

An aerial, grayscale photograph of a city, likely Austin, Texas, showing a river (the Colorado River) flowing through the center, with a bridge crossing it. The surrounding area is densely packed with buildings and trees.

A brief history of transportation equity

Alex Karner, PhD

Assistant Professor

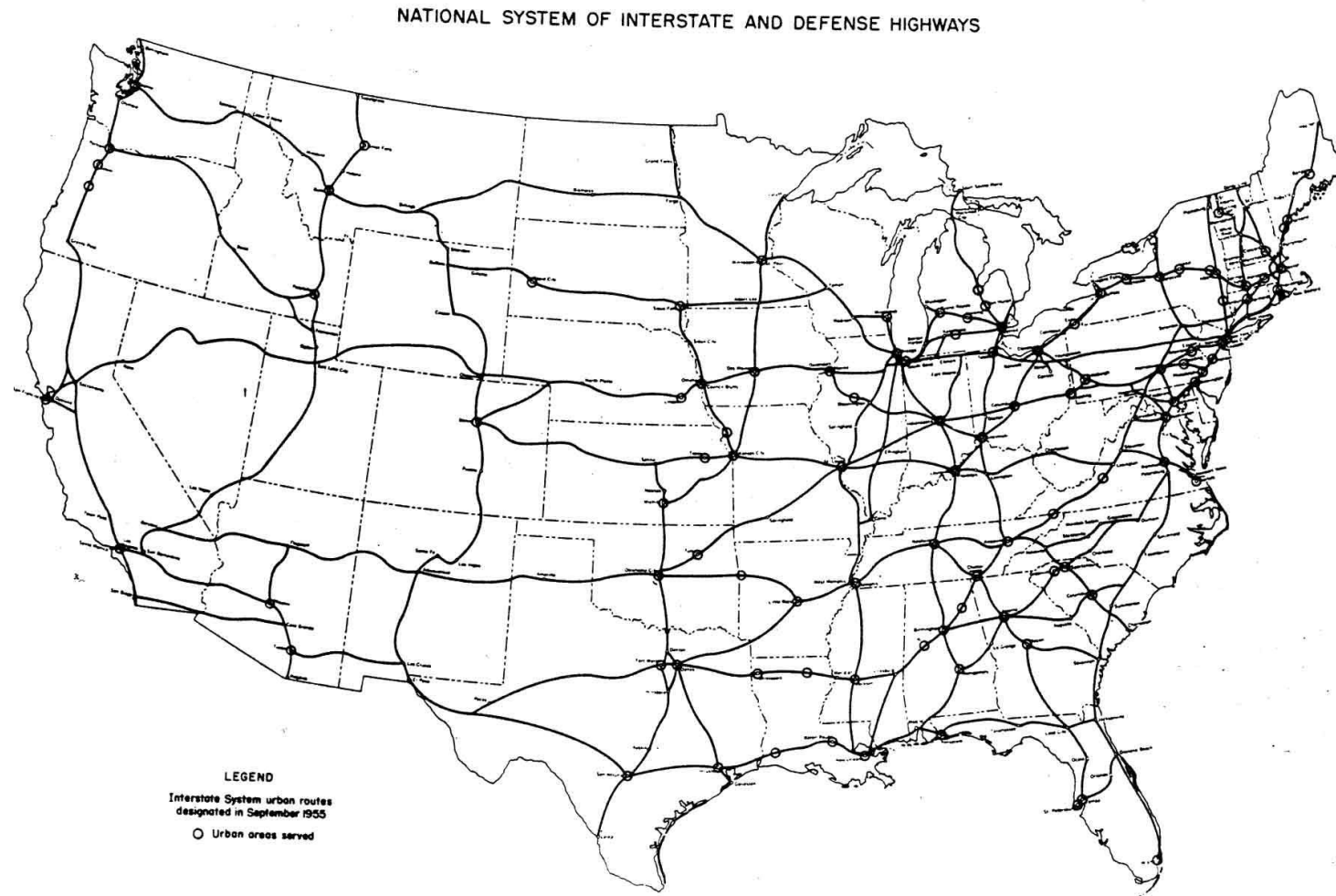
Graduate Program in Community & Regional Planning

The University of Texas at Austin

Transportation equity

- Transportation decisions involve winners and losers
 - New light rail line
 - Freeway capacity expansion
 - Separated bike facilities
 - Overall modal spending
- **Benefits:** *accessibility*
- **Costs:** opportunity costs, environmental burdens, injury/death
- Are transportation plans, projects, programs, and decision-making processes *fair*? How do we know?

Federal-Aid Highway Act 1956



Federal-Aid Highway Act 1956

- Created a 41,000-mile system
- 90% federal funding
 - Federal gas tax increased to 3 cents
 - Highway Trust Fund created
- 20% of mileage in urbanized areas
- Largely completed over 1956 – 1973



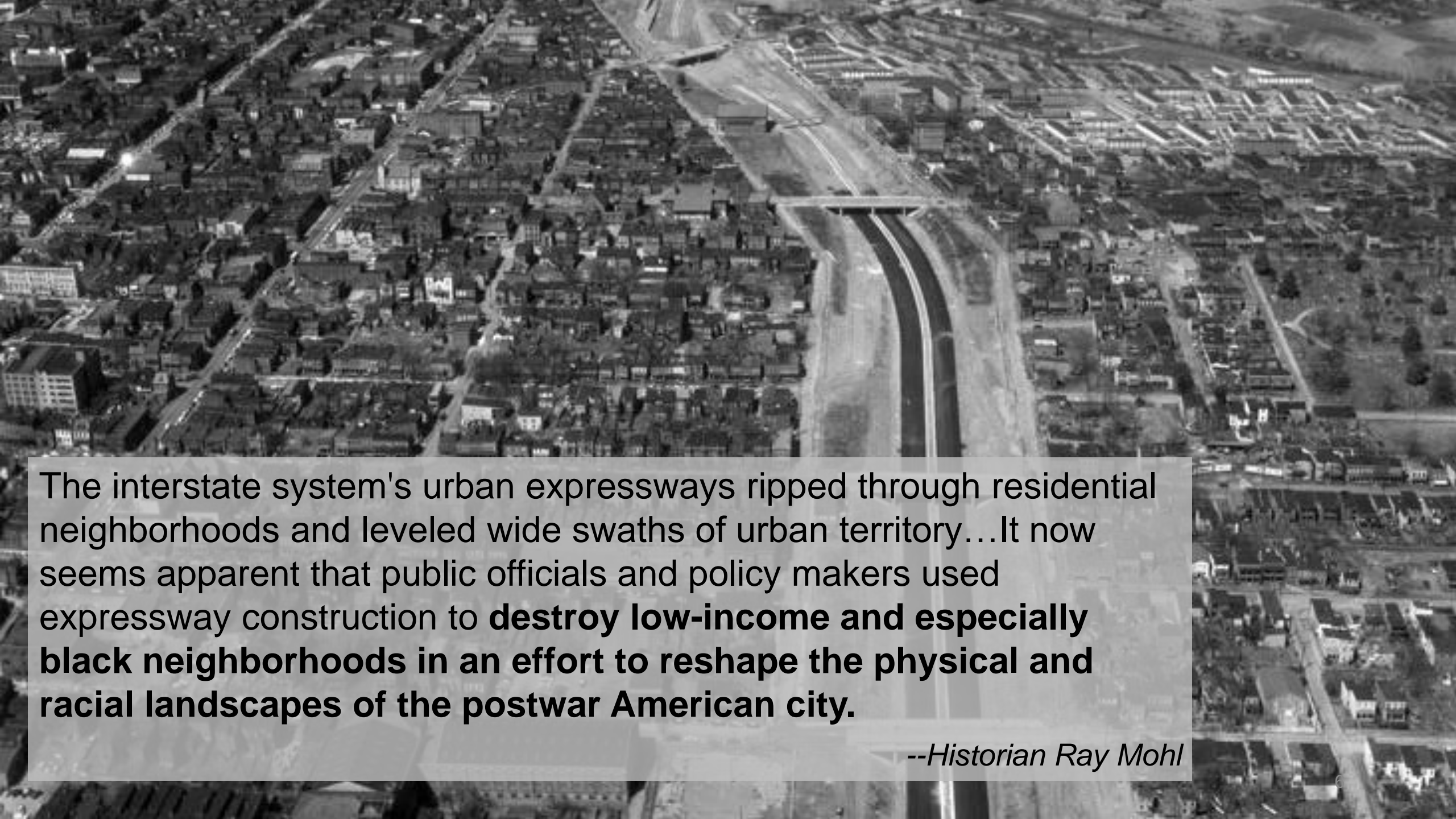
Direct impacts



Interstate 95 construction through
Jackson Ward, Richmond, VA



Interstate 95 construction through
Miami, FL

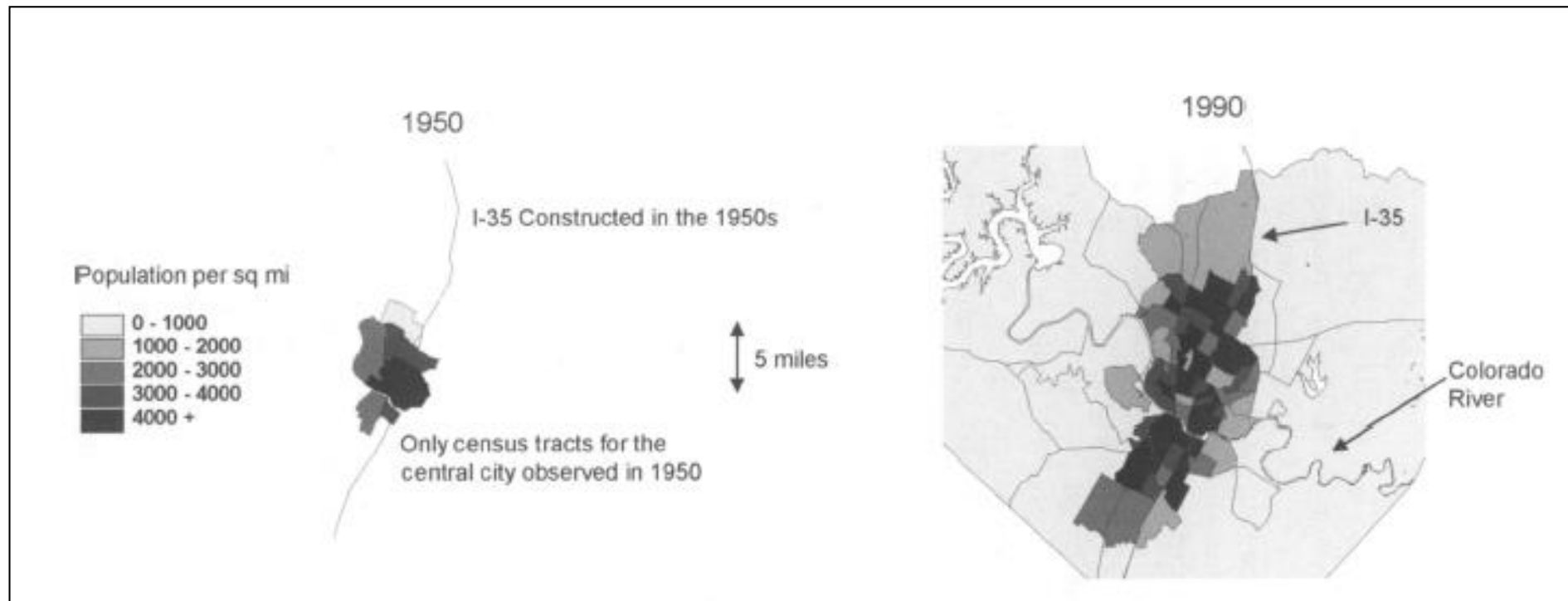
An aerial, black-and-white photograph showing a multi-lane highway (interstate) cutting through a dense urban landscape. The highway runs diagonally from the top center towards the bottom right. To the left of the highway, a grid of streets and residential buildings is visible. To the right, there are more industrial or commercial structures, including what looks like a parking lot with many cars. The highway itself has a bridge or overpass section in the middle. The overall scene illustrates the impact of large-scale infrastructure projects on existing urban communities.

The interstate system's urban expressways ripped through residential neighborhoods and leveled wide swaths of urban territory...It now seems apparent that public officials and policy makers used expressway construction to **destroy low-income and especially black neighborhoods in an effort to reshape the physical and racial landscapes of the postwar American city.**

--Historian Ray Mohl

Direct impacts: Suburbanization

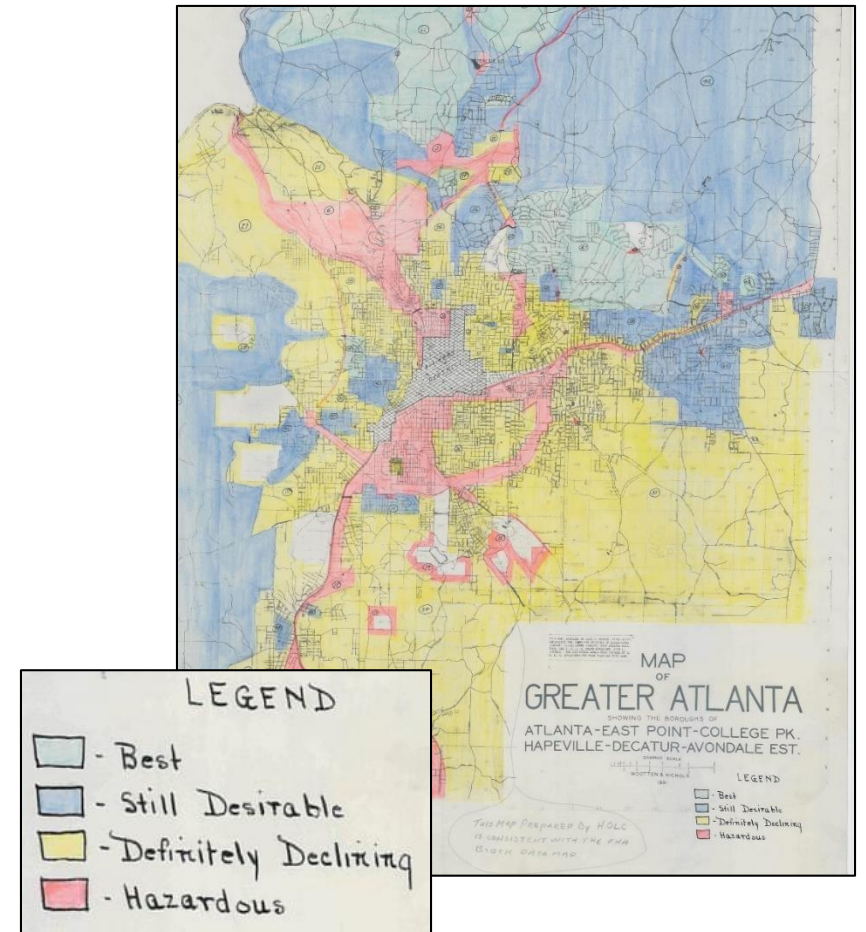
Austin, TX



source: Baum-Snow (2007)

Suburbanization for whom?

- Depression-era lending favored white, racially homogenous areas
- Later lending disproportionately benefitted whites
 - Less than 2% of \$120 billion in loans made by the Federal Housing Administration (1934-1962) went to people of color
- Redlining created a downward spiral in communities locked out of funding



1935 Home Owners' Loan Corporation map of greater Atlanta



Watts, Los Angeles, 1965

McCone commission report (1965)

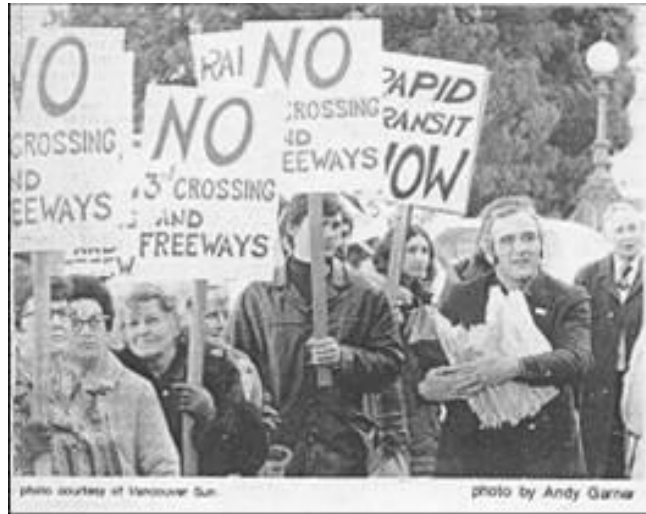
- Focused on transportation
- Isolation by highways and lack of transit fueled feelings of frustration and contributed in large part to civil unrest by restricting access to employment and other services
- Beginnings of “transportation equity”



John McCone, CIA
Director (1961-1965)

Stop the road!

1960s/70s freeway revolts



Vancouver, BC, Canada



San Francisco, CA



Milwaukee, WI
2013!

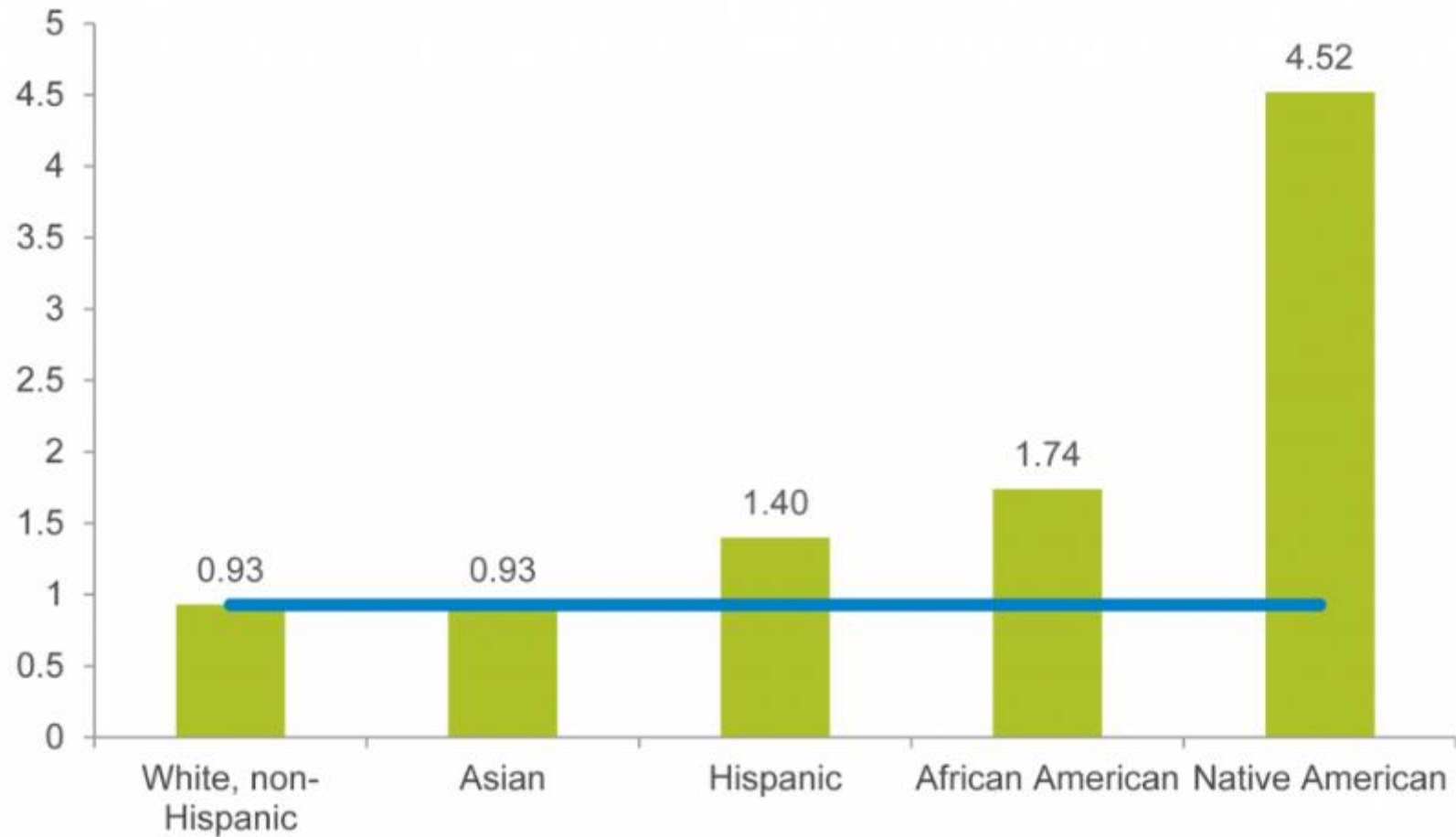


Toronto, ON, Canada (June 1971)

Pedestrians and transportation equity

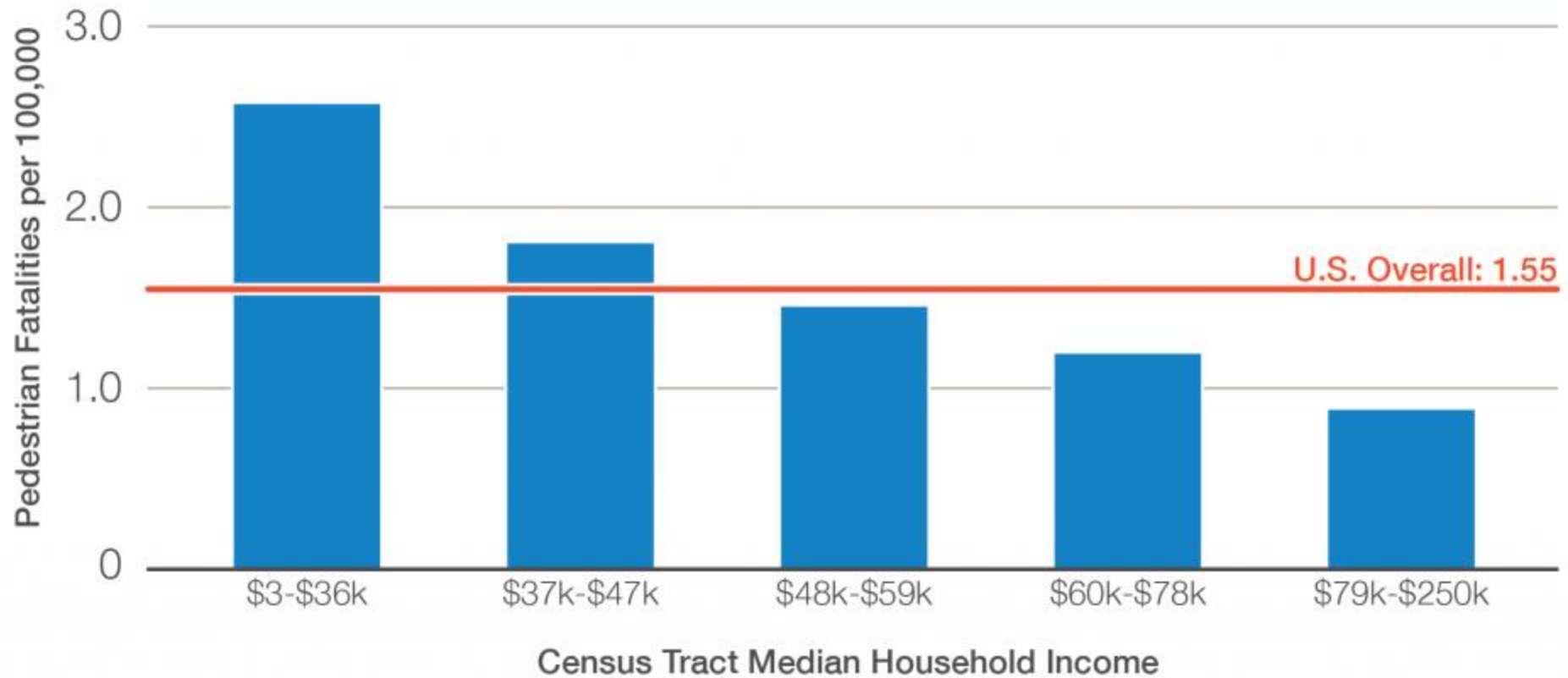
- Manifests in several ways:
 - Overall funding shares
 - Higher rates of walking/elevated need for high-quality pedestrian facilities among vulnerable populations (older adults, immigrants, low-income people) but generally lower access
 - Also populations with reduced vehicle access
 - Disproportionate injury and death rates and poorer outcomes when collisions occur

Annual pedestrian fatalities per 100,000 people by race/ethnicity (2005-2014)



source: Smart Growth America (2017)

Annual pedestrian fatalities per 100,000 people by income



source: Smart Growth America (2019)



Contact

Alex Karner, PhD

Assistant Professor

Graduate Program in Community and Regional Planning

The University of Texas at Austin

alex.karner@utexas.edu

Twitter: @AlexKarner