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# The State of Transportation Access in East Cleveland

**By: Cormac Apostolides, Aaron Rucker, Trevor Wood**

A recent data analysis has revealed striking variations in how income levels can significantly influence the quality of transportation alternatives available to individuals in the center of East Cleveland and its neighboring areas. According to the reports, in addition to the benefits of higher wages, residents of affluent communities like Bratenahl, Shaker Heights, and University Heights also benefit from lower average commute times (Hidalgo). On the other hand, commutes are a little longer in lower-class neighborhoods like Richmond Heights, Euclid, and East Cleveland; interestingly, East Cleveland has the lowest median income. This discrepancy emphasizes how urgently targeted transportation infrastructure upgrades are needed to close the mobility and wealth divides.

The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) has reacted proactively to these discrepancies and the wider need for improved public transit alternatives. Development in the Lorain Avenue corridor will be aided by a \$700,000 grant from the Federal Transit Administration, which was recently awarded. To improve accessibility and promote ridership, this project will link nearby residential and commercial buildings with bus rapid transit routes. The program is a component of a bigger plan to improve transit lines' connectivity to residential and commercial areas. The RTA wants to change urban transportation to be more efficient and equitable for all citizens, regardless of income level, by concentrating on five vital routes. In addition to meeting urgent transportation requirements, this strategic strategy supports larger urban development objectives that promote inclusive, sustainable communities.

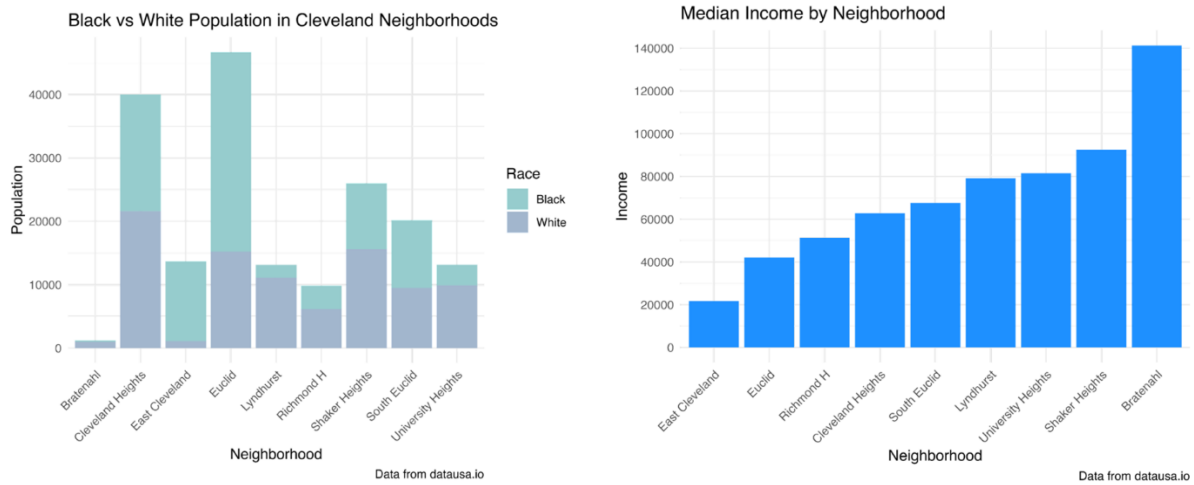
Barkley, Brett, & Gomes examined the problems related to public transportation accessibility for jobs in Northeast Ohio. This paper explored the impact of commuting accessibility on economic possibilities, particularly for low-income and minority groups. When compared to other American urban areas, Northeast Ohio's transportation coverage and frequency are superior. Nonetheless, the accessibility of jobs by public transportation is still below average, suggesting that regional growth and transportation planning are not well coordinated. The report examines the availability of jobs by industry type and skill level across several areas. It reveals differences in employment opportunities according to industry, region, and demographics. The study demonstrated that jobs with a salary of less than \$1250 per month and those with only a high school degree have the fewest career options. The paper also shows that minority and low-income groups find it more difficult to obtain work that suits their qualifications or is close to where they live. This combined with limited public transportation access, makes finding work more challenging. The authors argue for continuing investment and policy focus in these areas to improve the general quality of life in Northeast Ohio, highlighting the importance of efficient public transportation networks and improved job accessibility for social fairness and economic competitiveness.

With a few exceptions in specific areas, Yeganeh et al. discovered that low-income and non-White areas often have greater access to jobs via public transit. This discovery aligns with previous research highlighting the benefits of public transportation for these populations. Higher-income groups typically have easier access to jobs in major areas such as New York, Washington, DC, Chicago, and Houston. This finding supports earlier studies that found a relationship between income levels and the Central Business District (CBD), showing that people from wealthier origins are more likely to live nearer to city centers or to places where the majority of the population is lower income. While income is a significant factor in transit equity analysis, other factors that must be taken into account include racial demographics, the percentage of White residents in a certain area, and the percentage of the population with limited English proficiency. These elements are essential for conducting a detailed analysis of the trends in job accessibility among various populations.

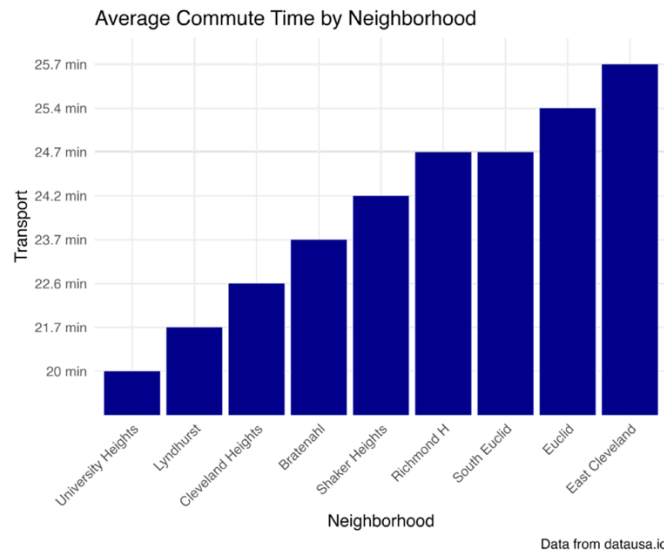
Based on the findings of the extensive research conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and Yeganeh, Armin Jeddi et al., which revealed systemic problems with job availability and public transportation accessibility throughout Northeast Ohio, we now turn our attention to the local effects of these larger trends in East Cleveland. Our research and findings highlight the critical role that public transportation plays in boosting economic competitiveness and social fairness. Shortly, the city of Cleveland and neighboring northeast Ohio cities are investing to renovate and improve public transportation.

Using information from DataUSA.io, we have carried out an investigation on East Cleveland and the surrounding neighborhoods to investigate and enhance the findings by the Federal Reserve of Cleveland and Yeganeh, Armin Jetti, et al. Our goal was to examine how socioeconomic differences within these particular areas impact the quality and accessibility of transportation, both of which are essential for ensuring effective daily commutes and the general well-being of the community.

**Figure 1.** (left) Black versus White population in Cleveland neighborhoods; **Figure 2.** (right) Median income by neighborhood



**Figure 3.** Average commute time by neighborhood



We conducted data analysis of the Black and White populations within East Cleveland and eight surrounding neighborhoods (Figure 2). East Cleveland had the highest Black population with 12,600 and Cleveland Heights had the highest White population with 21,600.

In Figure 3, our analysis of the median income of each neighborhood resulted in East Cleveland being the lowest at \$21,699 and Bratenahl being the highest at \$141,250. These results are significant because they showcase the disparities in wealth between neighborhoods with a high Black population and a high White population.

The data analysis we conducted on average commute time across the neighborhoods revealed East Cleveland having the highest time at 25.7 minutes and University Heights having the shortest time at 20 minutes. These results indicate that neighborhoods with the highest populations of Black citizens are not only less wealthy but take longer to travel where they want to go in the city. The data analysis we conducted for East Cleveland and surrounding neighborhoods revealed critical information about how the level of income can negatively impact the quality of transportation for residents. The results of our data analysis indicate there is a need to change the transportation quality for residents living in East Cleveland. Although the transportation times are roughly comparable between the neighborhoods, East Cleveland needs a sizable increase in transportation to make up for the lack of access to quality jobs.

It is essential to recognize that the relationship between minority populations and transit accessibility is nuanced and varies across different urban contexts. While some minority-majority neighborhoods may indeed face transit deserts, characterized by limited access to public transportation, others may benefit from extensive transit networks driven by factors such as population density, political influence, and historical investment in infrastructure. These variations underscore the need for tailored approaches to addressing transit disparities that consider the unique characteristics and needs of each community. Moreover, income levels further complicate these dynamics, as lower-income households in minority-majority neighborhoods disproportionately rely on public transportation as their primary mode of travel. For these residents, access to reliable and affordable transit is not just a matter of convenience but a fundamental necessity for accessing employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services. Conversely, higher-income residents often gravitate towards neighborhoods with robust transit connectivity, contributing to gentrification pressures and reshaping community demographics.

Policies aimed at improving transit accessibility must adopt a multifaceted and holistic approach that considers the intersecting influences of race, income, and neighborhood characteristics. Targeted investment in transit infrastructure and services should prioritize underserved minority-majority neighborhoods, addressing existing gaps in accessibility and promoting economic development and social inclusion. Additionally, efforts to enhance job access through transit-oriented development, workforce development programs, and affordable housing initiatives can help mitigate the barriers to economic opportunity faced by marginalized communities. Ultimately, addressing the nexus of minority populations, income levels, and transit accessibility in urban neighborhoods requires a concerted effort from policymakers, urban planners, community advocates, and stakeholders. By prioritizing equity and inclusion in transportation planning and policymaking, cities can work towards building more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive communities where all residents have the opportunity to thrive.

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