

7



Transportation Planning and Child Care Facilities

The location of a family's child care arrangements can significantly affect a parent's commute pattern. As a result, planners should consider the location of child care in the jurisdiction's land use and transportation planning processes by allowing child care facilities to be placed in areas that are adjacent to transportation corridors or hubs. This will ensure that:

- Child Care is accessible to families who use transit or other transportation alternatives; and
- The impact of the family's commute on air quality and traffic congestion will be minimized.

Child Care and the Transit Dependent Parent

The location of child care facilities at employment centers, along transit routes, and near park and ride lots will increase the accessibility of child care services to working parents. Many low-income families needing child care are transit dependent. These families find it difficult, if not impossible, to use child care facilities that are not located near public transportation lines.

Child Care and Air Quality

A family's commute to child care is no longer an issue solely of personal concern. In fact, conveniently located child care can have a positive effect on a community's air quality and traffic congestion.

According to a study conducted by the California Department of General Services in 1990, working parents add five to six miles to their daily commute to transport children to child care or school. This extended commute results in an additional 1,352 added vehicle miles per person per year, creating an additional 56 pounds of pollutants per person per year.

These conditions are further exacerbated by the finding that parents with child-transport responsibilities use alternative commute modes significantly less frequently than workers without these responsibilities. A 1988 study by the Department of General Services indicated that women who transport children to child care or school are 50 percent less likely to use public transit than women without these responsibilities. Child care that is located at employment centers, along transit routes, or at transportation hubs can enable these parents to begin to use public transportation.



Strategies for Planners

The relationship between the location of child care and the daily commute becomes increasingly important as California communities tackle the linked issues of congestion management and air quality. Communities that wish to integrate child care needs with local transportation plans should consider the following strategies:

- Coordinate efforts between land use and transportation planners.
- Include child care facilities as an amenity to major transportation hubs and origin and destination points. Specifically, consider locating child care facilities at multi-modal stations, major transfer points, park and ride lots, and major housing and employment developments.
- Review zoning requirements to ensure that child care is an acceptable land use along transportation routes, and at major employment and housing sites.
- When considering child care as an amenity to transportation facilities, seek ways to mitigate the impacts of noise and air quality and available sunlight. With careful planning, these concerns can be dealt with successfully.
- Amend general plans to include child care in air quality and/ or transportation elements. Consider expanding the general plan to include a child care element.
- Include the provision of child care facilities as a transportation control measure.
- Include child care questions in all commute surveys to better quantify the child care/transportation link.

Most employer-based programs are developed after an assessment is made of the workers' commute patterns. These employee surveys should be supplemented with additional questions that assess the proportion of workers with child-transport responsibilities. This will enable employers to structure transportation management programs to better meet the needs of working parents. Additional questions might include, for example:

- The number of workers with child care needs including the number of children and their ages.
- The way these parents currently commute to work.
- Current child care arrangements, including pick up and drop off responsibilities and child care costs.
- The additional miles traveled by parents to access child care.

The Office of Early Care and Education can provide assistance to anyone wishing to conduct a child care needs assessment survey.