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Project Title: Lessons Learned on Mobility as a Service (MaaS): Exploring Opportunities and Barriers for the U.S. Context

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Lessons Learned on Mobility as a Service (MaaS): Exploring Opportunities and Barriers for the U.S. Context

This research explores how Mobility as a Service (MaaS) could be applied in the United States (U.S.) by drawing from international experience and directly engaging with American travelers. The study reviews lessons from established MaaS programs abroad, examines how travelers in different U.S. communities perceive and might use integrated mobility services, and evaluates the practical challenges of combining transit, shared mobility, and payment systems on a single platform. The findings will help the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) understand which MaaS concepts are most likely to work in the U.S. context, how these services could expand multimodal travel options, and what steps agencies might take to reduce reliance on private vehicles. This project will serve as an early foundation for future research and policy development around MaaS in California.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Travel in the U.S. is changing quickly. New mobility services are emerging, people's travel habits are shifting, and the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have made it harder to predict how people choose to get around. These changes have increased interest in whether more integrated, multimodal travel options, like Mobility as a Service (MaaS), could help reduce dependence on private cars, improve access to transportation, and support more sustainable travel patterns.

While many countries have already tested MaaS platforms, the U.S. has its own mix of challenges, including different governance structures, travel behaviors, and transportation systems. Because of this, there is little evidence showing how MaaS could realistically work in the U.S. context. This research fills that gap by exploring how travelers view MaaS concepts, what barriers might limit adoption, and what opportunities exist to adapt multimodal mobility strategies for U.S. communities. The goal is to build a foundation of knowledge



DRISI provides solutions and knowledge that improves California's transportation system.

that agencies can use as they consider future MaaS-related efforts.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

This research will follow a coordinated set of activities to understand how MaaS could work in the U.S. The project begins with a broad review of international programs to identify models, governance structures, and successful practices that might be adapted for California. Building on this foundation, the team will design and conduct focus groups in different types of communities, recruiting a diverse group of travelers and using approved protocols to learn about their travel habits, their willingness to use MaaS, and the barriers that might prevent adoption.

As the focus groups are completed, the team will analyze the qualitative data using structured methods to uncover common themes and traveler insights. Throughout the project, an advisory group of stakeholders will provide feedback to ensure that the research remains relevant to Caltrans' policy and planning needs. The University and Caltrans will collaborate closely through kickoff meetings, regular progress check-ins, and iterative review of deliverables. The project concludes with a final report, policy brief, and presentations that summarize all findings in a clear, actionable format.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The goal of this research is to understand how MaaS could realistically work in the United States by combining lessons from international examples with insights from American travelers. The study will look at what has been successful abroad, explore how U.S. travelers feel about using bundled mobility services, and examine the practical challenges of integrating transit, shared mobility, and payment systems into a single platform. By bringing these perspectives together, the project will identify realistic ways MaaS could expand multimodal travel options and reduce reliance on private cars. The final products will include a literature review, findings from focus groups, clear takeaways for policymakers, and a

comprehensive report to help guide Caltrans in considering future MaaS strategies.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

This research will help Caltrans make more informed decisions about future mobility investments by showing which parts of MaaS are most appealing to U.S. travelers. By blending international lessons with insights from California-based focus groups, the study will give Caltrans practical guidance on where MaaS could genuinely improve travel choices, support equity goals, or help reduce congestion by providing stronger alternatives to driving.

The project also produces resources that agencies can use right away, including a clear, non-technical literature review, a policy brief, and a final report designed for planners and decision-makers. These materials translate complex research into straightforward, actionable recommendations.

In the broader sense, this work strengthens Caltrans' ability to anticipate emerging mobility trends and plan for a transportation system that better reflects the needs, preferences, and travel behaviors of communities across California.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

We have kicked off the project and are working on scheduling the quarterly meeting for the summer quarter.

IMAGES



Image 1: A stylized graphic of interconnected mobility hubs (Source: <https://www.sacog.org/planning/transportation/sustainable-mobility-program/mobility-hubs>)