

A Mobility Strategy for Improving Opportunity

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Abstract

Postwar changes in the metropolitan settlement structure have profoundly altered the geography of opportunity in the older cities of the Northeast and Midwest. Poverty is concentrated in once-central cities, while employment continues to deconcentrate to the suburbs. In the face of these changes, antipoverty policy has become a geographic exercise of moving people and resources from certain places to other places.

The three main strategies for confronting inner-city poverty are dispersal, development, and mobility. These strategies are discussed and compared, with particular emphasis on the mobility approach. The article argues that the mobility approach—which connects poor inner-city residents to suburban employment opportunities without changing the location of households or firms—is the most promising near-term strategy for combating urban poverty.

Introduction

Sweeping changes in the settlement structure of the United States motivate many strategies designed to reduce inner-city poverty. The phrase “settlement structure” refers to both the physical landscape of buildings and streets and the social landscape of boundaries and routes. Settlement structure is so basic that it is beyond question for most people, like the other basic structure that organizes our lives: time.

The influence of settlement structure, however, is profound. When people lock their car doors as they enter a certain neighborhood, they are reacting to settlement structure. When people buy homes based on school district, they are responding to settlement structure. When you make a quick exit off the expressway as dozens of brake lights appear, you are reacting to settlement structure. Settlement structure is the way all these diverse aspects of our lives—houses and schools, routes and travel times, neighborhoods and personal safety—are related. And our mental map of the settlement structure is our way of navigating the complex terrain in which we live our lives.

Antipoverty strategists are no less dependent on mental maps. In recent years, they have recognized settlement structure as an obstacle to their goals (Galster and Mincy 1993; Hughes 1989). Consequently, most antipoverty strategies are attempts to change where poor people live or work. They propose to move poor people from bad locations to good locations, or they propose to transform bad locations into good locations by moving good things around. Consider scattered-site public housing programs that seek to disperse low-income households from slums to good neighborhoods. Or think of enterprise zone programs that seek to rebuild the employment base of once-central cities by attracting firms that would otherwise locate elsewhere. In a fundamental way, these are geographic exercises.

In this volume, Galster and Killen (1995) have deepened our understanding of these issues by developing a conceptual framework for studying the geography of metropolitan opportunity. Their framework breaks fertile new ground for cultivating ideas about objective spatial variations in social systems, markets, and institutions and about subjective perceptions of this opportunity structure as mediated by the local social network.

In this article I examine a key aspect of objective spatial variation in metropolitan labor markets: the suburbanization of employment. I also briefly portray conditions of concentrated poverty and racial segregation in the United States. The statistics cited will be familiar to most readers; my contribution here will be to present up-to-date information for the nation's largest metropolitan areas. Elsewhere, I present detailed information on the changing location of employment in a group of large metropolitan areas (Hughes 1993). My intention here is not to measure impacts and test hypotheses regarding cause and effect. In particular, I will not be in a position to establish the effect of job suburbanization on inner-city poverty. One reason debates about this effect (and about settlement structure and poverty in general) go round and round is that conventional data and methods are no match for the complexities at issue, although the Galster and Killen framework makes some progress in this regard. Instead, the intention here is simply to establish a reasonable case for experimenting with an antipoverty strategy that might mitigate the effects of job suburbanization. Those effects may turn out to be irrelevant to, or only a very small part of, poverty and employment in the inner city. But only a well-conceived demonstration will ever answer this question adequately.

In the second half of the article, I discuss the implications for antipoverty strategy of poverty concentration and job

suburbanization. Particular emphasis is placed on a strategy that is now a small part of President Clinton's empowerment zone program and the centerpiece of Senator Bill Bradley's mobility-to-work legislation. This strategy is designed to connect inner-city residents to suburban employment via a combination of training, placement, and support services delivered through a partnership that would build bridges across metropolitan areas and across areas of programmatic responsibility. In a series of reports and conferences, I have proposed such a "mobility strategy" (Hughes 1989). As I stress throughout this article, however, many questions remain regarding the mobility strategy; the prudent course of action is a well-designed demonstration in a few places.

In one of the most important statements of antipoverty strategy during the 1960s, Anthony Downs (1968) wrote of the need to "envision alternative futures for the American ghetto" as a prerequisite to formulating strategies to combat inner-city poverty. With such a vision in place, Downs argues, the policy strategist can identify the actors needed to realize the alternative future, enumerate the incentives needed to motivate those actors, and name or invent the mechanisms needed to allow key actors to pursue those incentives. This article is presented in the spirit of Downs's policy strategizing. I attempt to portray current conditions, draw working conclusions about the policy implications of those conditions, propose strategies that might improve those conditions, and present a case for employing demonstration research to help sort out policy options.

Geography is certainly history, but it need not be destiny. By examining the geography of metropolitan opportunity, we may come to understand how inner cities have been assaulted by change in recent decades and how the residents of our inner cities can be helped to avoid the grim destiny these changes portend.

The geography of isolation

Since the end of World War II, the United States has built enormous metropolitan settlements that now organize the daily lives of most Americans. A majority of the U.S. population resides in metropolitan areas containing a million or more persons, and a quarter of Americans now reside in the eight largest consolidated

metropolitan statistical areas¹ (CMSAs), the best unit for observing the full growth of our metropolitan settlements.²

In the 1990s, metropolitan areas are no longer dominated by their so-called central cities. Instead, most residences and workplaces are located beyond big-city boundaries in a new kind of suburbia that we are still struggling to understand (Downs 1989; Frey and Speare 1991; Garreau 1991). Poverty and disadvantage are concentrated in the former central cities. This section compares conditions in cities and suburbs in the eight largest metropolitan areas and four additional metropolitan areas.³

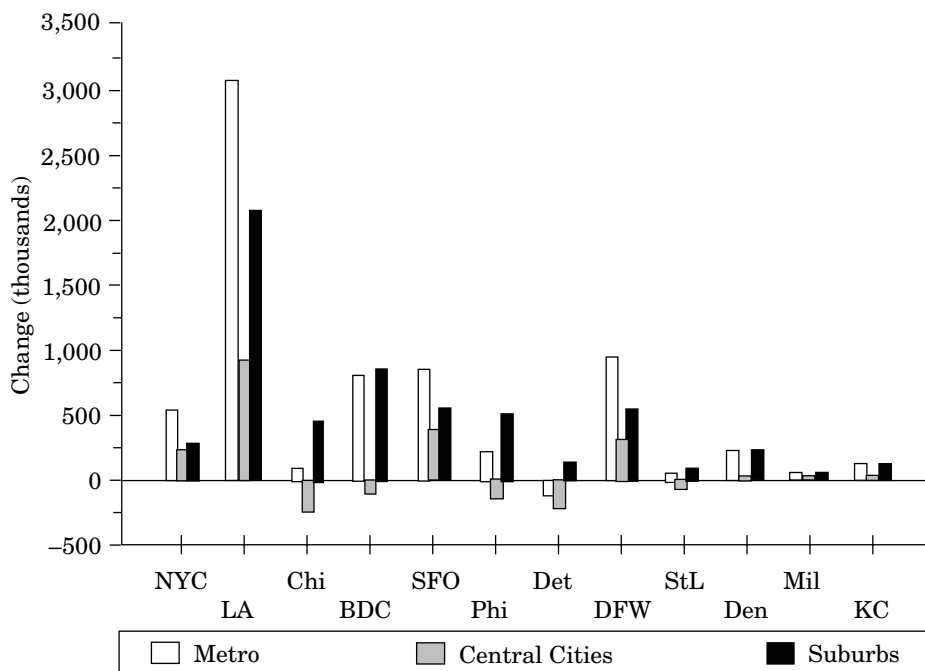
In figure 1 the change in population from 1980 to 1990 is shown for these metropolitan areas and their central cities and suburbs. Of these dozen metropolitan areas, all but metropolitan Detroit gained in total population during the 1980s. The metropolitan areas are arranged in the figure from left to right in order of total population size in 1990. Although metropolitan New York–Newark is still the largest settlement, by far the largest increase in population occurred in metropolitan Los Angeles (3 million

¹ These eight CMSAs are New York–Northern New Jersey–Long Island, NY-NJ-CT; Los Angeles–Anaheim–Riverside, CA; Chicago–Gary–Lake County, IL-IN-WI; Washington–Baltimore, DC-MD-VA; San Francisco–Oakland–San Jose, CA; Philadelphia–Wilmington–Trenton, PA-NJ-DE-MD; Detroit–Ann Arbor, MI; and Dallas–Fort Worth, TX (defined as of April 1, 1990, with the exception of the newly consolidated Washington–Baltimore region, which I have adopted to conform with current practice).

² What follows is a very abbreviated version of confusing Census Bureau definitions. For more detail, see U.S. Bureau of the Census (1991, appendix 1). A metropolitan statistical area (MSA) begins with a city that, with contiguous densely settled territory, constitutes an urbanized area (another Census Bureau definition) of at least 50,000 population. Any county with at least 50 percent of its population residing within this central urbanized area is designated the (or a) central county of the MSA. Outlying counties are added to the MSA if their resident population exceeds certain thresholds regarding (1) commuting to the central county and (2) population density. Finally, adjacent MSAs are consolidated if total commuting between them exceeds 15 percent of the workers in the smaller MSA and if the combined population of the CMSA exceeds 1 million. It is because of these commuting relationships that this article focuses on CMSAs rather than on their component MSAs. (The component MSAs of a CMSA are designated as primary metropolitan statistical areas, or PMSAs.) Also important for this article is the definition of the central cities of metropolitan areas. Central cities include the largest city in an MSA, all other cities with a population over 250,000 or employment over 100,000, and all other cities with a population exceeding 25,000 and an employment/residence ratio exceeding 0.75.

³ The four additional areas are Denver–Boulder, CO; Kansas City, MO-KS; Milwaukee–Racine, WI; and St. Louis, MO-IL.

Figure 1. Change in Population, 1980–1990, for Entire Metropolitan Area, Central Cities Total, and Suburban Total



Note: BDC = Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA; Chi = Chicago-Gary-Lake County, IL-IN-WI; Den = Denver-Boulder, CO; Det = Detroit-Ann Arbor, MI; DFW = Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; KC = Kansas City, MO-KS; LA = Los Angeles-Anaheim-Riverside, CA; Mil = Milwaukee-Racine, WI; NYC = New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT; Phi = Philadelphia-Wilmington-Trenton, PA-NJ-DE-MD; SFO = San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA; StL = St. Louis, MO-IL.

versus 0.5 million). In fact, the four largest gains in population occurred in Sun Belt metropolitan areas—Los Angeles, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Francisco-Oakland and the North-South “border” metropolitan statistical area (MSA) of Washington-Baltimore.

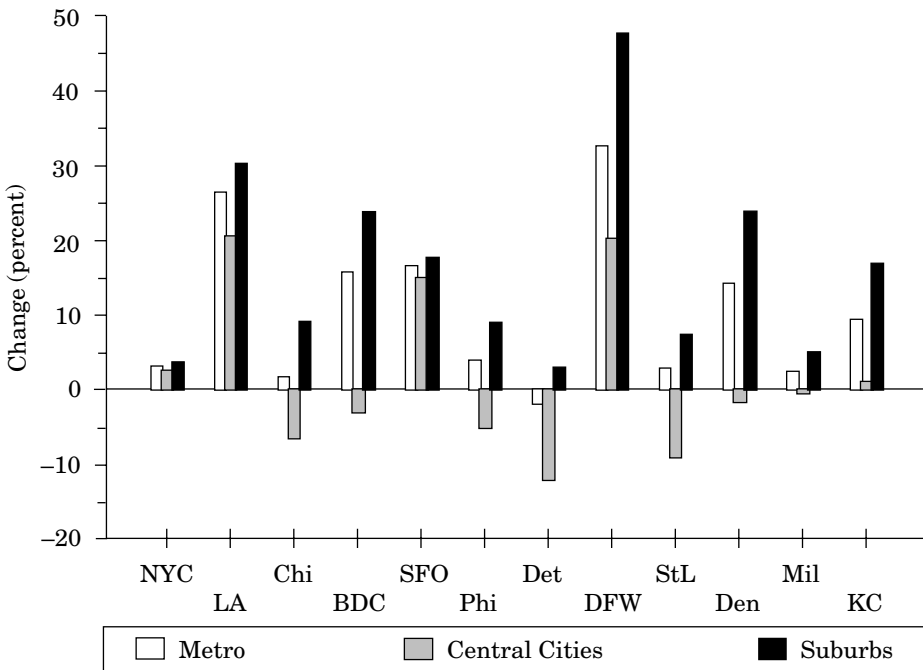
However, consider where this population growth was located within the metropolitan areas. In seven areas, the central cities lost population during the 1980s. Perhaps the most dramatic shift was in metropolitan Washington-Baltimore, where the central cities lost population even though the CMSA gained nearly a million new residents—all of them in the suburbs. Metropolitan Chicago had the largest decline in central-city population, losing more than 250,000 persons during the 1980s. Even the cities with the largest population growth during the 1980s (Los Angeles, San Francisco-Oakland, and Dallas-Fort Worth) captured only about one-third of their metropolitan

growth. The older regions of the Northeast and Midwest have declining central cities and growing suburbs (the exception, again, is New York–Newark). The newer metropolitan areas of the West and South have growing cities and faster growing suburbs (the exception is Denver).

To control for the relative size of the city and suburban populations, I compare the percentage change in city and suburban populations in each metropolitan area (figure 2). In none of these metropolitan areas is city population growth, if any, keeping pace with suburban population growth.

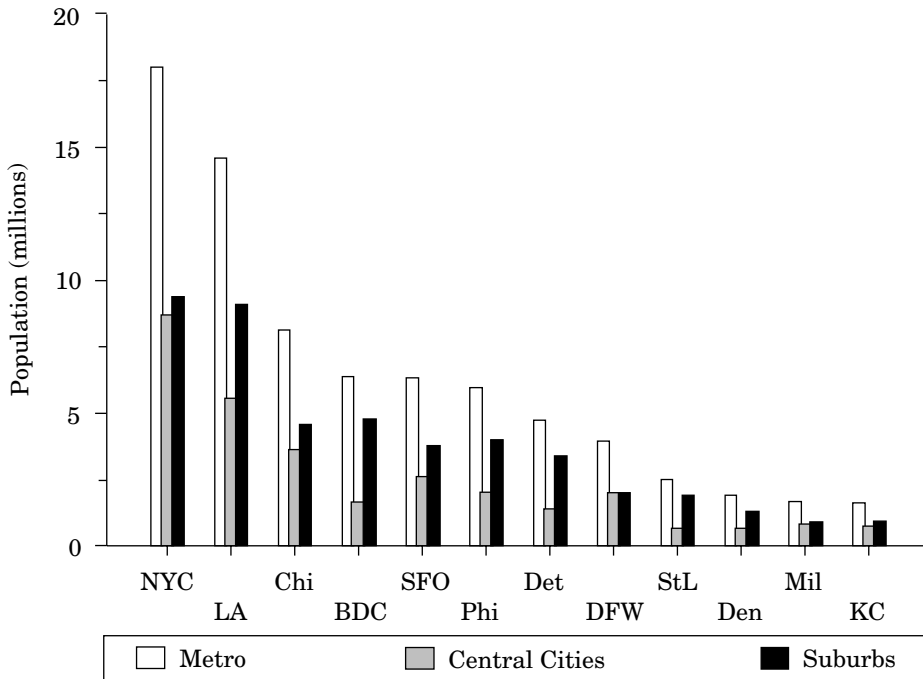
By 1990, this process of population suburbanization had gone so far that suburban residents outnumbered city residents in all 12 of the metropolitan areas. In figure 3 are displayed the 1990 populations for cities, suburbs, and the metropolitan area as a whole. The differences in the degree of suburbanization across metropolitan areas are apparent. Washington and Baltimore, Detroit, St. Louis, and Philadelphia are less than half the size of their surrounding suburbs, while Dallas and Fort Worth,

Figure 2. Percentage Change in Population, 1980–1990, for Entire Metropolitan Area, Central Cities Total, and Suburban Total



Note: See figure 1 for explanation of abbreviations.

Figure 3. Population in 1990 for Entire Metropolitan Area, Central Cities, and Suburbs

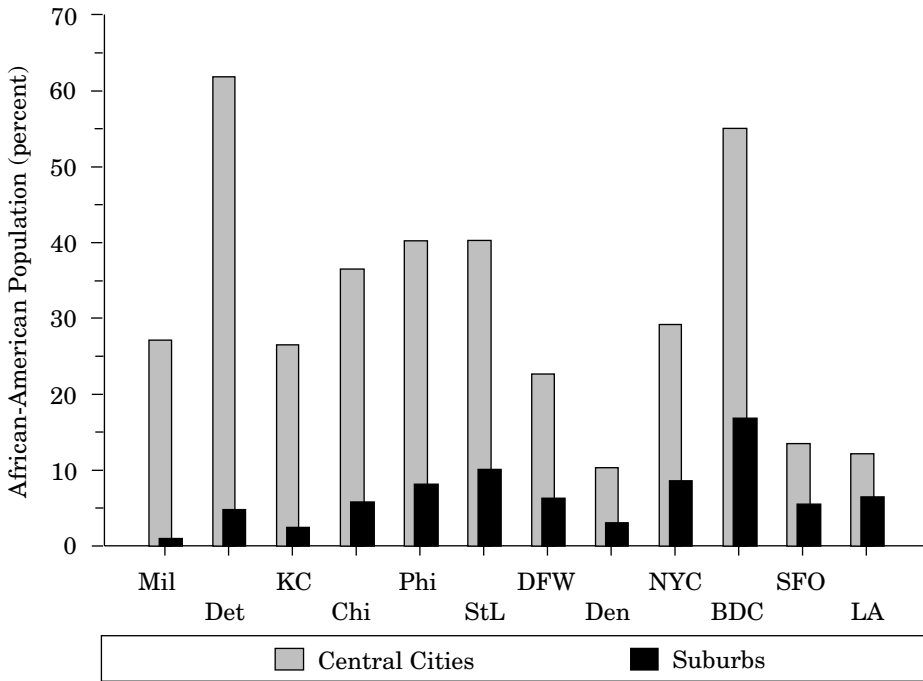


Note: See figure 1 for explanation of abbreviations.

New York and Newark, and Chicago and Gary are about the same size as their surrounding suburbs. Because of these differences, it is more revealing to compare metropolitan areas by using the percentage of persons in poverty or unemployed. This method is followed in the remainder of this section.

It is important to note that this process of suburbanization has not been uniform. The most extreme example is the continuing concentration of African Americans in central cities. In general, African Americans are more segregated than any other ethnic group, and nationally this segregation has declined only modestly as black incomes and education have risen (Massey 1990; Massey and Denton 1987). In figure 4, this segregation is portrayed at the very gross scale of cities and suburbs. In metropolitan Chicago, for example, the central cities were 36.3 percent black and the suburbs were 5.6 percent black. That is, the city percent black in metropolitan Chicago was 6.5 times the suburban percent black. With no racial segregation, the percentage in the cities and suburbs would be the same. Thus, since metropolitan Chicago as a whole was 19.2 percent black in 1990, the cities in the region had about twice and the suburbs had about

Figure 4. Percentage African American, 1990, in Central Cities and Suburbs



Note: See figure 1 for explanation of abbreviations.

one-quarter as many African Americans as they would have had with no racial segregation.

In every one of these metropolitan areas, the percentage of the city population that was African American was at least twice as high as the suburban percentage, and in half of them it was at least four times as high. Note that the columns have been re-arranged to give us additional information. Metropolitan areas are presented in the figure in order of their ratio of city and suburban percent black, from most divergent on the left to least divergent on the right. In Milwaukee, the most divergent metropolitan area, the central cities were 26.9 percent black and the suburbs were 0.8 percent. Even in metropolitan areas with large suburban African-American populations, the pattern of black city and white suburbs remains very strong.⁴ For example, the Washington-Baltimore CMSA has the nation's largest suburban

⁴ Non-Hispanic whites are a majority in the suburbs of all 12 metropolitan areas. In fact, the suburbs are more than 80 percent white in nine of the metropolitan areas (all except Los Angeles, San Francisco-Oakland, and Washington-Baltimore).

black population: 788,000 in 1990. This is more than three times Chicago's suburban black population. But suburban Washington-Baltimore still had only about two-thirds as many suburban blacks as it would have if there were no racial concentration. (And of course, this level of analysis neglects the fact that a substantial fraction of the Washington-Baltimore CMSA's suburban blacks live in a single county of the region—Prince George's County, Maryland. As this example shows, suburbanization alone is a poor indicator of integration.)

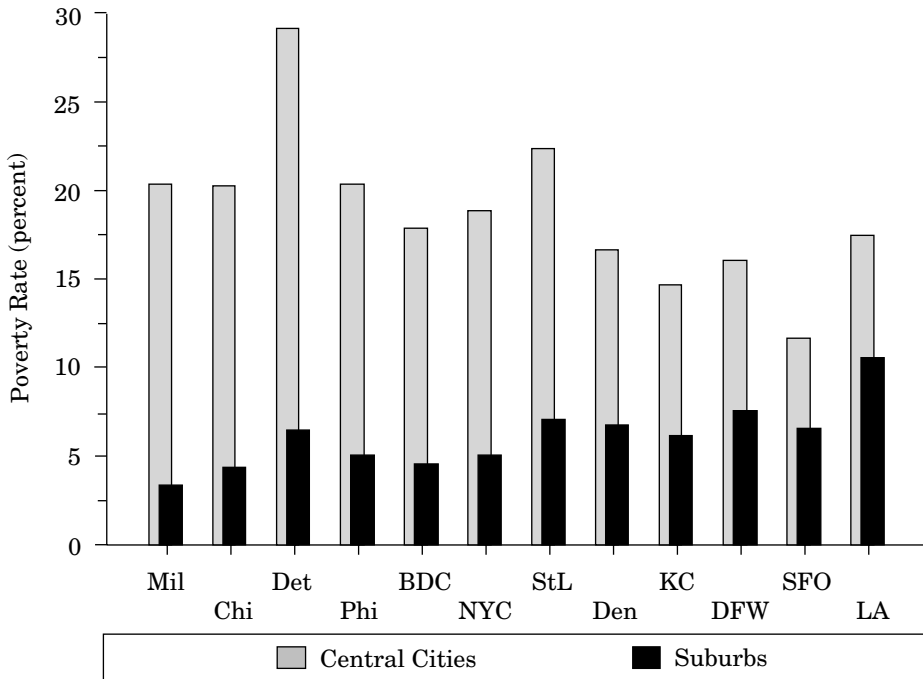
So, cities remain disproportionately black, and in every one of the study areas, most metropolitan African Americans reside in central cities. This discussion is not intended to substitute for an examination of racial segregation at the level of neighborhoods, which is the scale to which most people refer when they speak of segregation. The intention is simply to demonstrate the degree to which African Americans are concentrated in central cities.⁵ The following graphs present some of the economic conditions (poverty, unemployment, and job growth) in these central cities compared with those in their surrounding suburbs. The fact that these problems are borne disproportionately by African Americans has implications for policy strategy.

The poverty rates in cities and suburbs are compared in figure 5. Again, the metropolitan areas are arrayed from left to right in descending order of the city/suburban ratio of rates. Cities are much poorer than suburbs: In metropolitan Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia, central cities are four times poorer; in metropolitan Washington-Baltimore, New York, St. Louis, and Denver, cities are three times poorer; and in metropolitan Kansas City, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Francisco-Oakland, and Los Angeles, cities are about twice as poor as their suburbs.

In this graph, and in the later graphs, there is a strong regional pattern: The metropolitan areas fall into nearly perfect Frost Belt and Sun Belt categories. Metropolitan Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington-Baltimore (a border area), New York, and St. Louis have the greatest disparities between city and suburbs. Metropolitan Denver, Kansas City, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Francisco-Oakland, and Los Angeles have the smallest disparities.

As used here, Frost Belt and Sun Belt are catchall terms for the many dimensions along which these metropolitan areas differ.

⁵ The general pattern holds for all minorities. To facilitate the exposition, the focus here is on African Americans. Those interested in more detail on residential patterns should see White (1987).

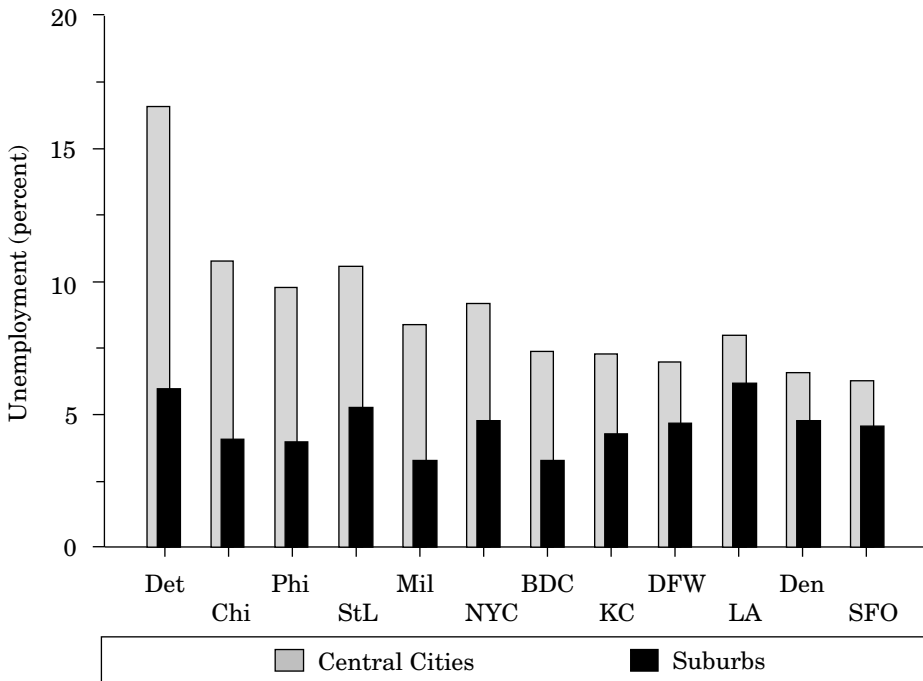
Figure 5. Poverty Rates, 1990, in Central Cities and Suburbs

Note: See figure 1 for explanation of abbreviations.

Obviously, climate is one. History is another. The Frost Belt metropolitan areas expanded to metropolitan scale earlier than the Sun Belt metropolitan areas. This history holds implications for the demography of these areas, for the age of their housing stock and infrastructure, for the types of industries located there, and so on. The areas also differ in the technology of their settlement structure. For example, the commuter transportation system of Chicago is not simply older than that of Dallas–Fort Worth; it is also based on a different technology. Chicago depends on a mix of trains based on fixed-rail systems and automobiles based on road systems. Dallas–Fort Worth is almost wholly dependent on automobiles.

Unemployment rates in cities and suburbs are shown in figure 6. The metropolitan areas are arranged from the largest city/suburban difference in rates on the left to the smallest difference on the right. The differences range from 11 percentage points in metropolitan Detroit to less than 2 points in San Francisco–Oakland. The unemployment differences between cities and suburbs are smaller than the differences in poverty rates. This is not surprising. People can be poor for many reasons: They may be elderly, disabled, children in poor households, unemployed, or

Figure 6. Unemployment Rates, 1990, in Central Cities and Suburbs



Note: See figure 1 for explanation of abbreviations.

employed but paid low wages. The unemployment rate, however, is a very different kind of indicator. It focuses on a specific group of people: adults of working age who are actively looking for work and cannot find it. It does not include people who might be so discouraged by their prospects that they have given up looking, nor does it include people who might be working part-time but would rather work full-time or people who, some might say, are too lazy to look for work. It is a much more powerful indicator than poverty rates of the disadvantage of city residence.

In every metropolitan area, the city unemployment rate is higher than the suburban unemployment rate. In every Rust Belt metropolitan area (on the graph, from Detroit to Washington-Baltimore), the city rate is at least 4 points higher than the suburban rate (it is also at least twice the suburban rate). Once again, the Sun Belt metropolitan areas display less disparity between city and suburbs: 2- to 3-point differences in each case.

Much has been written about the link between inner-city poverty and unemployment on the one hand and the suburbanization of unemployment on the other. This link is known to social scientists as the “spatial mismatch” hypothesis, and the debate

over its veracity is now 30 years old (Silver, White, and Iceland 1993). Although this article is clearly sympathetic to the mismatch hypothesis, it will not contribute to the complex scientific debate on the question. I simply suggest why the mismatch seems like such a compelling partial explanation for inner-city poverty. Again, the test would come only from a well-designed demonstration.

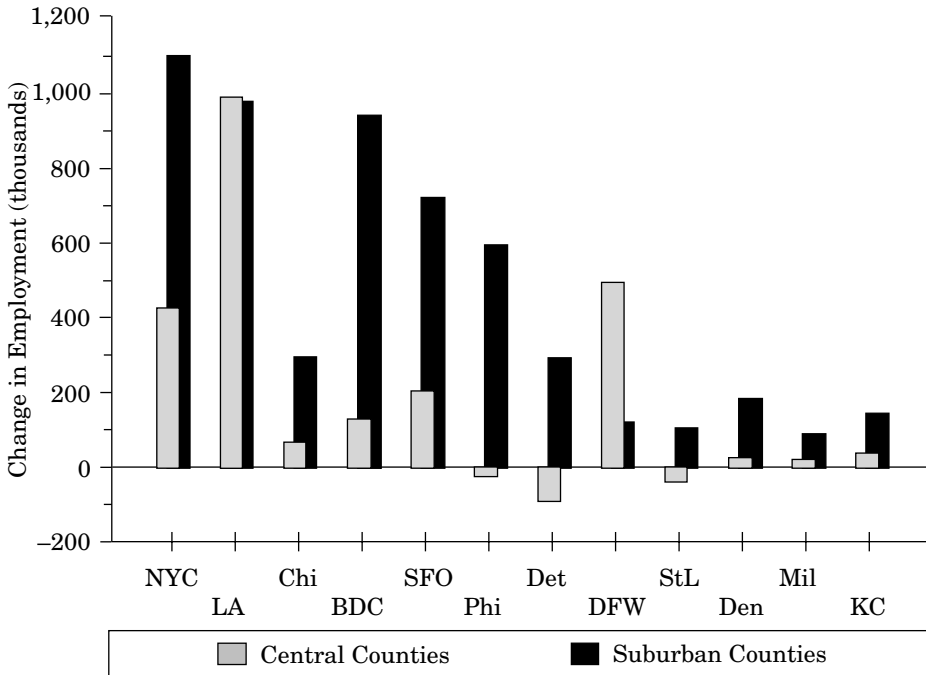
Many statements of spatial mismatch use very simple categories, such as cities and suburbs, to document job suburbanization. Many conventional data sources report only this level of geographical detail. In fact, it is difficult to get even city-level employment data for census decades. Most studies must rely on county-level data to track changes in employment at the location of the job.

The change in employment between 1980 and 1990 for central counties and suburban counties in each metropolitan area is shown in figure 7 (see footnote 2 for the definition of central county). The reliance on county data has three important consequences. First, employment numbers are not comparable with all the preceding numbers, which have been based on central cities, not central counties. Second, the relationship between cities and counties varies widely across metropolitan areas. For example, Philadelphia City and County have the same boundary, while Los Angeles City and all of its primary metropolitan statistical area suburbs are contained within Los Angeles County; thus, in Philadelphia “central county” equals “central city,” whereas in Los Angeles “central county” equals “primary metropolitan statistical area.” Third, since central counties are usually much larger than the central cities they contain, the figure understates the degree to which new jobs are located outside central cities. That is, new jobs located outside Los Angeles City but inside Los Angeles County are counted as central, not suburban, in figure 7.

In spite of this last bias, an enormous degree of employment suburbanization during the 1980s is apparent from the figure. In almost every metropolitan area, employment growth was disproportionately located in the suburban counties. In six of the eight largest metropolitan areas, most, if not all, job growth during the 1980s was in the suburbs. In eight of nine areas chosen for further study because of their extreme job suburbanization, more than 90 percent of job growth was outside the central county. The only exception was the San Francisco–Oakland CMSA.⁶

⁶ Because of the definitions discussed above, the San Francisco–Oakland CMSA counts all of Alameda County (which contains Oakland) as “central.”

Figure 7. Change in Employment, 1980–1990, in Central and Suburban Counties



Note: See figure 1 for explanation of abbreviations.

The suburbs appear to be the engines of employment growth in these 12 metropolitan areas.

In sum, there is an extreme pattern in these metropolitan areas: Poverty and joblessness are concentrated in formerly central cities, while prosperity and job growth are deconcentrating toward the metropolitan periphery.⁷

⁷ Readers of the scholarly literature on spatial mismatch will note, with Harry Holzer, that mismatch can be said to exist only if labor supply does not adjust to changing labor demand—in our terms, spatial mismatch would exist if a change in employment location (labor demand) was not followed by a change in residential location or commuting patterns (both labor supply). For policy purposes it is more important, in my judgment, to document where the jobless are now, so I omit a discussion of how local joblessness has changed over time. But the dynamic effect is the proper measure for the mismatch issue itself. Although not the agenda here, it can be demonstrated that city and suburban unemployment rates diverged during the 1980s. I have not correlated the divergence of rates with the suburbanization of employment across my small (and biased) sample of metropolitan areas, but the Rust Belt areas had the greatest divergence. For a discussion of the salient research issues, see Holzer (1991).

But these data raise more questions than they settle. First, we must understand employment changes in the actual central cities of these metropolitan areas. This is important for making comparisons with the earlier data on central-city poverty, but it is even more important for policy studies. Cities are jurisdictions within which decisions are made and services delivered. City boundaries often mark stark differences in race, taxation, school quality, and presumably in employment change. Central counties are a poor marker for central cities, especially when we focus on the real world of policy making and implementing. Second, most previous studies of employment location within metropolitan areas have reported only county-level data. However, because counties are so large, this technique represents only a small improvement over the simple separation into city totals and suburban totals. This separation is not helpful when it comes to employment location because it creates the impression that jobs are scattered across the suburban countryside. To clarify our understanding of employment suburbanization, we need information on what is occurring at the local level within suburbia, where patterns of job location probably have more to do with interstate highways than county boundaries. Only at this level of detail can we usefully consider the accessibility of suburban jobs for central-city residents.

Antipoverty strategy as a geographic exercise⁸

In the face of this powerful metropolitan pattern—poverty at the center, opportunity on the edge—the search for an antipoverty strategy takes on a profoundly geographic character. For a quarter-century, policy analysts and advocates have been talking, often implicitly, about reconfiguring geography. The goals have been to decentralize problems or recentralize solutions. The means have been to change the location of housing, employment, racial and income groups, public services, and so on. Any strategy that attempts to reduce inner-city poverty, especially through work, must engage in this geographic exercise.

I have noted elsewhere the three basic strategies of dispersal, development, and mobility (Hughes 1991). Briefly, the dispersal strategy seeks to decentralize the housing of the poor from the city to the suburbs. The development strategy seeks to recentralize employment from the suburbs to the city. The mobility strategy seeks to connect the ghetto poor to suburban

⁸ Portions of this section are excerpted from Hughes (1993), with permission from The Urban Institute.

opportunities as a tool for pursuing both the increased choices of a dispersal strategy and the community building of a development strategy. In the remainder of this section, I describe each strategy and discuss the particular strengths and weaknesses of each. The three strategies play off each other in complex ways, and I conclude with a discussion of these interactions.

The dispersal strategy

The dispersal strategy is the most straightforward and constitutionally compelling of the three strategic approaches. It is straightforward because it takes seriously the observation that there are few jobs and bad schools in the city but many jobs and good schools in the suburbs and focuses on unlocking the suburban gates that exclude the poor and blacks. It is constitutionally compelling because surely U.S. citizens have a right to live anywhere they can afford. The strategic goal is to provide the ghetto poor with the opportunities that come with a suburban residence: newer, lower density housing in safer, cleaner neighborhoods with better funded schools and a growing labor market. The dispersal strategy has three broad mechanisms. First, there are civil-rights-based efforts to ensure that people are not excluded from housing markets they can afford because of race (or religion or, in some states, family size or type). Second, there are land-use-based efforts to reform local zoning laws that restrict the construction of housing types (multifamily units, rental units with several bedrooms, and so on) that make housing more affordable for low-income households. Third, there are public-housing-based efforts to disperse the construction of new public housing units and subsidize rentals throughout the metropolitan housing market by means of vouchers.

One acute tension within the dispersal strategy arises between its goals for housing provision and its goals for access to suburban employment and public services. By attempting to reconfigure the geography of low-income residence, dispersal strategies are inevitably related to housing policy. And in the current low-income housing climate, in which construction and subsidy budgets are highly constrained and existing (highly centralized) public housing stock is too valuable to be abandoned, dispersal policy and housing policy often conflict.

Further, the political obstacles to fully implementing a dispersal strategy are enormous. Many actors have incentives to thwart the dispersal strategy, and these actors have many mechanisms at their disposal. Our fragmented, parochial systems of metropolitan government could hardly be better designed to

prevent dispersal. It is difficult to see what local (that is, implementing) political interest is served by dispersal. Even big-city politicians would, under a successful dispersal campaign, only lose or decrease the minority constituencies that have helped elect minority mayors and congressional representatives. And finally, the dispersal outcome is inherently unstable. The strategy could enforce mechanisms that ensure the right of poor blacks to enter a particular neighborhood or jurisdiction, but no conceivable mechanisms could prevent affluent whites from then moving out.

The best known dispersal strategy is the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program of the Chicago Housing Authority. This program has helped about 5,000 African-American families leave virtually all-black Chicago public housing for predominantly white city neighborhoods and suburbs. Careful research has shown that the moves have had significant positive effects on the lives of both adults and children in the households (Rosenbaum 1991; Rosenbaum and Popkin 1991). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development plans a \$240 million expansion of the Gautreaux experiment to five metropolitan areas across the country.

Conducting small-scale experiments in more cities and suburbs will be a useful exercise. But the real question looming before Gautreaux, and all dispersal strategies, is the scale question. How large could a Gautreaux program become before it would face the fiscal constraints and political obstacles noted above? Even longtime advocates of Gautreaux in Chicago recognize the political limits to implementing the strategy beyond the few thousand who now participate (Davis 1993). Simply consider that for African Americans to be represented in the Chicago CMSA suburbs in proportion to their presence in the metropolitan area (which is 27 percent black as a whole), the size of the suburban black population would have to quadruple, from 250,000 (in 1990) to 1 million. Likewise, for poor people to be represented in the Chicago CMSA suburbs in proportion to their presence in the metropolitan area (which is 11 percent poor as a whole), the size of the suburban poor population would have to increase by more than 300,000, from 190,000 (in 1990) to 500,000.

The development strategy

The development strategy takes a different approach, although it moves from the same observation: Poverty is concentrated at the

center of the metropolitan area; opportunity is dispersing toward its periphery. Cognizant of the considerable political obstacles to dispersal, development strategists attempt to recentralize some of the opportunities associated with suburban residence, mainly employment opportunities. The development strategy is also quite straightforward in that it seeks to return the system to an earlier state: Jobs have left the central city, so policy should intervene to induce their return.

Two related arguments often accompany the development strategy. These were probably best articulated by Downs (1968) and Harrison (1974). One of the great risks of the dispersal strategy is that it would dissipate the political strength of minority groups, particularly blacks. Much of this political strength comes from the leverage commanded by black pluralities or majorities in central cities. In effect, residential segregation has created the possibility of black representation in mayoral and congressional elections. The dispersal strategy inherently breaks up poor, minority residential concentrations in the central city and thus would diminish the electoral base founded on these residential concentrations.

A second and somewhat related argument made by development strategists is that geographic distance is a trivial barrier between blacks and suburban jobs. The far more important barrier, they argue, is racial discrimination. Dispersing the residences of inner-city blacks would do nothing to alter this discrimination in the labor market; blacks would face the same practices if they lived in the suburbs. Better to enrich the opportunities of the ghetto, say the development strategists, since discrimination would presumably be lower in the city than the suburbs.

The major contemporary urban program consonant with the development strategy is urban enterprise zones, which have received much criticism as ineffective and costly (Boarnet and Bogart 1993; Glickman 1984). Although enterprise zones may be politically important for the retention of firms in some central cities, it would be very costly to attract enough employment to address the needs of the impacted ghetto. Perhaps most important, critics have long argued that development strategies do nothing to overcome patterns of metropolitan segregation and even encourage “separate but equal” communities—the point being that such communities would be anything but equal in reality (Downs 1968). John F. Kain and Joseph J. Persky (1969) considered ghetto development policies to be a “morally objectionable” acquiescence to racism.

The mobility strategy

Both the dispersal and development strategies have compelling arguments in their favor. Unfortunately, each also offers powerful critiques of the other. Each works against a set of entrenched local interests. Dispersal strategists underestimate the politics of our metropolitan settlements, which provide numerous mechanisms to prevent dispersal. Development strategists underestimate the economics of employment suburbanization, which has relocated jobs to the metropolitan periphery for reasons that would be costly to reverse, if they could be reversed at all.

The goal of the mobility strategy is to reconnect the ghetto to opportunity in ways that leverage a variety of local interests. That connection has been disrupted by metropolitan decentralization and other factors. The ghetto was once the place of low-cost housing adjacent to entry-level employment. The components of the mobility strategy are designed to restore that connection by exploiting the very incentives created by decentralization. City residents get access to economic opportunity without sacrificing community networks such as extended family and institutional affiliations. Suburban employers get access to the entry-level workers who are hard to find in suburban labor markets. City governments retain voters who have received the benefits of the strategy. Suburban governments get a reduction in housing development pressures driven by the increasing labor demand. A well-designed program strategy would create mechanisms that allow these actors to act on these incentives.

This is not the proper forum for a full discussion of an operational model of the mobility strategy. (Public/Private Ventures is now engaged in a one-year demonstration planning project involving local partners in 10 metropolitan areas and being funded by five private foundations and two federal agencies.) But in broad outline, the model would consist of three program mechanisms. First, a partnership would connect inner-city residents with suburban employers. Within the framework of the nation's largest employment program for the disadvantaged, the Job Training Partnership Act, this would mean an alliance of city and suburban service delivery areas that now divide metropolitan labor markets into distinct territories. This administrative geography has the unfortunate effect of consigning inner-city residents to the slackest places in a metropolitan labor market (the central city or county) and stranding suburban employers in the tightest places (suburban counties or groups of counties).

The second program mechanism in a mobility strategy would be a targeted commute that makes suburban destinations that are now unreachable by inner-city residents accessible. These destinations are unreachable because of a lack of public transit services from inner-city origins or the expense of acquiring, maintaining, and protecting private automobiles. The targeted commute might be delivered in a variety of ways: new or extended transit, coordinated ride sharing or vanpooling, or subsidies for automobile purchasing and insurance. The idea is simply to exploit incentives regarding these transportation options (access to jobs and workers, scale economies of shared transportation, cleaner air, reduced traffic). The third program element would involve support services to address problems generated or exacerbated by the journey to work. For example, child care might be complicated for a worker who depended on a targeted commute that may not run in the middle of a shift. A guaranteed ride-home provision might be needed to support a worker who needs to pick up a sick child. Also, programs might require services to help inner-city residents navigate both the opportunities and the dangers of the suburbs, as many of them will be there for the first time in their lives.

The mobility strategy builds on earlier efforts; none of its components are new. In particular, the central transportation components were the subject of a series of program demonstrations during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The mobility strategy has been the subject of sufficient interest during the past few years that it has attracted some criticism, including research by the Drachman Institute (1992).

The Drachman Institute paper makes a good presentation of the evidence from the early demonstrations; however, the report presents its own survey of contemporary programs as evidence somehow comparable with that provided by the earlier demonstration research. Although the Drachman report provides thoughtful discussions of many operations, it exhibits a limited capacity to identify programs in the field, let alone evaluate them. Twice (pp. 30 and 51) the report states its inability to find programs. In fact, a study by the American Public Transit Association (1993) identified programs in each place in which the Drachman report found nothing and implied that nothing existed.

A prominent flaw in these criticisms is that they build a straw man called “reverse commuting” and then declare its inadequacy for confronting inner-city poverty. I do not disagree that ad hoc transportation to suburban employers has had and surely would

have a minimal effect on ghetto unemployment. However, the point is that we have no adequate demonstrations of contemporary programs that seek to address the broader mobility needs of the inner-city poor.

Inner-city poverty and metropolitan settlement structure are complicated. It will take a comprehensive array of programs and a sustainable coalition of actors to change them. No single program and no single agency can effect real change. We must display the imagination to look beyond failed or struggling programs to well-designed strategies that articulate responses to well-known difficulties, such as helping transportation services survive the transition from serving job seekers to serving job commuters, discrimination by white employers and coworkers toward minority workers, and the likelihood that some participants will no longer need transportation services as they eventually acquire private transportation. All these problems are real, and no existing program has addressed them adequately. This is why I suggest a major demonstration.

Another criticism of the mobility strategy is that it appears to maintain historic patterns of residential segregation. The mobility strategy appears to be the kind of "separate but equal" approach that is so effectively damned by dispersal strategists. But caricatures of the mobility strategy as American apartheid, with transit passes drawn as "day permits" for black workers to enter white enclaves, are misplaced. The mobility strategy is formulated within formidable political constraints.

To be sure, the difficulty of a policy goal is no reason not to pursue it. Instead, there are at least three related counter-arguments to criticisms of the mobility strategy that are based on its supposed maintenance of residential segregation. First, although it is probably not a sufficient condition, greater socio-economic parity between whites and blacks is almost certainly a necessary condition for sustainable residential integration. The mobility strategy attempts to achieve that parity by enhancing African-American opportunities in the labor market. Thus, the mobility strategy, by integrating the workplace first, might be an instrumental, though admittedly incremental, step toward eventual neighborhood integration.

Second, there are many arenas in which we may work out our racist attitudes and actions. Explicitly geographic arenas include residential neighborhoods, places of work, and, to a lesser extent, schools. The workplace is a considerably less volatile arena than

either neighborhoods or schools. Perhaps it is better to reshape people's racial and ethnic attitudes through daily contact at work than to expend enormous energies over potential contact in neighborhoods. Further, there is the problem of exit. Policy may be able to ensure and realize the right of poor blacks to move into a neighborhood, but how can it require more affluent whites to remain? Although coworker and customer discrimination will almost certainly prevent workplace integration from being easy, surely these will be less virulent than the "neighbor discrimination" that lies behind white flight from integrating neighborhoods.

Third, there is a certain hypocrisy in calls for residential integration. There are rather severe limits to governmental capacity to intervene in housing markets. Only so many public housing units can be built and maintained, and only so many public dollars can be used to subsidize the entry of low-income households into the private housing market. This means that the burden of genuine, everyday racial integration at the neighborhood level almost always falls on poor and working-class blacks and whites. Most affluent families have abandoned, and the rest can abandon, racially integrating neighborhoods, whereas less mobile households must stay to work out an integrated society. This is not to say that working-class racism is somehow excusable. However, we might find middle-class calls for residential integration more compelling if the proponents could demonstrate how middle-class neighborhoods would participate in the vision.

Examples of mobility programs⁹

There are many inventories of mobility-related local programs (American Public Transit Association 1993; Drachman Institute 1992; Hughes 1989; Hughes and Sternberg 1993). To portray a sense of these local programs, I present three approaches: a state financing scheme to support vans operated by nonprofit community-based organizations, a nonprofit job-contracting firm that provides transportation, and a public transit agency that uses employer subsidies to support new routes. These programs are not evaluated as successes or failures but offered as examples of varied approaches. For a distillation of these programs into an operational model and a demonstration design, see Palubinsky (1994).

⁹ Portions of this section are excerpted from Hughes and Sternberg (1993), with permission from The Urban Institute.

In 1989, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) developed the Job-Ride program to address Milwaukee's unemployment problem with a reverse commute strategy. Job-Ride is unusual because it is a publicly sponsored transportation program with a clear antipoverty purpose. Specifically, it secures rides for city residents to interviews and to jobs for a specific number of months (usually six) until the rider can purchase a car or establish alternative carpooling arrangements.

WDOT funding is divided among a small number of grantees, who bid for funds every three years. The state covers 80 percent of the grantees' operating costs. Each grantee operates a fleet of vans, but maintaining the fleet is secondary to finding jobs and supporting resident workers. Each grantee provides its riders with counseling on interview techniques, advice on appropriate work apparel, and some level of job training. The Milwaukee Urban League is a typical grantee. It received \$166,000 in 1992, has placed 319 inner-city workers in suburban jobs, and has scheduled 32,800 van trips from city to suburb.

Although WDOT does not have a hands-on role in the various mobility initiatives that it finances, its goals coincide with those of the local actors. The state benefits when inner-city workers find jobs and when suburban employers find workers. Moreover, the establishment of vanpools reduces traffic congestion and pollution emission and conserves natural resources. Accordingly, Wisconsin's Department of Energy contributes a small amount to Job-Ride, as does the Department of Health and Social Services.

In Chicago, Suburban Job Link (SJL) was founded in 1971 as Just Jobs, Inc., an employment-contracting service. Its mission was to improve employment opportunities for disadvantaged persons who lack normal access to the job market. In its efforts to find jobs for inner-city workers, Just Jobs confronted every day Chicago's severe problem of metropolitan mismatch: Employment opportunities were in the suburbs, inaccessible to inner-city workers because of transportation deficiencies. As a result, the company changed its focus (and its name) a few years ago. Its current corporate goal is linking inner-city neighborhoods to suburban employers through a transportation service. In recognizing metropolitan mismatch and inventing connection methods, SJL served as a bridge builder.

SJL operates a fleet of six buses and a service that organizes carpools and tracks their development to refer new workers to appropriate pools. The buses operate in multiple shifts, and with carpools, the program transports between 400 and 600 workers

per day. SJL's experience as a job placement agency is a key to its success. The service has close connections with employers, who contract with it to find workers. Close to 150 companies employ the workers transported by SJL.

SJL plans to strengthen its bridge-building role in the metropolitan area. Supported by public and private funds, SJL envisions a "suburban oasis" facility that can house job training, serve as a transfer point for buses and vans, and be a distribution point for information about job openings and ride sharing.

Philadelphia's Seltzer Organization is the developer of several business parks in the city's suburbs. In the mid-1980s, Seltzer confronted firsthand the results of Philadelphia's metropolitan mismatch. Employers occupying its office parks began to complain that they were unable to address entry-level labor shortages because of the inaccessibility of the parks to public transportation stations. Seltzer accordingly approached the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), seeking collaboration on a solution to the problem. In response, SEPTA studied the feasibility of adding a bus route to connect the parks and the local rail station. It agreed to add a route, designated Route 201, if Seltzer agreed to subsidize whatever difference remained between the break-even revenue and revenues generated from riders. Together, Seltzer and SEPTA bridged the gap between the mismatch problem and a connection solution.

Route 201 proved unexpectedly successful. Within two years no employer subsidy was necessary. Recognizing the potential for similar programs along other commuter rail lines, SEPTA has developed a total of six Route 200 series shuttles. Route 201 remains the most successful operation. It has paid for itself for the past three years and is the only route to do so. The others are subsidized by business parks, which pay the difference between the cost of the service and revenues collected from riders. Local transportation management associations and chambers of commerce also contribute.

Conclusion

Rather than rearranging the geography of housing or the geography of firm location, the mobility strategy represents a more

direct approach: Make the opportunities of the region available to the residents of the inner city by confronting the training, information, and transportation barriers that a decentralized region creates. The mobility strategy does not hold the fortunes of impacted ghetto residents hostage to our political and economic capacity to rebuild downtown blue-collar economies or open up the suburbs to affordable housing.

Of course, it is true that this approach leaves intact much of the nexus of constraints outlined by Galster and Killen. In particular, schools and racial segregation patterns are not objects of direct intervention. But local social networks might be profoundly altered. If connections across our fragmented metropolitan labor markets can be built and sustained, information regarding both work and the world of work would flow more easily into the inner city. This enhanced information flow is a direct intervention of the mobility strategy.

An important qualification to this emphasis on the mobility strategy is that the three antipoverty strategies are not necessarily substitutes. Clearly, no commitment to connecting inner-city residents to suburban jobs relieves city or suburban governments from the responsibility of protecting the civil rights of people to live anywhere they can afford. And clearly, a commitment to connecting inner-city residents to suburban jobs does not mean that city governments should or would abandon their local economic development agendas. Indeed, the three strategies could be very effective complements. Connecting lower skill city residents to the suburban labor market allows city economic development officials to focus on sectors in which the central city often retains a powerful advantage, such as tourism, upscale retail, and business services. Also, the economic gains afforded by the mobility strategy can lead to community resources sufficient to support neighborhood businesses. SJJL, for example, claims to return more than \$4 million in annual wages to its inner-city neighborhood by connecting residents to suburban jobs. This new source of neighborhood income will improve the prospects for developing sustainable local enterprises to serve this potential consumption base.

Clearly, the pieces of this puzzle will not simply fall into place and remain fixed. Metropolitan areas are complex and dynamic. Some ghetto residents will get jobs and incomes and buy a car, no longer relying on the transportation programs of the mobility strategy. Some people will get jobs and higher incomes and move to the suburbs, perhaps no longer relying on or contributing to the community institutions strengthened by the mobility

strategy. The broadest goal of the mobility strategy is to transform the impacted ghetto into a viable place with access to the same resources that make any neighborhood viable: safety in the streets, education and human services in the community, and access to employment opportunities throughout the region. People may want to move when given the choice, or people may choose to rebuild and remain in their neighborhoods rather than leave them. But whatever their choice, the mobility strategy would be successful precisely because the poor would have a real choice—between safe, productive, accessible neighborhoods in the inner city and the attractions of the suburbs.

That choice is, ultimately, the ingredient mobility strategists seek to emphasize in the antipoverty strategy mix. We will never know the strategy's capacity to increase choice without a demonstration.

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The author gratefully acknowledges support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for this study, and from the Ford Foundation and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy for earlier research on which this study is based. The author has benefited from conversations with former colleagues at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, including David T. Ellwood and James R. Hines, Jr., and from discussions with John J. DiIulio, Jr., Gerald Garvey, William Julius Wilson, Anthony Downs, Mark Schmitt, Richard Bickel, Natalie Jaffe, Ellen Nissenbaum, and Mark Elliott. Finally, the author thanks the harried government documents librarians at the Free Library of Philadelphia, one of the nation's great public libraries and civic institutions. Errors are mine alone.

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