



SJSU Research Center
210 N. Fourth St., 4th Fl.
San José, CA 95112

Tel // 408.924.7560
Fax // 408.924.7565

www.transweb.sjsu.edu

Board of Trustees

Founder

Hon. Norman Y. Mineta

Honorary Co-Chairs

*Congressman James Oberstar
Congressman John L. Mica*

Chair

William W. Millar

Vice Chair

Mortimer Downey

Executive Director

Hon. Rod Diridon, Sr.

Ronald Barnes
Rebecca Brewster
Donald H. Camph
Thomas Carper
Anne P. Canby
Jane Chmielinski
William Dorey
Nuria I. Fernandez
Steve Heminger
Hon. John Horsley
Will Kempton
Brian Macleod
Hon. Norman Y. Mineta
Stephanie L. Pinson
Hans Rat
Dean David Steele
Paul A. Toliver
Michael S. Townes
David L. Turney
Edward Wytkind

For immediate release
Contact: Donna Maurillo
831-234-4009 mobile
maurillo@mti.sjsu.edu

OR

Riki Rafner
415-597-6712
Riki.rafner@gmail.com

Mineta Transportation Institute Publishes Study on Public vs. Private Mobility for Poor People as It Relates to Employment

Researchers Johnston & Gao conclude that public transportation is more beneficial overall in helping welfare recipients find and keep jobs.

San Jose, Calif., August 5, 2009 – The [Mineta Transportation Institute](#) (MTI) has published Report 08-02, [Public Versus Private Mobility for the Poor: Transit Improvements Versus Increased Car Ownership in the Sacramento Region](#). The report provides valuable information on the debate about transportation policy choice regarding welfare recipients. It concludes that, as it relates to obtaining and retaining jobs, improved public transit has greater benefit to households receiving welfare than does helping them obtain an auto.

Principal investigators were Robert A. Johnston, emeritus professor in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy at UC Davis, and Shengyi Gao, research scientist in the Information Center for the Environment, UC Davis.

The study addresses the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The goal of the law signed by President Bill Clinton was to assist welfare recipients find employment and become self-sufficient. To conform to the federal law, the California Department of Social Services adopted the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CALWORKS) program on January 1, 1998.

“Surveys and empirical studies demonstrate that, besides job skills and child care, lack of reliable transportation is a key factor preventing many welfare recipients from finding and retaining jobs,” said Dr. Johnston. “The solution is either to provide the means for welfare recipients to obtain a car, to provide improved public transit, or to do both.”

The Johnston & Gao study tested the possible impacts of promoting car ownership versus transit improvements on job accessibility, work trips, and traveler benefits (calculated as dollars per trip) at the system level by running a travel demand model adopted by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG).

The study demonstrated that assigning a car to households without a vehicle would have only minor negative impacts in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), traffic volumes, and congestion. However, it would substantially reduce the mode-shared trips – that is, trips involving more than one means of transportation, such as walking, cycling, taking the bus, etc.

However, an improved transit system makes the jobs—in particular, the entry-level jobs in suburban areas—more accessible to families who reside in inner-city areas, and it provides an alternative mode for all travelers. While all the participants in the study benefitted from the travel mode provided, overall, the families that relied on public transit saw greater benefits. The complete study can be found at www.transweb.sjsu.edu. Go to the Research tab, then to Publications and scroll down. There is no charge to download the report.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Robert A. Johnston is an emeritus professor in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy at the University of California, Davis, where he also serves as a faculty researcher at UCD's Institute of Transportation Studies. Current consulting involves the evaluation of regional travel demand models and land use models for public and private clients and reviews of environmental assessments of large projects. He has been an expert witness in several National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) lawsuits. Johnston's current research involves applying an integrated urban model to California. Johnston's GIS-based urban growth model is being applied to about 20 rural counties in California for the California DOT. In 2006–07, Professor Johnston was on a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) committee that issued a book on the state of travel modeling in the United States. He recently developed a model for projecting energy use and greenhouse gases from general plans.

Shengyi Gao is a research scientist in the Information Center for the Environment, University of California, Davis. He received his Ph.D. in Transportation Technology and Policy from UC Davis in 2006. His research interests include the relationships between land use and transportation, transportation equity, urban growth modeling, and application of geographic information system technology in transportation and land use planning. He is currently working on the California Production, Exchange, and Consumption Allocation System (PECAS), which is an integrated land use-transportation model.

ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE:

The [Mineta Transportation Institute](#) (MTI) was established by Congress in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and was reauthorized in 1998. The institute is funded by Congress through the US DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration, by the California Legislature through the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and by other public and private grants and donations. The US DOT selected MTI as a national "Center of Excellence" following a 2002 competition.

The Institute has a Board of Trustees whose internationally-respected members represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI's focus on policy and management resulted from a board assessment of the industry's unmet needs and led directly to choosing the San José State University College of Business as the Institute's home. MTI conducts research, education, and information and technology transfer focusing on transportation policy and management topics and issues. Visit www.transweb.sjsu.edu