

The State of Transit Equity: Metro Los Angeles

Public transportation can offer a “ladder of opportunity,” providing affordable and convenient connections to jobs, goods and services, medical care, and other essentials of daily life. But pervasive racism and discrimination in land use, transportation, and transit planning have resulted in wide gaps in transit access across race, income, and other characteristics, worsening social inequity.

The Los Angeles region is no exception. TransitCenter’s Equity Dashboard analyzes transit and population data for the region since February 2020. Due to segregation in both land use and transportation:

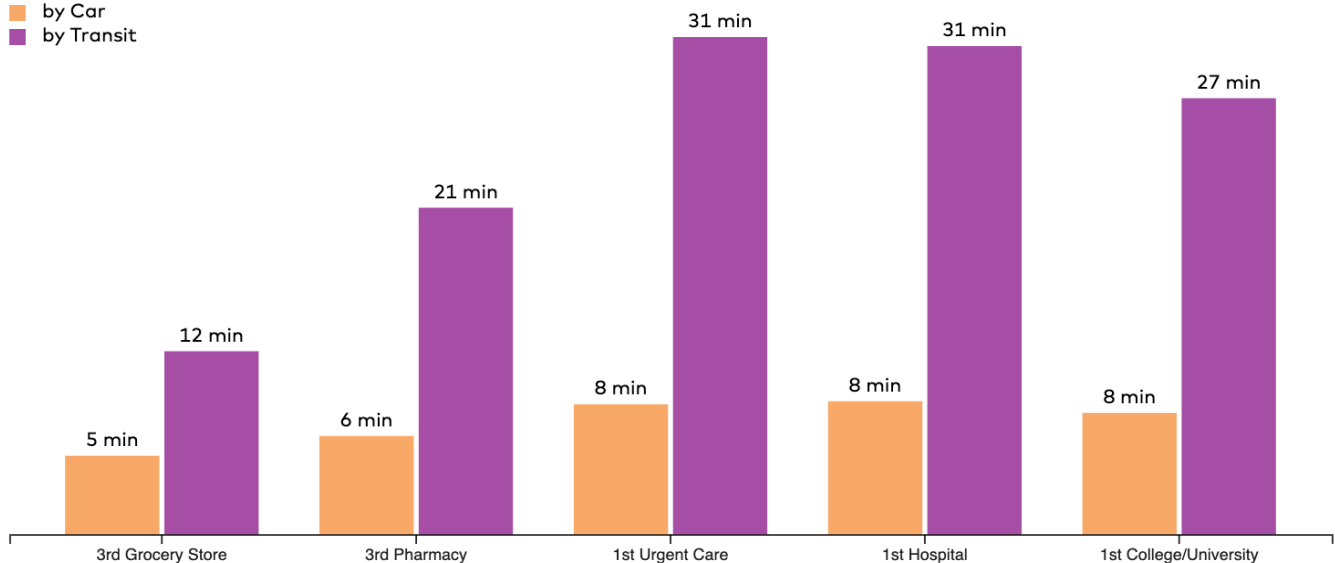
- **Transportation and development patterns create longer transit trips to healthcare and education.**
- **Transit access remains lower than before the pandemic.**
- **Transit is scarce and provides less access to opportunities for Black residents than other residents.**

Transportation and development patterns create longer transit trips to healthcare and education

Equitable transit provides access to all of life’s necessities. But for many poor residents, the current transit system falls short. On a weekend morning, it takes nearly **four times longer to reach the closest hospital using transit than using a car**, and more than three times longer to reach the closest college or university. (In the chart below, we measure time to the third-closest grocery store and pharmacy to show how effectively transit connects people to a variety of options.)

Travel Time to Destinations

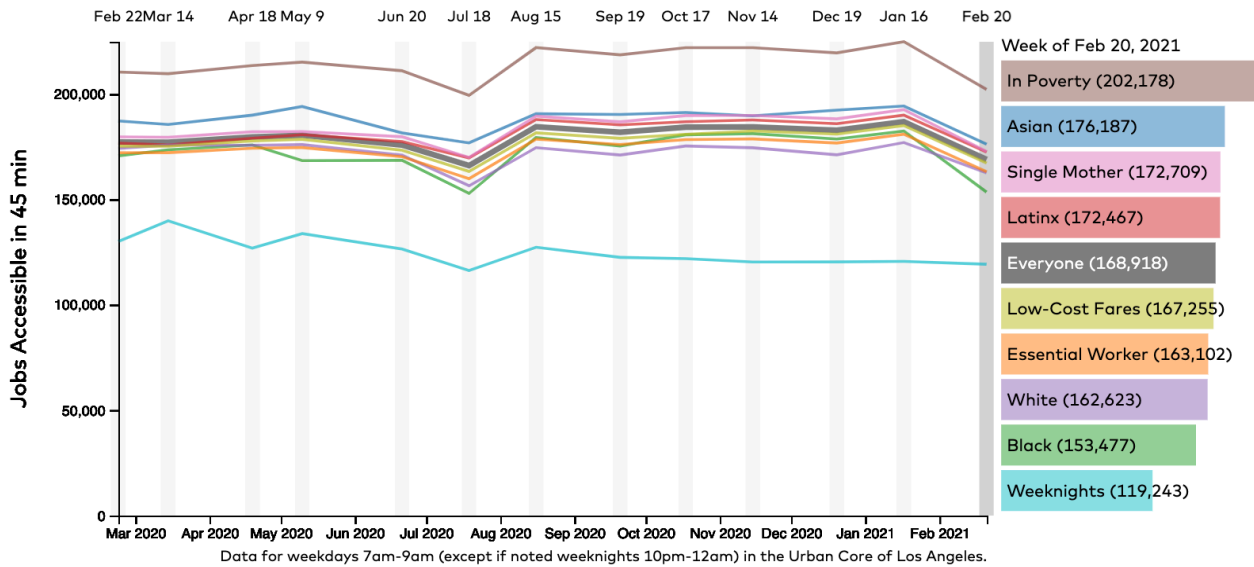
by Car
by Transit



Data for Saturdays from 10am-12pm in the Los Angeles MSA, as of the week of February 21, 2021.

Transit access remains lower than before the pandemic

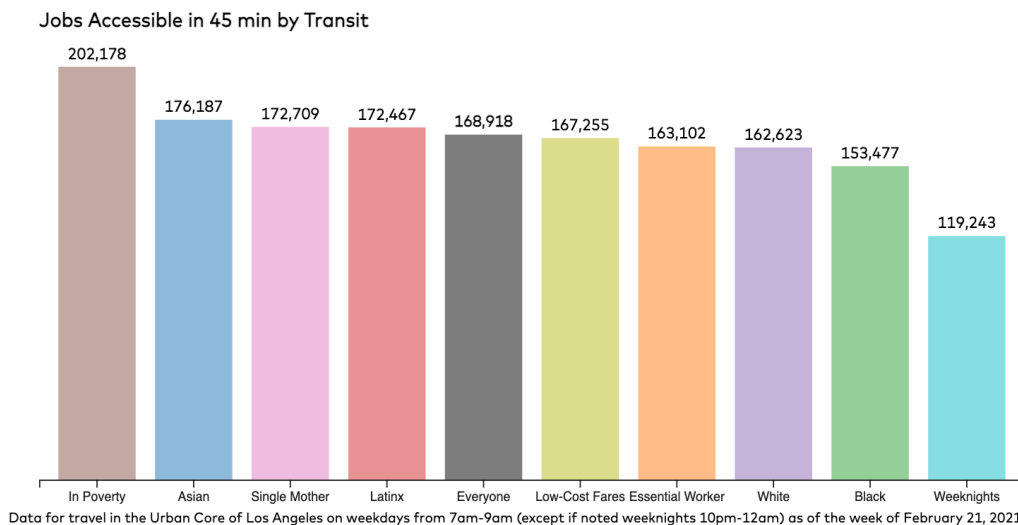
Agencies in Los Angeles cut service over the course of the pandemic, and have not restored service to pre-pandemic levels. As of February 2021, people had less access to opportunity on transit than a year ago. **On weekday mornings, the average Black resident could access 17,200 fewer jobs than in February 2020, a 10% decline.** The average resident could access 8,300 fewer jobs than a year ago, a 5% decline.



Transit is scarce and provides less access to opportunities for Black residents than other residents

The public transit network in the Los Angeles region provides different amounts of access to people of different races. **The average Black resident can access 153,477 jobs in 45 minutes using transit, compared to 168,918 for the average resident.** In 2019, 7% of Black residents took transit to work, compared to 2% of white residents—and during the COVID-19 pandemic, BIPOC workers were far more likely than white workers to continue to travel to and from work.

There is a need to significantly improve access for nearly all riders. In the Los Angeles region, residents can reach 2,878,605 jobs on average in 45 minutes using a car -- 17 times the average level of job access on transit. While transit does not have to provide as much access as a private vehicle to meet people's needs, it should be reasonably competitive. Transit falls far short of providing this level of access for the average rider, including most BIPOC residents and residents living in poverty.



Leaders in the Los Angeles area can address these disparities through more equitable transit, land use, and planning

Addressing disparities in transit requires the use of an equity lens in planning, service improvements that increase access for marginalized people, and development policies that allow more people of all races and incomes to live near good transit.

Groups working in the Los Angeles region have called for several improvements that could lead to more equitable transit access, including:

- **Street design changes to speed up bus service throughout the region**
- **Increasing bus service and operating it more frequently throughout the week**
- **Developing new programs, changing zoning, and increasing funding to expand affordable housing near frequent transit routes**

Transit leaders should develop equity strategies with clearly defined principles and goals; Los Angeles Metro's Equity Platform is a pioneering example. Agencies should also use public engagement methods that garner representative input, and create internal working groups and external advisory groups focused on advancing equity throughout the transit agency.

Want to learn more?

TransitCenter's Equity Dashboard measures how well transit networks in seven U.S. cities connect people who've been marginalized within those metro areas to the jobs, services, and amenities they need to thrive. The Dashboard contains additional resources, including interactive maps of access to opportunity, analysis of how access has changed starting in February 2020, and downloadable data. View it at dashboard.transitcenter.org.

