

# Research Notes

## Planning/Policy/ Programming

**October 2025**

**Project Title:** Exploring Induced Travel from Rail Transit Expansions

**Task Number:** 4711

**Start Date:** October 1, 2025

**Completion Date:** December 31, 2026

**Task Manager:**

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## Exploring Induced Travel from Rail Transit Expansions

Examining the effect of increased commuter/regional rail on transit use and automobile use.

### WHAT IS THE NEED?

This research project will take an in depth look at estimating and mitigating vehicle miles traveled (VMT) induced by both transportation and land development projects which is essential to meeting California's greenhouse gas emissions targets, as well as informing decisionmakers and the public about project-level effects in cost-benefit analyses and environmental review. The VMT effects of transit service provision or expansion can be particularly tricky to estimate. Not much is known about the effects of commuter/regional rail on either regional transit use or regional automobile use.

### WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We are going to be doing three things with this project:

- (1) Review and synthesize the literature on the effect of rail transit expansion on both transit and automobile use.
- (2) Explore the data that could be used to empirically examine the effect of increased commuter/regional rail on transit use and automobile use.
- (3) Develop recommendations for assessing the VMT effects of expanding rail transit in environmental reviews, or at least what additional data or research would be useful for that.

### WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The findings from this project can benefit Caltrans as it develops its vehicle miles traveled (VMT) mitigation policy in partnership with the California Air Resources Board as it sets greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and reviews sustainable communities' strategies.

### WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

This project would help fill that gap by empirically examining



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the effect of increased commuter/regional rail on transit use and automobile use, using at least one California case study. The project would also produce a synthesis of the literature on the effect of rail transit expansion on both transit and automobile use, as well as recommendations for assessing the VMT effects of expanding rail transit in environmental reviews. The project results could help inform the VMT mitigation playbook Caltrans is developing for its VMT-induced projects. It will help Caltrans, other transportation agencies, lawmakers, and the public more effectively prioritize environmentally sustainable transportation options.

### WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

Project kick off meeting will be scheduled shortly after start date of 10/1/2025.

### IMAGES



**Image 1:** Passengers board a Metro Rapid Bus on Vermont Avenue in South Los Angeles. (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times )