



# Briefing Paper: Gender Equality & Public Transportation

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## Why is transportation an EQUALITY issue?

Transportation plays a fundamental role for women and men, girls and boys, and gender non-conforming individuals' access to education, employment, healthcare, childcare, and other key services. Affordable, safe, timely, and accessible transit services affect residents' life prospects and quality of life. Additionally, it boosts socio-economic growth and increases cross-cultural connectivity, as well as social cohesion.<sup>1</sup>

## Why is transportation a GENDER EQUALITY issue?

### *Mobility Patterns*

Studies<sup>2</sup> show that women and men have different mobility patterns and mobility needs. On average, women typically use public transportation to a greater extent than men, taking multiple short trips at regular and irregular hours, often together with their children and/or elderly relatives or, while carrying bulky items for the household. These mobility patterns, however, can look different for specific subsets of women. According to a 2006 study by the Women's Foundation of California "low-income African-American women with children [in Los Angeles] take five times more trips by public transit than the general female population and six times more trips than men."<sup>3</sup>

### *Sexual Harassment & Abuse*

Women and girls are also disproportionately affected by sexual harassment and abuse when taking public transportation. Abuse may originate from other passengers or transit staff.<sup>4</sup> In Los Angeles, 27% of female metro riders and 17% of male metro riders report having experienced some form of sexual harassment while riding the Metro. Among Metro's bus riders, 16% of female riders and 13% of male riders have experienced some sort of harassment.<sup>5</sup>

### *Human Trafficking*

Los Angeles is one of the worst human trafficking hubs in the state and around the world. In 2017, 1,305 cases of human trafficking were reported to the National

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Council, ECE/TRANS/2009/7, 17 December, 2008, Report to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Executive Committee on the Implementation of the Priorities of the UNECE Reform for Strengthening some Activities of the Committee

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Council, ECE/TRANS/2009/7, 17 December, 2008, Report to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Executive Committee on the Implementation of the Priorities of the UNECE Reform for Strengthening some Activities of the Committee; Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility, Dieke Peters, Thematic study prepared for Global Report on Human Settlement 2013, <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GRHS.2013.Thematic.Gender.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility, Dieke Peters, Thematic study prepared for Global Report on Human Settlement 2013, <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GRHS.2013.Thematic.Gender.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility, Dieke Peters, Thematic study prepared for Global Report on Human Settlement 2013, <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GRHS.2013.Thematic.Gender.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> LA Metro's OEI 2017 Survey

Human Trafficking Hotline. Of those, 89% of the survivors identified as female.<sup>6</sup> Some of the most recognizable corridors in the City, e.g., Western Avenue, Century Boulevard, Sepulveda Boulevard, and Figueroa Street, is where most trafficking take place.<sup>7</sup> Common recruitment spots include bus and train stations and their respective waiting areas.<sup>8</sup>

### *Homelessness*

Between 2013 and 2016, the number of unsheltered women in Los Angeles County increased by 55%. Of the 52,765 people experiencing homelessness, 16,224 are women according to the 2018 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count.<sup>9</sup> In 2015, a study by Harvard University found that “access to transportation is the single biggest factor in the odds of escaping poverty and avoiding homelessness.”<sup>10 11</sup> Also, unsheltered and unaccompanied women frequently ride public transportation at night as they perceive this to be safer than to stay in one place on the streets.<sup>12</sup> Currently, LA Metro offers a 20% discount on its monthly pass for low-income community members as part of their efforts to advance equity and accessibility in Los Angeles. In addition, Metro is looking into developing a model for weekly payments.<sup>13</sup>

### *Missed Opportunities*

A lack of gender-sensitive transit services is detrimental to women’s quality of life, particularly those living below the poverty line, and therefore perpetuates gender inequality as a whole.<sup>14</sup> For example, lack of comprehensive transit services increases the time women spend in transit, therefore extending time spent on errands and domestic tasks. The cumulative effect can be isolating as women may lose out on career options and opportunities to connect with family, friends and colleagues. In Los Angeles, the average bus speed has declined by 15% since 2013.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, 80% of bus trips originating in Downtown LA take twice as long as the same trip by car.<sup>16</sup> These time delays leave women, who represent 55% of all bus riders,<sup>17</sup> at a disadvantage. Also, a lack of safe transportation services is directly linked to young women’s educational pursuits: parents tend to limit their children’s extra-curricular activities when safe public transit is not available.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Los Angeles Police Department, City Council Response, Bureau of Human Trafficking Task Force, Report to the LA City Council Immigrant Affairs, Civil Rights, and Equity Committee, dated July 17, 2018

<sup>7</sup> “Look Again,” <https://www.lookagainla.com/>

<sup>8</sup> Los Angeles Police Department, City Council Response, Bureau of Human Trafficking Task Force, Report to the LA City Council Immigrant Affairs, Civil Rights, and Equity Committee, dated July 17, 2018

<sup>9</sup> 2018 Greater Los Angeles Homeless County – Los Angeles County, <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=2001-2018-greater-los-angeles-homeless-count-los-angeles-county.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> How A Transportation Safety Net Could Keep More People Off The Streets, Capital Public Radio <http://www.capradio.org/articles/2018/08/30/how-a-transportation-safety-net-could-keep-more-people-off-the-streets/.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility Childhood Exposure Effects and County-Level Estimates, Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren, Harvard University, [http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/images/nbhds\\_exec\\_summary](http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/images/nbhds_exec_summary)

<sup>12</sup> Comment from the The Downtown Women’s Center, 090418

<sup>13</sup> How A Transportation Safety Net Could Keep More People Off The Streets, Capital Public Radio <http://www.capradio.org/articles/2018/08/30/how-a-transportation-safety-net-could-keep-more-people-off-the-streets/>

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Council, ECE/TRANS/2009/7, 17 December, 2008, Report to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Executive Committee on the Implementation of the Priorities of the UNECE Reform for Strengthening some Activities of the Committee

<sup>15</sup> <https://investinginplace.org/2018/06/28/since-2013-metros-average-bus-speed-has-declined-by-15-it-is-time-for-la-to-get-serious-about-bus-lanes/>

<sup>16</sup> Los Angeles Metro: NextGen Bus Study Presentation (2): <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UCFajy4LRn0hXUisKcS4LBjo667qoaBm/view>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility, Dieke Peters, Thematic study prepared for Global Report on Human Settlement 2013, <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GRHS.2013.Thematic.Gender.pdf>

Combined, the aforementioned challenges hinder the City's capacity to achieve gender equality and promote sustainable social and economic development. The community as a whole loses when women are not empowered to be productive due to a lack of transportation accessibility. According to a 2015 study by McKinsey, the GDP is raised by trillions in countries where women participate in the workforce at the same rate as men.<sup>19</sup> From a city planning and diversity lens, lack of accessible transit transportation services also prevents multi-ethnic enclaves from fostering strong social connections with other communities.

### **Why do men and women have different mobility patterns?**

It should come as no surprise that employment status, ethnicity, age, health, location, class, education, and cultural values affects one's mobility patterns and mobility needs. As men persist as the primary breadwinners in many households, women by and large continue to assume the role of care taker and community stakeholder. This generally leads to:

- more men participating in the workforce,
- men having greater access to the household's car,<sup>20</sup> and
- women taking multiple short, dispersed trips to non-working facilities (e.g., health centers, childcare facilities, schools, and shops).

In the U.S., the total number of women age 16 years and older that participate in the workforce fell from 59.3% in 1996 to 56.8% in 2016.<sup>21</sup> In Los Angeles County, the workforce participation rate for women is 70.4%, compared to 83.7% for men.<sup>22</sup> Since 2000, the number of women working in their prime earning years (24-54y) has declined,<sup>23</sup> and the development has remained consistent over the past 30 years.<sup>24</sup> Research suggests that women's greater presence in low-pay, pink-collar occupations, i.e. jobs that are traditionally considered to be "women's work," can be associated with shorter and off-peak travel time.<sup>25</sup>

In Los Angeles County, 20% of women live below the federal poverty line. However, for women and girls of color the numbers are more troubling, with 26% of African Americans and 26% of Latinas living in poverty (data from 2014).<sup>26</sup> According to United Way of California 2018 Real Cost Measure Report, over 7 in 10 single mothers struggle to meet basic needs - an estimated 189,861 households.<sup>27</sup> Of LA's female Metro riders, 53% do not have access to a car and are using public transportation as their only method of transportation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth," McKinsey, 2015, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

<sup>20</sup> Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility, Dieke Peters, Thematic study prepared for Global Report on Human Settlement 2013, <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GRHS.2013.Thematic.Gender.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/civilian-labor-force-participation-rate.htm>

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Census count (of 2016), Labor Force Participation Rate, Los Angeles County

<sup>23</sup> "Why Are So Many Women Dropping Out Of the Workforce? Los Angeles Times, May 28, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-women-dropping-out-20170522-story.html#>

<sup>24</sup> "The Number of Women Opting Out of the Workforce Hasn't Changed Over the Past 30 Years," SLATE, September 1, 2016, [http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx\\_factor/2016/09/01/the\\_number\\_of\\_women\\_opting\\_out\\_of\\_the\\_workforce\\_hasn\\_t\\_changed\\_over\\_the.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2016/09/01/the_number_of_women_opting_out_of_the_workforce_hasn_t_changed_over_the.html)

<sup>25</sup> "Why do men and women travel differently? Study sheds light on gender differences," University of Minnesota, Center for Transportation Studies, <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Publications/catalyst/2014/may/travel>

<sup>26</sup> 2016 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in LA County, <http://laccw.lacounty.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=iZfSTtldj4c%3D&portalid=10>

<sup>27</sup> *Struggling to Stay Afloat: The Real Cost Measure in California 2018*. United Ways of California. <http://www.unitedwaysca.org/realcost>.

<sup>28</sup> Los Angeles Metro Metrics: [https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/media.thesource.metro.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/10194236/gender\\_v\\_income-01-1.png](https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/media.thesource.metro.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/10194236/gender_v_income-01-1.png)

Additionally, a person's access to get a driving license affects her mobility pattern and mobility needs. In 2016, women made up 51% of all licensed drivers in the United States.<sup>29</sup> No data is currently available for the County of Los Angeles, but LA Metro has commissioned a new study, "How Women Travel," that will look into this issue in depth. Lastly, cultural values, such as a value regarding women's social interaction with men in public, can limit women's freedom of mobility.<sup>30</sup>

## **How can we make sure transit services benefit women and girls?**

### *Hire Her*

In the City of Los Angeles, 27% of women work in transportation, production, or the material moving sectors (data from 2016).<sup>31</sup> According to the UN study *Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility*, "male transit planners are often overly concerned with reducing point-to-point travel times and speed..." and therefore overlook aspects relating to women's mobility patterns and mobility needs.

In 2015, Mayor Eric Garcetti issued Executive Directive No. 11 on Gender Equity in City Operations stating "gender equity must permeate every level of City operations – as leaders, employers, and service providers."<sup>32</sup> The Directive embraces the increasingly accepted notion of including women at every step of decision-making processes to ensure policies, programs, and services are gender-sensitive. (This includes the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation phases of all initiatives.) Thus, in order to further improve transit services, it is key to explore strategies that help more women enter the transportation sector. The advantages of such efforts would go beyond the transit service aspect as positions in the transportation sector are typically well-paid. In other words, if transit operators take active steps to recruit more women, they will also help close the gender wage gap.

Possible steps include:

- i) Reassess and revise hiring practices, including job specifications and job requirements.
- ii) Offer mentoring, leadership, or other skills-based programs to help women advance to leadership positions and/or non-traditional women positions. Track the number of women that participate and advance to other positions.
- iii) Close the gender wage gap within the organization.
- iv) Ask job training providers to actively reach out to women to ensure women participate in trainings for jobs within the transportation sector.
- v) Explore ways to offer benefits that help women and parents, such as flexible work arrangements, child care services and/or subsidies for child care services.

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<sup>29</sup> The Statistics Portal: <https://www.statista.com/topics/1197/car-drivers/>

<sup>30</sup> Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility, Dieke Peters, Thematic study prepared for Global Report on Human Settlement 2013, <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GRHS.2013.Thematic.Gender.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> 2015 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in the City of Los Angeles. Commissioned by the City of Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women and prepared by Mount Saint Mary's University.

[https://www.lamayor.org/sites/g/files/wph446/f/page/image/LACity\\_Part1\\_Demographics.pdf](https://www.lamayor.org/sites/g/files/wph446/f/page/image/LACity_Part1_Demographics.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Mayor Eric Garcetti's Executive Directive No. 11 on Gender Equity in City Operations, [https://www.lamayor.org/sites/g/files/wph446/f/page/file/ED\\_11.pdf?1440645063](https://www.lamayor.org/sites/g/files/wph446/f/page/file/ED_11.pdf?1440645063)

### *Women's First-Last Mile*

It is only through a comprehensive assessment of women's mobility patterns at all socio-economic levels that we can get a clear understanding of their needs. In addition to travel speed, frequency, and reliability of the services that women typically use, the assessment should look at:

- i) Women's access to transit services: by foot, bicycle, scooter, car and the design and availability of escalators, elevators and ramps. In addition, cleanliness, lighting, green areas, proximity to commercial activity and perception of safety on the way to the transit service.
- ii) Transit hubs and waiting areas: Lighting, protection from the sun availability of benches/chairs, real time transit-service information, safety information, presence of safety personnel, emergency call buttons, stroller-friendly area design, restrooms, nursing rooms, chargers, grocery stores, and pharmacies in the waiting area or nearby.
- iii) Convenience and safety on the bus/metro: space for families with strollers and household items during boarding and inside the bus /train car, real time transit service information, lighting, emergency information, emergency call buttons, presence of security personnel, non-isolated train cars to prevent breeding ground for harassment, flexible drop-off policy at night, transit operators trained on cultural sensitivity
- iv) Centralized system for community members to easily provide feedback regarding issues related to their rider experience regardless of what government agency is responsible for addressing the concerns.

### *Vulnerable populations*

In order to support vulnerable populations (including unsheltered women, domestic violence survivors, human trafficking survivors, members of the LGBTQ community, and minority groups, such as African American women and Latinas), transportation operators should link these riders to specific services. This can be done through:

- Increased number of coordinated outreach teams
  - To achieve the desirable result, it is recommended that transit staff, security staff, and outreach teams are trained on trauma-informed care, de-escalation, homelessness (female homelessness specifically), human trafficking, and LGBTQ cultural competency and sensitivity. These trainings are also relevant for staff working on Amtrak, Greyhound buses, and at airports.
- Enhanced information on resources and service providers on buses/Metro, at transit hubs, and in other waiting areas.

### *Track Her Patterns*

To create a gender-sensitive transit system it is imperative to track, monitor, and assess data disaggregated by gender and to conduct qualitative assessments on women's mobility patterns, rider experience, and mobility needs. If there are no mechanisms in place to do so, the first step is to evaluate existing systems and processes for data collection.

### *Develop a Policy Framework that Counts Everyone*

Based on the gender-sensitive assessment, transit operators should identify possible changes to current services and facilities, including the associated costs, and develop and adopt a gender-sensitive policy framework.<sup>33</sup>

## **How to stay informed and get involved?**

### *The LA City Commission on the Status of Women (LACSW)*

LACSW's mandate is to advance the general welfare of women and girls in Los Angeles and to ensure that all women have full and equal participation in Los Angeles City government. LACSW, in partnership with LAPD, has recently launched Look Again – a campaign that aims to raise awareness of human trafficking in Los Angeles. Additionally, LACSW participates in LA Metro's NextGen Study Working Group and collaborates with the Workforce Development Board to address gender inequality through the LA Workforce Development System. To share your ideas and/or concerns relating gender equality, join LACSW's monthly meetings at City Hall or email LACSW Project Coordinator, Caroline Torén at [caroline.toren@lacity.org](mailto:caroline.toren@lacity.org). For more information about LACSW, please visit <https://hcidla.lacity.org/commission-status-women>

#### **What is Gender Equality?**

Gender equality refers to equal rights, life prospects, opportunities, and the power of women and men, girls and boys, and people of various gender expressions to shape their own lives. It is a right's-based concept with transformative connotations that embraces an intersectional view on inequalities between genders, and points towards change of gender-based power relations in all sectors of society.

#### **What is Gender Equity?**

Gender equity refers to fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs for women and men, girls and boys, and people of various gender expressions, and the fair distribution of resources based on the needs of different groups of people.

#### **What is Gender Mainstreaming?**

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, policy or program, in all areas and at all levels before any decisions are made and throughout the whole process. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs so that both women and men benefit, and inequality is not perpetuated. Gender mainstreaming is not a goal in itself but an approach for promoting gender equality.

#### Sources:

- United Nations, Gender Mainstreaming – An Overview, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/e65237.pdf>
- The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Gender Analysis – Principles & Elements, <https://www.sida.se/contentassets/a3f08692e731475db106fdf84f2fb9bd/gender-tool-analysis.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility, Dieke Peters, Thematic study prepared for Global Report on Human Settlement 2013, <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GRHS.2013.Thematic.Gender.pdf>