

SPR-05: Access and Affordability

For Regions

1-15 points

Goal: Enhance accessibility and affordability of the transportation system to all users and by multiple modes.

Sustainability Linkage

Improved access and affordability benefit the social and economic sustainability principles by improving employment opportunities, access to community services and enhancing opportunities to interact with the community. Increasing the modal choices available to the public supports the environmental principle by offering alternatives to motorized travel.



Background and Scoring Requirements

Background

This criterion is related to *SPR-08: Freight and Goods Access and Mobility*. This criterion includes a focus on access for people, while SPR-08 includes a focus on access for freight and goods access and mobility.

As explained below, in the context of this self-evaluation tool, accessibility refers to three distinct and complementary issues—physical access, equitable access, and affordable access. To support and inform decision-making, agencies should conduct evaluations and analyses with regard to accessibility and affordability, and should use the results in the programming of transportation improvements.

The following are examples of accessibility issues that might be considered in a transportation planning context:

- **Pedestrian and Bicycle:** The transportation facility provides access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, or taking public transportation.
- **Jobs to Housing Imbalance:** Jobs and housing are concentrated in separate areas and jobs are not located adjacent to appropriate workers due to land development patterns.
- **Reverse commutes:** A community has high unemployment due in part to an inability to access service and retail jobs which are on the periphery of the metropolitan area. An accessibility analysis is performed to determine what highway or transit investments or improvements are needed to enhance the accessibility of these workers to job sites. The analysis considers the mismatches between the skills of the unemployed and locally available jobs, as well as auto ownership rates.
- **Economically depressed/isolated rural communities:** A specific region of a state is economically depressed and isolated and wants additional highway investment to spur economic growth and enhance access to services (e.g., hospitals, airports, grocery stores). The political leadership requests that the State transportation agency evaluate whether a lack of accessibility is contributing to the area's economic woes and isolation. The agency conducts an accessibility analysis to determine the extent to which the area needs additional access and scopes specific projects/programs. These programs address both time and cost barriers to access.
- **Access for people with limited mobility or disabilities:** A metropolitan area has many transportation facilities that are not accessible to users with limited mobility or disabilities. This issue has been raised by the MPO's constituency as a primary concern that should be addressed in the transportation plan. In cooperation with the appropriate implementing agencies, the MPO conducts a study of areas where accessible facilities are

lacking and needed, and creates a plan for strategically implementing projects/programs to enhance access to the transportation system for these populations. The results of the study are incorporated into its LRTP.

Note that an ADA transition plan identifies the steps and strategies to make the necessary changes to the agency's inventoried facilities, including facilities within the public rights-of-way (PROW), and to bring them up to ADA standards; facilities may include sidewalks, curb ramps, accessible pedestrian signals, transit stations, buses, etc.

As these examples show, the terms access and accessibility have a number of dimensions. In developing plans, agencies should consider the following (the associated details are illustrative only):

Physical Access

- Compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*¹ (ADA), and more broadly to the principles of universal design, which go above and beyond ADA requirements.
- The *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*² as signed into law on September 26, 1973. Section 504 of the Act provides that no otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.
- The ability to reach desired goods, services, activities, and destinations (collectively called opportunities). Providing a broad range of transportation choices increases accessibility.
- Trip connectivity which allows safe, convenient, seamless, and intuitive connections between modes.
- Connected streets, traditional street patterns that facilitate walking and shorter trip length (not cul-de-sacs).

Access and Equity

- Executive Order 12898, called the *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*³ states that "Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations."
- The availability of road, rail, bus, bike, and pedestrian facilities and transit service for all members of the public and specifically for minority communities and low-income communities.
- The impacts of transportation on all members of the public and specifically on minority communities and low-income communities.
- The cumulative opportunities afforded by access to jobs, education, food, recreation, health care, social services, places of worship, libraries, retail centers, etc. Good access is especially important for:
 - Rural isolated and/or poor communities
 - Transit-dependent households
 - Other zero-car households
 - Low-income households
 - Persons with disabilities
 - Older adults
 - Children

Affordability

Increase the affordability of the transportation system as a whole through the following transportation planning projects and programs:

- Planning and programming that specifically addresses the minimization of transportation costs, particularly for those that are poor or disadvantaged.
- Conduct planning activities that are focused on minimizing the cost of transportation:
 - Encourage non-motorized access
 - Encourage higher density and mixed-use developments in close proximity to existing transportation services or in conjunction with the development of new services
 - Allow flexibility for non-traditional transportation modes of transportation structures (e.g., jitneys, personal car-sharing, etc.)
- Specific outreach and communication strategies focused on the transportation needs of the disadvantaged.

Scoring Requirements

To achieve points, the agency must demonstrate that it effectively evaluates and monitors the distribution of user benefits and relative accessibility through planned transportation improvements to communities and areas/populations of concern. Points can be earned for increasing levels of activity in the planning process as follows:

Requirement SPR-05.1

1-6 points. Discussion/Consideration in Planning Documents

Scoring is based on the following, cumulative requirements. The first requirement must be accomplished to earn the second.

- **Requirement SPR-05.1a**

1 point. Analyze Physical Access

System planning documents analyze physical access and identify specific population groups or areas where this is an issue. The analysis includes a discussion of time and cost barriers, as well as their consequences. The document includes specific, planned programs or improvements that address access issues.

- **Requirement SPR-05.1b**

1 point. Analyze Access and Equity

System planning documents analyze access and equity and identify specific population groups or areas where this is an issue. The analysis includes a discussion of time and cost barriers, as well as their consequences. The document includes specific, planned programs or improvements that address access issues.

- **Requirement SPR-05.1c**

2 points. Analyze Affordability

System planning documents analyze affordability and identify specific population groups or areas where this is an issue. The analysis includes a discussion of time and cost barriers, as well as their consequences. The document includes specific, planned programs or improvements that address access issues.

- **Requirement SPR-05.1d**

2 points. Include Documentation of Outreach Communications

For all dimensions of accessibility analyzed in SPR-05.1a, SPR-05.1b and SPR-05.1c, the planning document includes documentation of targeted, enhanced outreach or communications that have been used to engage these population groups or areas in the planning process. The agency goes above and beyond requirements to ensure public meetings are accessible by using innovative methods to involve these groups. Examples of innovative methods include, but are not limited to, taking the meeting to them (so they do not have to make a special trip), and providing materials in multiple languages and formats (e.g., ensuring compatibility with “readers” used by the visually impaired, etc.), among others.

Requirement SPR-05.2

2-5 points. Use Quantitative Analysis in Plans and Programs

Scoring is based on the following, cumulative requirements:

- **Requirement SPR-05.2a**

2 points. Quantitatively Evaluate Accessibility and Affordability Concerns

The agency uses travel model, census, geospatial, and other data to quantitatively evaluate the nature and distribution of accessibility and affordability concerns in its jurisdiction.

- **Requirement SPR-05.2b**

3 points. Quantitatively Analyze How System Addresses Concerns

The agency quantitatively analyzes how its system plan or program addresses or improves concerns/issues such as:

- Access to commercial centers, jobs, hospitals, schools, and other civic institutions and social and emergency services,
- The equitable cost of access,
- The affordability of travel choices, and
- The affordability of housing through its relationship to transportation investments.

Requirement SPR-05.3

2 or 4 points. Regular Monitoring of Plans and Programs

Scoring is based on the following, cumulative requirements. The first requirement must be accomplished to earn the second.

- **Requirement SPR-05.3a**

2 points. Include Sustainability Performance Measures

The system plan or program includes sustainability-related performance measures that can be used to monitor the effects of plan implementation on transportation accessibility and affordability.

- **Requirement SPR-05.3b**

2 additional points. Monitor Progress and Demonstrate Sustainable Outcomes

The agency is monitoring progress against the performance measures and adjusts its program efforts as necessary to meet its goals.

Resources

Above-Referenced Resources

The following resources are referenced in this criterion and consolidated here:

1. U.S. Department of Justice, *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*,
<https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/1990s/ada.html>
2. U.S. Department of Justice, *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/sec504.htm>
3. U.S. Department of Justice, *Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (1994),
<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/1994/02/16/94-3685/federal-actions-to-address-environmental-justice-in-minority-populations-and-low-income-populations>

Additional Resources

The following resources provide information on this criterion topic in addition to the sources directly referenced:

4. Center for Neighborhood Technologies Housing and Transportation (H+T®) Affordability Index
<http://htaindex.cnt.org/>
5. EPA's Smart Location Database <http://www2.epa.gov/smart-growth/smart-location-mapping>
6. Walk Score <https://www.walkscore.com/>
7. Yingling Fan and Arthur Huang, *How Affordable is Transportation? An Accessibility-Based Evaluation* (2011), CTS Report 11-12, Transitway Impacts Research Program, Center for Transportation Studies, <http://www.cts.umn.edu/Publications/ResearchReports/reportdetail.html?id=2024>
8. Todd Litman, *Transportation Affordability: Evaluation and Improvement Strategies* (2013), Victoria Transport Policy Institute, <http://www.vtpi.org/affordability.pdf>
9. Todd Litman, Evaluating Accessibility for Transportation Planning: Measuring People's Ability to Reach Desired Goods and Activities (2015), Victoria Transport Policy Institute, <http://www.vtpi.org/access.pdf>
10. EPA, GeoPlatform Online,
<http://epa.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=cb6ee8434c054e3bba37995f06e644d3#>

Scoring Sources

The program is considered to have met this criterion if the requirements above can be reasonably substantiated through the existence of one or more of the following sources (or equivalent), as appropriate:

1. LRTP and TIP include accessibility and affordability content.
2. Supplemental documentation of accessibility and affordability analyses and evaluations.
3. Documentation of targeted and enhanced communication and outreach to "traditionally underserved" populations.
4. Documentation of implemented projects or activities to improve access and affordability in response to discussion/analysis.
5. Documentation of the agency's performance measures, monitoring process, and progress to date.