

Environmental Justice Issues in Passenger Rail: The Bad with the Good

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Key Presentation Take-Aways

Access to
Transit

- Access to transit is crucial for Environmental Justice (EJ) populations who tend to be more transit-dependent

TOD Benefits
and Burdens

- There are numerous benefits of Transit-Oriented Development for all populations, as well as burdens resulting from displacement of residents and businesses

Station Area
Planning

The burdens on EJ populations should be considered through the Station Area Planning process

What is Environmental Justice?

- Executive Order (E.O.) 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, signed by President Clinton on February 11, 1994, requires that federal agencies identify *disproportionately high and adverse effects of federal actions on minority and low-income populations*, referred to as environmental justice (EJ) populations, and to avoid, minimize, or mitigate these effects where practicable

What is Environmental Justice?

- In May 2012, the USDOT issued an update to Order 5610.2(a), *Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, affirming the need to provide “*meaningful opportunities for public involvement*” by members of those populations during project planning and development

What is a Disproportionately High and Adverse Effect?

- Considers the following questions:
 - Would the project's adverse impacts (burdens) be predominantly borne by EJ populations?
 - Would burdens to EJ populations be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than those suffered by non-EJ populations?
- Considers the effect of the project's offsetting benefits and mitigation measures

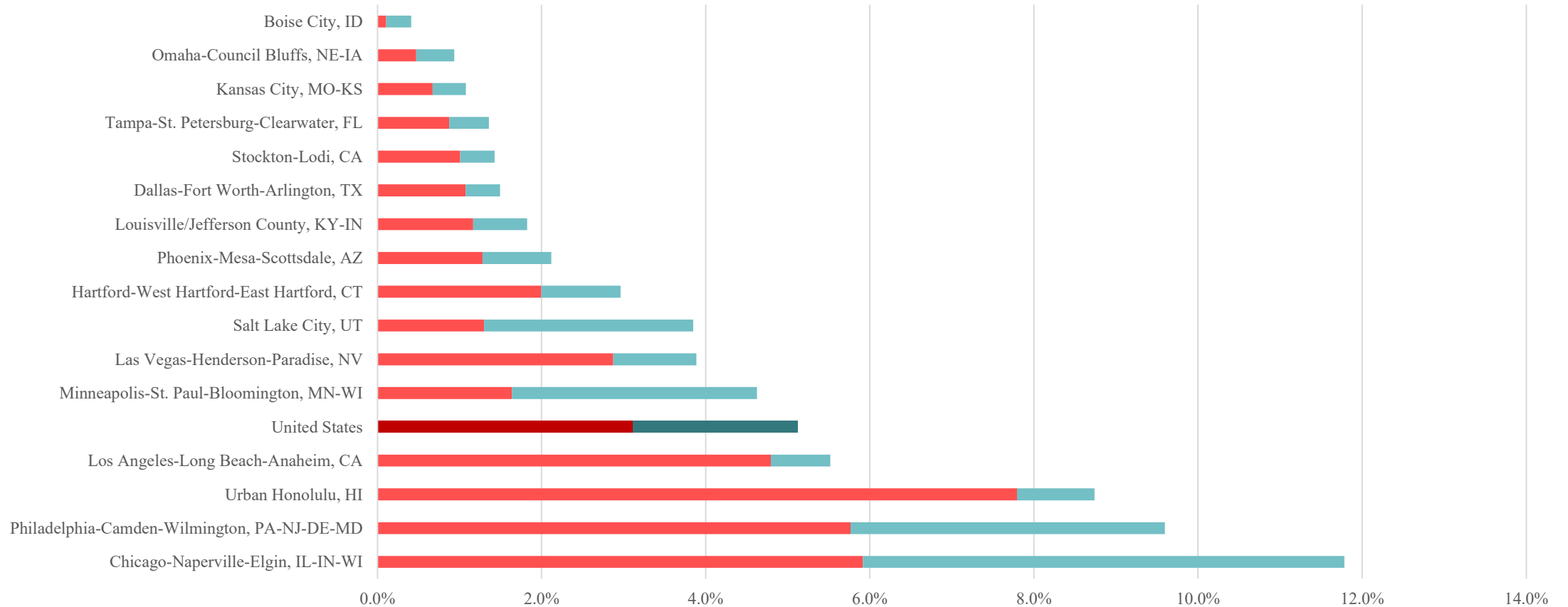


EJ Populations Tend to Be More Transit-Dependent

According to the 2016 American Community Survey ...

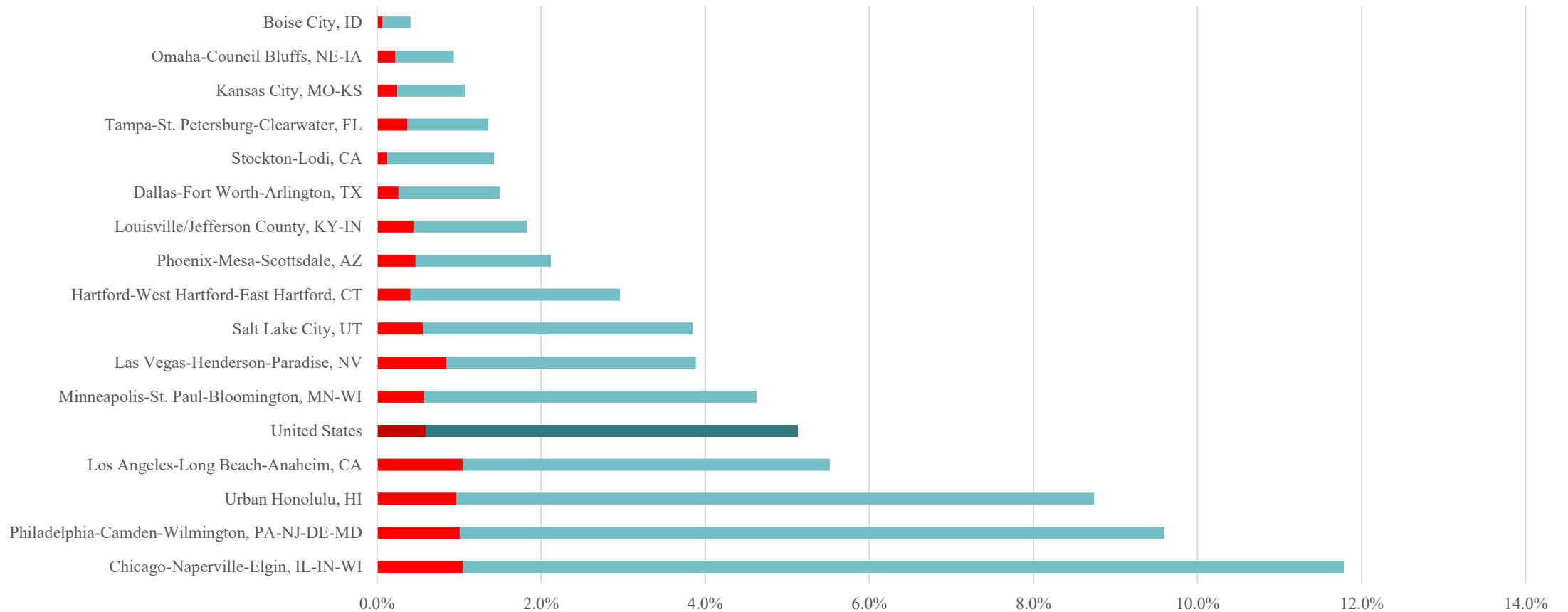
- In the U.S. as a whole,
 - 5.1% of all workers age 16 or older take transit
 - 60.8% of all transit riders identify as minority
 - Compared to 35.0% of workers regardless of commute mode
 - 11.6% of all transit riders are below the poverty level
 - Compared to 7.1% of workers regardless of commute mode
- Households <\$20,000/yr use transit more than 4 times as much as higher income groups (CHPC 2013)

Percent of Workers who Commute by Transit, and Proportion that Identify as Minority



2016 ACS

Percent of Workers who Commute by Transit, and Proportion below Poverty Level



2016 ACS

EJ Populations Tend to Spend a Higher Percentage of Income on Transportation Costs

- On average, Average American spend 18% of income on Transportation Costs (Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2016)
- *However*, equivalent transportation cost means higher percentages for lower-income populations

Example	Annual Income	Annual Transportation Cost	% of Income Spent on Transportation
Household A	\$100,000	\$10,000	10%
Household B	\$40,000	\$10,000	25%

Transportation Costs

Commute by Automobile	Commute by Transit
Cost to Acquire Vehicle (lease or purchase)	Transit Fare
Maintenance of Vehicle	Parking at Station *
Fuel	Vehicle ownership costs *
Parking	
Tolls	
	<p>* <i>note:</i> 48.5% of transit riders do not own a car (2009 National Household Transportation Survey); therefore about half still maintain at least one vehicle in the household.</p>

Transit-Oriented Development: Good for All

- Reduces dependency on driving
- Provides access to employment, educational, health, and recreational opportunities and services
- Improves public health
- Creates more sustainable communities – live/work/play
- Strengthens local economies
 - Promotes redevelopment and infill development
 - Increases property values

Increased Property Values Are Good, Right?

- Yes, for owners
 - Although adjusted property taxes may result in a burden
- No, for renters
 - Market-driven rents will go up
 - Higher demand -> higher rent
- As housing costs increase, demographic composition of the area may change and low-income housing may be lost

EJ Populations Have Lower Home Ownership Rates

Nationwide

- **63.6%** of all households are owner-occupied

Low-Income Households

- **32.4%** of all low-income households are owner-occupied
- Compared to 75.6% of households above the poverty level

Minority Households

- **45.5%** of minority households own their own home
- Compared to 71.4% of all non-minorities

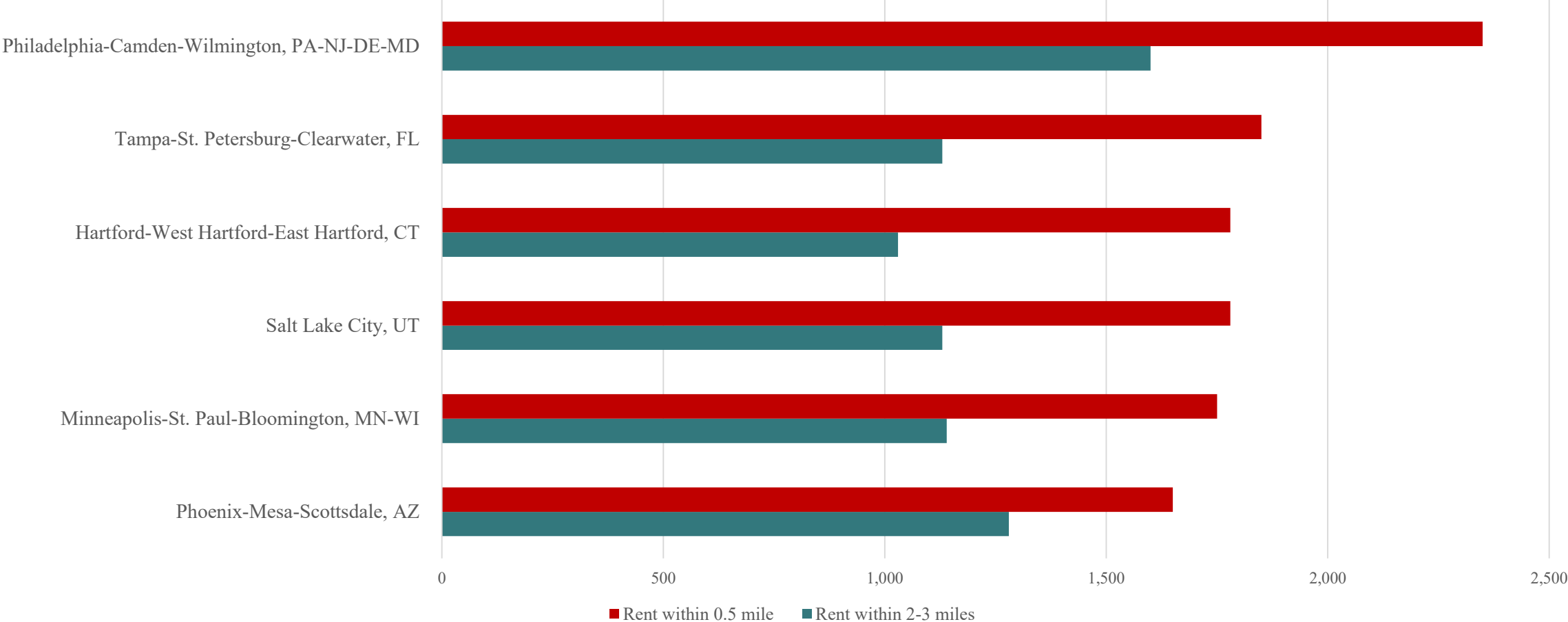
Transit Riders

- **60.7%** of all transit riders rent their homes
- Compared to 30.4% of drivers that rent their homes

Rents Near Rail Stations

- Rents near transit are typically 10-20% more than rents at similar buildings farther from transit (CHPC, 2013)
 - Considers all types of transit and areas with or without TOD
- Based on a sample of 6 typical rail stations with some degree of station area planning and TOD...
 - Rents within ½ mile of the rail station are about 50% higher than rents beyond the ½-mile radius but within 2 to 3 miles

Rents Near Rail Stations



Concern with TOD



- Immigrant-owned businesses or those that serve immigrant or lower-income communities may be displaced as newer businesses come in
- Effects may not happen immediately, but TOD may accelerate housing and business turnover

TOD Policies within Station Area Planning Can Help

Provide for a mix of housing at transit stations

- E.g., affordable housing percentage goals and tax credits
- EJ populations can take advantage of the benefits

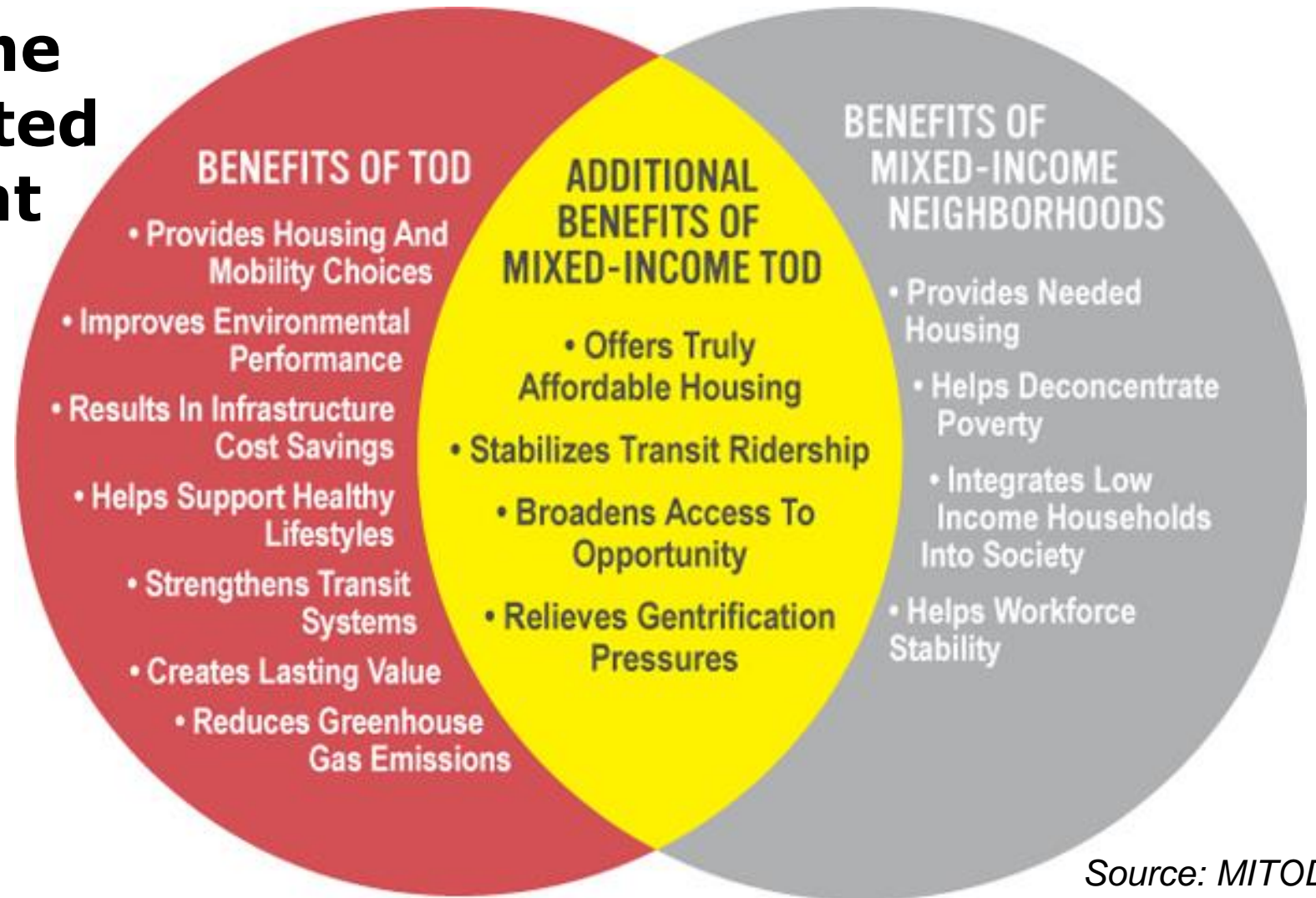
Plan for Sustainability

- Mix of land uses for living, working, and playing to reduce carbon footprint

Improve access to and within the TOD area

- Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit circulation

Mixed-Income Transit-Oriented Development



Source: MITOD.org

First and Last 2 or 3 Miles

Strategies to connect populations living farther than ½ mile away (including EJ) to transit

- For non-drivers
 - Bicycle and pedestrian network to promote active transportation
 - Bike-share programs, including electric bicycles
 - Local buses, vanpools/shuttles, and microtransit
- For drivers
 - Parking at stations

Moving Forward with TOD

Start Station Area Planning Early to Consider and Avoid (or Minimize or Mitigate) the Effects of TOD on Existing Residents and Neighborhood Character

- There are a lot of benefits of TOD, but don't forget that there may be some "burdens" on EJ populations
- Involve the community in planning efforts
- Form TOD working groups for land use, transportation, and financing collaboration



For More Information:

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Resources:

- Center for Neighborhood Technology
 - CNT.org
- Mixed-Income Transit Oriented Development
 - MITOD.org
- Reconnecting America
 - reconnectingamerica.org
- California Housing Partnership
 - CHPC.net