



HEALTH **IMPACT** ASSESSMENT

Evaluating the Impacts of a Transportation Utility Fee in Columbia/Boone County

August 19, 2013

Columbia/Boone County HIA Project

Funding for this
HIA provided by:



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Columbia/Boone County HIA Partner Team



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Background

- *Summer 2011*: Bus fares increase, services are cut
- *January 2013*: HIA Partner Team presents findings on expanded public transit
- *February 2013*: Assessment of impact of transportation utility fee begins

Report cites transit's health impact

City looks at hiring consultant to help.

By **ANDREW DENNEY**

Tuesday, February 5, 2013 at 2:00 pm

After a Columbia City Council meeting Monday night, city leaders are planning to call on outside help to find ways to adjust transit to provide better service.

Policymakers consider more attention to health impact

Current study looks at effects of buses.

By **ANDREW DENNEY**

Thursday, October 25, 2012 at 2:00 pm

Government leaders often are occupied with the short-term effects of new policies — their cost or popularity with constituents — rather than the long-term effect on community health.

Cities across the United States, including Columbia, have been looking at the potential health impact of decisions in areas such as transportation or city planning. Those health impact assessments can be used to make recommendations to policymakers.

What is a Health Impact Assessment?

Health Impact Assessment is a systematic process that:

- Determines the potential effects of a proposed policy, program, plan, or project on the health of a population
- Considers the distribution of those effects on a population
- Provides recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects

Project Goals

1. Assess potential health effects of a transportation utility fee
2. Determine the likelihood of these health effects
3. Provide recommendations

Transportation Utility Fee HIA

How will a monthly transportation utility fee affect low- and fixed-income households?

1. Food insecurity
2. Stress
3. Health care access
4. Housing conditions and security

Target Population

- 150% Federal Poverty Guidelines: \$29,295 for a family of three
- 19% poverty rate in Columbia
- Energy assistance resources (winter 2012)
 - LIHEAP: 2,781 applicants, \$651,384
 - ECIP: 1,070 households, \$340,243
 - CASH/HELP: 340 households, \$33,900

What is a Transportation Utility Fee?

- Transportation system is a public utility
- Fees popular on the West Coast – 19 cities in Oregon
- TUF charges users based on the number of trips generated by their properties
- \$4/month for single-family homes, \$2/month for multi-family homes, commercial properties charged by property size

What is a Transportation Utility Fee?

- TUF in Columbia would raise approximately \$3.7 million
- Approximately 3,500 operating hours added by TUF, transportation sales tax, and federal assistance
 - Add 8 hours on Sundays
 - Add hours during week
 - Cut headways by half during peak weekday hours

Key Findings

- Food, energy, education, housing, and health care costs increased
- Median income dropped to just under \$41,000 – down 13.34% from 2007-2010
- Low- and fixed-income families especially affected by added expenses (working families, female-headed households, minority households, households with children, retirees, long-term unemployed adults)

Food Insecurity

- “Heat or eat” dilemma
- Food insecure: not having enough access to food for an active, healthy life
- 15.8% in Missouri, 12.3% in Boone County
- Hunger is short-term, but the effects last
- \$2-4 could be a “breaking point”

Decreased Health Care Access

- Growing gap in health care use between high- and low-income individuals
- Low income - less likely to have insurance coverage, visit primary care doctors, or fill prescriptions
- 37% of LIHEAP recipients went without medical or dental care

Housing Affordability, Conditions and Security

- Approximately 22% of Columbia home owners pay greater than 30% in total household income in mortgage costs
 - 50% of renters pay greater than 30% of income on rent
- Low- and fixed-income spend disproportionately more on energy
- Rely on unsafe heating and cooling methods
 - Personal injuries
 - Pollutants cause long-term damage

Stress

- Competition for energy assistance funds; placement on waitlists causes stress
- Families can be evicted for unpaid utility bills
- People sometimes fear reaching out for help

Recommendations

- Reduce or waive the transportation utility fee for low- and fixed-income populations
- Research alternative funding sources.
- Seek community input on funding options
- Increase public outreach about the bus system.
- Adjust transit operating hours of operation to accommodate shift workers

Recommendations

- Ensure bus stops are accessible for residents who need transportation to social services
- Create routes and timetables that are consistent throughout the week and displayed at all stops
- Ensure Columbia Transit website is updated regularly and easy to navigate
- Add Sunday service

Next Steps in HIA

- Process and impact evaluation
- Monitor implementation of recommendations
- Full report and executive summary will be available on CBCDPHHS and CoMET websites

Conclusion

- Low- and fixed-income households have restricted budgets negatively affected by extra expenses
- Magnitude of health effects dependent on fees assessed and waivers

Conclusion

- The "Bean Game" was adapted from Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices, a research-based interdisciplinary program of Human Environmental Sciences, University of Missouri Extension.

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