



Cultivating Connections... **Between Economic Development & Child Care**

Driving Transportation and Child Care Together

Transportation is critical to economic development and childcare

Childcare is part of the infrastructure for economic development and as such can be incorporated in transportation projects, tapping into a new source of public investment (Warner et al, 2004). The Federal Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), can be used to support planning and community services facilities including childcare at transit centers, hubs, or stations. TEA-21 funds have averaged over \$7 billion annually for the past three years (APTA Primer on TEA-21, September 2005). The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) signed into law in August 2005 builds on the foundation of ISTEA and TEA-21, providing guaranteed funding of \$244.1 billion for highways, highway safety and public transit between 2005 and 2009 (Federal Highway Administration, Summary on SAFETEA-LU).

When childcare is close to public transit and home, parental usage of both services can increase

The daily commute for parents includes childcare. Trip-chaining, the combining of several destinations into one route, has become more prominent in private vehicle travel. Most working parents travel additional miles daily between home and work to drop off and pick up children at child care, adding five to six miles daily which effectively results in more than 1,300 extra miles annually (Anderson, 2006). Better connections can also decrease traffic congestion in urban areas. In rural areas, where people do not reside in close proximity to neighbors or amenities, traveling to child care can add even more miles to the daily commute. A similar pattern is likely with those who live in suburban communities and work in downtown areas.

Locating child care at or near residential and employment areas can reduce commute time particularly for working mothers who are five times more likely than fathers to perform morning child care stops and more than three times more likely to perform child care stops in the afternoon (Anderson, 2006). This can be especially useful to low-income parents who are often transit-dependent and less likely to live in communities with quality affordable child care.

Transportation planning and child care - a productive collaboration

Reliable transportation and child care are important issues for working families. Federal financing provides the opportunity for state and local transportation planning agencies to incorporate child care into transportation facilities and development. This could be an important underutilized source of funding for planning and facility development in child care.

➤ The **Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority** (VTA) pooled federal and state transportation funds to create the Tamien Child Care Center adjacent to the Tamien Multimodal station (train, light rail, and bus) in San Jose. The Tamien Center has been able to serve 126 children ages six weeks through 12 years. They have offered parents discounts on public transportation and child care fees (Anderson, 2006). A “guaranteed ride home” program increased participation by allowing parents access to a shared vehicle or taxi to take care of emergencies with their children.

➤ Child care and transportation can also be linked through the land use planning process (Warner et al, 2004). In Butte County, California the **Assessing Child Care Economics Needs and Transportation (ACCENT) project** used transportation funding to incorporate child care into local planning efforts.

➤ Grassroots approaches can be very successful in enabling parents to access transportation, jobs, and child care. The **Wheels to Work** program in **Cayuga County, New York** is a grant program for low-income workers to obtain transportation in the form of a refurbished car.

➤ The **Federal Transit Administration's Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)** program assists welfare recipients and eligible low-income families with transportation to and from jobs. JARC money was used in Albany, NY in 2003 for a project to link transportation and day care (Congressman McNulty press release, July 2003).

➤ The **Rochester-Genesee Welfare to Work Collaborative** is an effort that brings together transportation providers, child care providers, religious leaders, elected officials and business leaders to develop transportation solutions for people moving off of welfare and into jobs (Governor Pataki press release, November 1997).

➤ **Cornell University's 2006 Survey of Economic Development and Child Care** found several examples of initiatives to link child care and transportation in New York State: Broome, Tompkins, Washington, Chemung and Schoharie counties. More communities need to develop such collaborations.

Getting started

Most successful collaborations between transportation and childcare have some common elements (ACCENT, 2002). Involving transportation planners, childcare providers, and business and government leaders is a critical first step.

➤ **Government.** Solutions to bridge the gap between child care and transportation include:

- providing incentives that encourage increased child-centered transportation capacity,
- ensuring that low-income families have access to reliable transportation, and

- assisting childcare providers in developing new facilities that are accessible to working parents.

➤ **Business.** Benefits that address the transportation needs of employees and their children can help businesses support their employees and increase worker productivity and loyalty.

➤ **Economic Development Planning.** Both long-term and short-term planning are key to maintaining quality public and private transportation systems that satisfy the needs of working parents. When economic developers and transportation planners recognize that transportation to and from children's programs is a significant part of the daily commute for families, it can help them to better integrate child care and transportation.

See the ACCENT Project for more details.

Resources

- Anderson, Kristen. *Planning for Child Care in California*. Point Arena, CA: Solano Press Books, 2006.
- National Economic Development and Law Center, ACCENT Project Executive Summary, 2002. http://www.bcoe.org/ess/accent/transp_exe_csummm.pdf
- Mildred Warner et al, *Economic Development Strategies to Promote Quality Child Care*, Cornell University Linking Economic Development & Child Care Research Project, 2004. <http://government.cce.cornell.edu/doc/pdf/EconDevStrat.pdf>
- Ellen Dektar "Linking Child Care and Transportation: An Ongoing Exploration," The LINCC Project Compendium of Research, Discussions and Next Steps, December, 2005. <http://www.lincc-childcare.org/>