

New Mineta research says transit operators and managers may directly control bus ridership increases

Free report says to adjust seven internal factors

San Jose, CA –May 20, 2015 – Mechanisms to increase transit ridership are in the hands of transit authorities. In general, they should not have to depend on outside factors to be successful. Rather, they can adjust seven internal factors under their control. That’s the conclusion of a new peer-reviewed research report from the [Mineta Transportation Institute](#) (MTI). [*Investigating the Determining Factors for Transit Travel Demand by Bus Mode in US Metropolitan Statistical Areas*](#) is available for free download from <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1101.html>. The principal investigators were Bhuiyan Alam, PhD, and Hilary Nixon, PhD, assisted by Qiong Zhang.

“The nature of transit travel demand is at the heart of transportation policy making and the success of transit systems,” said Dr. Alam. “Unfortunately, most of the existing studies have focused on a single or a few transit systems or metropolitan areas to analyze the determinants of transit travel demand. This study investigates those determining factors for bus ridership in the United States at Metropolitan Statistical Areas in 2010.”

Study results revealed that only one external factor – gasoline price – affected bus ridership. However, seven internal factors controlled by bus operators also affect ridership. These include transit supply, fares, average headway, transit coverage, service intensity, revenue hours, and safety.

Dr. Alam explained, “The findings are significant because this is a comprehensive study that includes all Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the US. Keeping these results in mind, transit policy makers and planners can create plans and policies that provide efficient transit systems that taxpayers naturally want to use.”

This is good news for transit operators because the research indicates that they have more control over ridership than conventional wisdom – or even some previous research – indicates.

Despite increased subsidies for transit systems and maintaining relatively low fares, national bus ridership hit a peak in 1948, declined, and then remained relatively steady since the 1970s. This new report says that several studies have been conducted to investigate the reasons, but most were limited in their scope or they drew conclusions that could not be applied generally. Some of them also gave greater weight to outside factors that proved insignificant in this study – such as the percentage of immigrant population, the percentage of carless households, and median household income.

The 58-page report includes a literature review, explanation of methodology, and six figures and seven tables to illustrate. A copy of the survey instrument is also included.

For a free, no-registration download, go to <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1101.html>

Tweet this: @MinetaTrans report: #Transit agencies have control over 7 key factors in ridership increases. <http://ow.ly/M1SIp>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM

Bhuiyan Alam, PhD, is an associate professor of urban planning in the Department of Geography & Planning at the University of Toledo, Ohio. His research interests are in public transportation; relationships among urban form, active transport, and health outcomes; traffic safety; transport and climate change; and planning in developing countries. He holds a Bachelor's in civil engineering from Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology, a Master's in regional & rural development planning from the Asian Institute of Technology, a Master's in civil engineering from Florida State University, and a PhD in urban & regional planning from Florida State University.

Hilary Nixon, PhD, is an associate professor of urban and regional planning at San José State University. Her research and teaching interests are in environmental planning and policy focusing on the relationship between environmental attitudes and behavior, particularly with respect to waste management and linkages between transportation and the environment. She holds a BA from the University of Rochester in environmental management and a PhD in planning, policy, and design from the University of California, Irvine.

Qiong Zhang is a transportation planner. She received a Master's Degree in geography & planning from the University of Toledo in 2013.

ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) conducts research, education, and information transfer programs regarding surface transportation policy and management issues, especially related to transit. Congress established MTI in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. MTI won national re-designation competitions in 2002, 2006 and 2012. The Institute is funded through the US Department of Transportation, the US Department of Homeland Security, the California Department of Transportation, and public and private grants. The internationally respected members of the MTI Board of Trustees represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI, the lead institute for the nine-university Mineta National Transit Research Consortium, is affiliated with San Jose (CA) State University's College of Business. Visit transweb.sjsu.edu

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