

## Fact Sheet on Commuting

In many metropolitan areas, jobs and job growth are occurring in areas lacking affordable housing. This is in part because of a growing trend in thriving housing markets to restrict housing development through burdensome regulations. Working households face either very high housing costs or long commutes. Many working families cope with high housing costs by moving further away from employment, with the following consequences:

- When the cost of transportation is added to the cost of housing, the share of working families spending more than half their total income on these expenses increases five-fold from 8.3 percent to 44.3 percent.<sup>1</sup> This leaves less money for health care, food, and other necessities.
- A recent study by Texas A&M indicates that the average annual traffic-related delay in 75 major metropolitan areas in the U.S. in 2001 was 62 hours per person, up from 16 in 1982.<sup>2</sup> The impact of these delays include:
  - Decrease in worker productivity
  - Increase in stress
  - Increase in energy costs

"People are commuting extraordinary distances, and those commute times also add to the costs of housing because the communities are providing the infrastructure, and they're paying for more and more infrastructure over a very sparsely populated area. If they throw those costs on to the builders the builders just roll them into the costs of the housing so the cost of the housing goes up."

Jim Carr, Senior Vice President of Research,  
Fannie Mae Foundation

- Longer commutes require more infrastructure. As people move to previously undeveloped areas, roads and other infrastructure must be extended and improved. This is paid for with increases in taxes, user fees, and impact fees, all of which drive up the cost of housing.
- People living in far-flung suburbs and rural areas have little access to public transportation, which increases reliance on cars. Efforts to improve public transportation to serve a widely dispersed population are costly.

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara J. Lipman, Research Director, Center for Housing Policy, *Some things's Gotta Give: Working Families and the Cost of Housing*, April 2005.

<sup>2</sup> David Schrank and Tim Loman, *The 2002 Urban Mobility Study* (Texas A&M: Texas Transportation Institute, 2002).