diets
- Food shopping behavior is complex
- Rising transportation costs can make healthy diets harder to maintain

Transportation: Food System Goals

- Healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food for all, with special emphasis on access in low-income and historically marginalized urban and rural communities
- Stronger regional food systems
 - tighter loops in production, processing, distribution, consumption, waste management;
 - multi-modal freight integration (rail, water, truck)
 - preservation of agricultural land and activities;
 - mobile infrastructure (e.g., grocery stores, kitchens, restaurants, processing facilities, etc.)
- Affordable transportation for agri-food system workers
- Reduced GHG emissions from agri-food-transportation and related health and ecological impacts
- Prioritizing agriculture for food (not corn ethanol)
- Regional agri-food systems as resource for transportation + energy sectors (methane capture, cooking oil, etc.)

Major Asks in “Healthy-T” Bill

- **Provide transportation assistance to nutrition program participants, comprehensively, adequately (to obtain food)**
- **Require regional transportation planning to include goals re. healthy food access, stronger local/regional food systems**
- **Improve regional transportation/transit linkages to access basic needs, including food**
- **Support land use planning to increase access to healthy food; build neighborhood food systems**
- **Provide transportation assistance to small scale producers, workers in agri-food, for distribution infrastructure**
- **Increase coordination with other agencies on related transportation goals/programs**

Transportation Policy Interpretation

- Promote regional access and choice
 - Increase local planning, decision-making for access to food and other basic needs
 - Expand funding for transit
 - Foster transit oriented development w attention to food system linkages
 - Increase priority for regional accessibility
- Orient transportation to community + regional goals
 - Increase transit, paratransit for healthy food access
 - Increase farm to table transportation linkages, infrastructure; include mobile infrastructure
 - Protect the public's health by reducing agri-food-transportation GHG emissions
- Reduce energy intensity of transportation systems
 - Reduce competition between energy and food in agriculture
 - Protect regional agricultural land for greater farm-table access
- Increase transportation efficiency through coordination

Key Challenges

- Roads and highways (not access) still a dominant orientation of transportation policy, drive land use planning
- Powerful interests vested in status quo (oil companies, road builders, auto companies and their associations)
- Impending revenue shortfalls from gas taxes
- Current transportation policy and funding fragmented by mode, trip purpose, program, and sector
- No “hook” within transportation legislation for key asks (need to work beyond Transportation Bill)