

**Planning,  
Policy and  
Programming****NOVEMBER 2024****Project Title:**

The Equity and Policy Implications  
of Long-Distance Commuting in the  
Greater Los Angeles Region

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## The Equity and Policy Implications of Long-Distance Commuting in the Greater Los Angeles Region

### WHAT IS THE NEED?

This research will develop and apply a methodology for assessing the equity impacts of supercommuting in the Greater Los Angeles region. Supercommuting describes very long journeys to and from work, which is defined for this research as 50 miles or more one way or over 90 minutes one way. The purpose of the research is to assess the extent to which the search for affordable housing in the Greater Los Angeles region motivates or compels supercommuting in Southern California. Researchers will focus on the financial and time burdens of supercommuting and the equity implications of commuters bearing these burdens as they relate to housing. This assessment will directly inform policy recommendations to Caltrans that researchers will develop to mitigate the negative consequences of supercommuting.

### WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The assessment of supercommuting will focus on the scale, prevalence, and location of supercommuting, as well as the characteristics (age, race/ethnicity, gender, income, etc.) of supercommuters. Researchers will use a combination of individual-level data and fine-grained geographic data to gain insights into the characteristics of workers most likely to commute very long distances. Most of the analyses will be at the ZIP Code level. The two main data sources researchers will use for estimating the prevalence of supercommuting for smaller geographic units are the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) and StreetLight, Inc. data. This information on supercommuters will allow us to estimate the share of supercommuters who are able to work from home and, thus, less likely to supercommute daily. Researchers will also gain a better understanding of the housing affordability pressures supercommuters face based on their income and commute geographies.



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California's transportation system.

There are large differences in housing costs between central Los Angeles and Orange Counties in the heart of the region, and the Inland Empire and High Desert areas. By identifying neighborhoods where many people supercommute and the most common destinations of their commutes, researchers will be able to measure the housing affordability gap between the housing prices where people could live within 50 miles of their place of employment, compared with where they actually live. Distances will be calculated based on road network analyses, such as the true roadway distance from origin to destination, and will incorporate estimates of excess travel time due to congestion by comparing average travel times at peak and off-peak hours from StreetLight, Inc. data. These estimates will allow us to add the cost of housing and transportation (termed H+T in the literature) and compare it to our calculated gap in affordability, yielding a measure of welfare gains or losses tied to supercommuting.

The estimates of housing and transportation costs will be the basis for a set of scenarios for assessing the equity impact of supercommuting, as well as the potential and options for mitigation, that will be developed by the researchers.

## WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

Researchers will produce a final report (white paper) detailing our assessment of supercommuting in the Greater Los Angeles region where very long commutes are common, including the share and numbers of very long commutes, the most common origins and destinations of long commutes, and, where data allow, trends in long-distance commuting over time.

## WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

The research will provide answers to three related broad questions: (1) What are the negative effects of supercommuting related to sociodemographic disparities in transportation access and outcomes? (2) What is the relationship between supercommuting and access to affordable

housing?; And, finally, (3) can the burden of long-distance commutes on less-advantaged workers be mitigated by housing policies? Answers to these questions will inform policy strategies to increase housing affordability without exacerbating the worst consequences of long-distance commute travel.

## WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

The researchers have completed the baseline costs for scenarios and are full speed ahead on the scenario development and drafting the final report. The project should be concluded by March of 2025.