

# **PUBLIC TRANSIT IN AMERICA: ANALYSIS OF ACCESS USING THE 2001 NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD TRAVEL SURVEY (PHASE II)**

## **BACKGROUND**

Understanding transit ridership has become a critical research interest and policy goal. Data from the 2001 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) provides information that can be used to increase understanding of transit ridership, inform decision making, and improve the success of transit. Previous research, “Public Transit in America—Evidence from the 2001 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey” (BC137-48) studied data originally released in the NHTS report. Supplemental data has since been appended to the NHTS report, and it includes variables that measure access or distance to public transportation. The significance and usefulness of this additional data merited this additional analysis.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this study was to analyze supplemental data appended to the original NHTS data and provide information to help planners and policy makers more fully understand public transportation travel/travelers. The new data provided a unique opportunity to explore access to public transit. Specific research objectives included (1) analyzing statistically significant distance intervals and (2) evaluating transit availability/use as a function of distance and various other socio-economic variables.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The analysis reveals strong differences in household and workplace access to transit as a function of race, income, auto ownership, and urban area size. Additionally, a very high sensitivity to access exists, which suggests that the share of transit accessible trips is smaller than previously acknowledged. Approximately 53 percent of national households are within a mile of bus service, and 40 percent are within a quarter-mile. Approximately 10 percent of the population lives within one mile of rail service. Over 50 percent of nationwide workplaces are within a quarter mile walk radius of a bus line. Not surprisingly, workplaces are more closely concentrated near transit than are residences. Further, mode share for transit declines by approximately two thirds beyond the first interval (up to 0.15 miles) from a bus route. These observations imply that services offering very good residential access are likely to be more successful in attracting passengers. Finally, the analysis suggests that access is even more critical than transit planning professionals may previously have acknowledged.

## **BENEFITS**

This research improves the understanding of how transit access impacts transit use, which is helpful in designing transit services and transit supportive land uses. More generally, this research supports informed planning and policy decision making, which is the ultimate benefit of this study.

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