Chapter 17

Community Impact Assessment
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COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION
Community impact assessment is a process to evaluate the effects of a transportation action on a community and its quality of life. The assessment process is an integral part of project planning and development that shapes the outcome of a project. Community assessment can be both a quantitative and qualitative measure of items important to people. They may be social or economic impacts or even both. Consideration of such impacts is not only required by law but is simply good planning. This chapter will examine a representative sample of impacts on the community as a whole and identify the impacts on particular social groups where appropriate.

DEFINING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ)
The concept of Environmental Justice (EJ) is rooted in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discriminatory practices in programs and activities receiving federal funds. Transportation planning regulations issued in October 1993 require that metropolitan planning processes be consistent with Title VI. In February 1994, President Clinton signed an executive order which amplified the provisions of Title VI by requiring federal agencies to make “achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority and low income populations.” (Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations)

In compliance with this directive, OKI has incorporated EJ evaluation into its long range planning process. OKI has assembled an Environmental Justice Committee to develop processes and procedures to more effectively address the needs of various populations in the region. Specific groups in the OKI region identified for environmental justice evaluation include minority populations, low income populations, the elderly, disabled and zero car households. The definition (as applicable to 2000 census data) of each EJ population is as follows:

- Minority: persons from every racial category except White Alone plus all Hispanic persons
- Low income: persons identified by the Census Bureau as below the poverty level
- Elderly: aged 60 or older
- Disabled: non-institutionalized persons aged 5 years and over with any disability (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau)
Zero car households: occupied housing units for which there is no car

**EJ POPULATION CONCENTRATION IDENTIFICATION**

Identification of concentrations of EJ populations within the OKI region was achieved by establishing thresholds based on the averages of regional totals for the various target populations according to 2000 census data (Table 17-1).

**Table 17-1**

2000 EJ Population Thresholds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>2000 Total for OKI Region</th>
<th>Threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>1,744,122</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Households</td>
<td>652,917</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Population</td>
<td>229,708</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in Poverty</td>
<td>190,610</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly (65+ years)</td>
<td>204,909</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Disabilities</td>
<td>153,134</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero Car Households</td>
<td>75,592</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using a methodology developed by the Ohio Department of Transportation, geographic areas exceeding the threshold values are classified as target zones for impact assessment purposes. The threshold is the regional average for that population.

Data for each EJ population were aggregated by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ), the geographic unit used in OKI’s transportation analysis. TAZs in which the percent of each EJ population exceeded its threshold were identified as containing concentrations of that population type. In order to evaluate the effects of the recommended transportation plan against the base conditions, the TAZ data for 2000 and 2030 were used.

Figures 17-1 through 17-5 on the following pages highlight the concentrations of the target populations by TAZ in the OKI region.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND EJ COMMUNITIES**

In order to adequately include the target populations in long range transportation planning for the OKI region, particular efforts were made to involve EJ communities in public meetings. These efforts included:

- Posting notices in media geared toward the EJ populations
- Holding meetings in locations in close proximity to the EJ populations’ neighborhoods, served by public transit and that are ADA accessible
Figure 17-1

Disabled Population

Legend
Disabled Population in 2000
- Yellow: 0% to 25% Above Regional Average
- Orange: 25% to 50% Above Regional Average
- Red: 50% to 75% Above Regional Average
- Pink: Over 75% Above Regional Average

Miles
Figure 17-4

Minority Population

Legend

Minority Population in 2000
- Yellow: 0% to 25% Above Regional Average
- Orange: 25% to 50% Above Regional Average
- Red: 50% to 75% Above Regional Average
- Dark Red: Over 75% Above Regional Average

Map showing the distribution of minority populations in different counties with a legend indicating the percentage above the regional average.
Figure 17-3

Persons in Poverty

Legend

Persons in Poverty 2000

- Yellow: 0% to 25% Above Regional Average
- Orange: 25% to 50% Above Regional Average
- Red: 50% to 75% Above Regional Average
- Dark Red: Over 75% Above Regional Average

Miles

0 2 4 8 12 16

OKI
Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana
Regional Council of Governments
Figure 17-2

Elderly Population

Legend

Elderly Population in 2000

- Yellow: 0% to 25% Above Regional Average
- Orange: 25% to 50% Above Regional Average
- Red: 50% to 75% Above Regional Average
- Scarlet: Over 75% Above Regional Average

Miles

0 2 4 8 12 16

[Map showing distribution of elderly population across various counties in the region, with color coding for different percentage ranges above the regional average.]
Figure 17-5

Zero Car Households

Legend
Zero-Car Households in 2000
- Yellow: 0% to 25% Above Regional Average
- Orange: 25% to 50% Above Regional Average
- Red: 50% to 75% Above Regional Average
- Dark Red: Over 75% Above Regional Average

Miles
• Enlisting the support and involvement of target population community leadership
• Creating comprehensible presentation materials and manning individual displays with knowledgeable staff in an open-house setting
• Holding meetings during both the day and evening to broaden accessibility

These meetings provided a forum for the public to participate in, review and comment on the proposed regional transportation plan.

Corridor studies, a major subset of the OKI plan, provide additional opportunities for EJ community involvement. Corridor studies permit a more detailed investigation of transportation needs and solutions as well as a vehicle for more comprehensive public involvement for all sectors of the impacted communities. OKI has conducted several corridor studies and currently is actively managing three corridor studies. Public involvement and Environmental Justice have been prominent issues in all of these studies. The projects that advance from the corridor studies to the regional transportation plan are the locally preferred alternatives selected by consensus of the community leaders, elected officials and public at large.

PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS
For transit planning, input received from transit riders, community leaders and planners has a direct impact on the recommended alternatives. Evaluation of the alternatives was done by consensus of the planning committees with full input from the customers and the providers. These collaborative recommendations are incorporated into this long range plan.

In developing the recommended list of highway capacity projects such as widening existing lanes or building new roads for the plan, OKI utilized a project prioritization process. The process assigned numerical scores for 15 criteria. Impact on EJ communities was included as one of the criteria. Projects were evaluated on a planning level to determine whether the impacts on communities were significant and, if so, were they positive or negative.

COMMUNITY IMPACT ANALYSIS OF THE 2030 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN
Once the components of the regional transportation plan have been solidified, OKI will use a variety of quantitative performance measures and qualitative evaluation to assess whether components had any adverse or disproportionate impacts on the target populations as well as to ascertain whether benefits are equitably distributed. The measurement methodology employed by OKI to evaluate the impact of transportation planning on the target populations was
developed partly from OKI’s travel demand forecasting model process and partly using non-modeling techniques. In certain cases, different techniques are required for evaluation of highway and transit modes.

Three scenarios will be prepared:

- The base year (2000)
- Baseline future representing conditions in the absence of a plan with only projects in the current FY 2004-2007 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and current transit service (2030 Baseline)
- A future plan with a financially constrained set of programs and projects (2030 Plan)

These measures will compare the relative treatment of the EJ populations and non-EJ populations. These measures include:

Mobility
- Travel Time
- Percentage of vehicle miles traveled in congestion

Accessibility
- Job opportunities within 20 minutes auto travel time
- Job opportunities within 40 minutes transit travel time
- Percentage of population within 40 minutes transit travel time of a college/university

Reliability
- Dependable transit service as measured by percent of on-time arrivals

Safety
- Transit with minimal risk of accident or injury as measured by reduced accidents

Equity
- Supply of transportation infrastructure and services
- Displacement of residents and business
- Social structure
- Expenditures on highway projects
- Expenditures on transit projects

Other Regional Performance Measures
- Environmental Impacts
- Financial impacts
- System performance indicators