

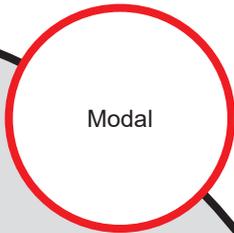


Caltrans Division of Research,
Innovation and System Information

Research



Results



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Project Title:

Bicycling and Access to Transit by Low-Income Immigrants

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Bicycling and Access to Transit by Low-Income Immigrants

Add to the existing body of knowledge about the travel behavior of immigrants, a growing proportion of the U.S.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Public transportation is a vital link in meeting the mobility needs of low-income individuals and immigrants to the United States. Roughly 2% of all trips nationwide are made by public transit, but immigrants who live in households that earn less than \$25,000 per year take nearly 9% of their trips by public transportation. Because it is nearly impossible for transit to provide door-to-door service, it is critical to examine the characteristics of the “last mile” segments that connect trip origins and destinations to transit, 88% of which are walk trips and 0.5% of which are bicycle trips in the low-income immigrant population. A focus group study that included primarily low-income Mexican immigrants identified a need to improve public transit, partially by improving the links among home, work, and transit.

Despite their importance, few studies have examined these access and egress trips and none have done so for low-income immigrants. To fill this gap, the authors conducted a travel survey that will oversample low-income immigrants as well as those who access and egress transit via bicycle, focusing on Alameda County.

WHAT WAS OUR GOAL?

The goal of this study was to add to the existing body of knowledge about the travel behavior of immigrants, a growing proportion of the U.S. population. It was designed to answer several research questions related to transit access and bicycling by low-income immigrants.



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WHAT DID WE DO?

The principal investigator conducted a mixed-methods study comparing the travel patterns, barriers and constraints of low-income immigrants living in the San Francisco Bay Area with those of other groups with regard to taking transit and bicycling. Interviews were conducted with 14 low-income immigrants and a paper-based intercept survey was filled-out by 2,078 adults.

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Interviewees revealed five major barriers that made public transit use difficult for them, including safety, transit fare affordability, discrimination, system legibility, and reliability. Although crime was the most prominent issue in interviews, the survey results suggest transit cost is the most pressing concern for low-income immigrants. Low-income immigrants were less likely than those with higher-incomes to have access to a motor vehicle, and were less likely than higher-income immigrants or the U.S.-born of any income to have access to a bicycle or bus pass. Finally, although most barriers to public transit use were the same regardless of nativity or household income, low-income immigrants were much less willing to take public transit when they had the option to drive and less willing to bicycle for any purpose. The prevalence of concerns about transit affordability, crime, and reliability suggest transit agencies should consider income-based fare reductions, coordinated crime prevention with local law enforcement, and improved scheduling.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

There are a number of end user groups who will benefit from the information in the final report. Transit agency planners and staff will gain a greater understanding of the characteristics

of riders accessing transit by bicycle. Transit agencies concerned with equity can use the knowledge to better meet the needs of low-income immigrants by prioritizing service enhancements and bicycle parking or accommodations in the highest areas of need. Local government transportation planners can use the results to better plan for bicycling facilities near transit stations and other barriers to transit access that low-income immigrants identify. Immigrants' rights and social equity groups may use the report findings to effectively advocate for transit access improvements for their constituents.

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