Report Recommends Methods to Facilitate Transit Ridership for Bicyclists

Mineta Transportation Institute's free publication provides insight for planners

San Jose, Calif., January 22, 2013 – How can transit planners accurately address the needs of those who combine bicycling with transit riding? Given that many bicyclists place a high value on the ability to blend these two modes, the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) has published a peer-reviewed report that provides policy recommendations to best address that need. *Perceptions of Bicycle-Friendly Policy Impacts on Accessibility to Transit Services: The First and Last Mile Bridge* is available for no-cost, no-registration download at http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1104.html. Authors are Bradley Flamm, PhD and Charles Rivasplata, PhD.

In recent years, transit agencies have made it easier to combine bicycles and transit by installing bicycle racks on transit vehicles, implementing bicycles-on-trains policies, and developing other complementary programs. But is that effort really enlarging the geographic range of transit access? Further, do planners fully understand the profile of cycle-transit users (CTUs)?

"The research results show CTUs to be a diverse group, and the concept of transit catchment areas is complex and fluid when the access mode is a bicycle," said Dr. Flamm. "The study documents the mutually reinforcing way in which bicycles and public transit serve as access modes for each other and includes policy recommendations that can improve cyclists' use and accessibility to transit service."

Who are CTUs, and how far do they travel?

This research project addresses two broad questions: Who are CTUs, and what distances do they travel on bicycles to access public transit? The project employed a literature review, a survey of bus operators, a survey of CTUs in Philadelphia and San Francisco, and follow-up telephone interviews with a subset of survey respondents. The survey addressed the motivations, practices, and challenges that CTUs face when combining bicycles and transit in single journeys.

Cycle-transit user respondents in both cities were predominantly male, white and well-educated, the research found. This is a profile that reflects the population of urban bicyclists found in most studies in the US. Most respondents combined transit and bicycling for work commute trips. The quantity and security of bicycle parking at transit stops and stations was the most frequently cited improvement CTUs would like to see addressed.

The modes complement each other.

Sample revelations from the research include:

- Bicycles and transit serve as access modes for each other, enabling travelers to access transit and use bikes for transportation when they might not otherwise be able to.
- CTUs reflect the larger population of US bicycle commuters, with low percentages of women and non-whites combining modes. They do, however, exhibit a degree of diversity that can be built upon as more is learned about the barriers to becoming a CTU.
- CTUs value being able to travel farther and to avoid bicycle travel at inconvenient times, in inclement weather, at night, and in undesirable places.
- Cycle-transit trips could be accomplished by other means but at greater costs, as respondents would have to rely on options that cost more time and money.
- Many CTUs had clear ideas about how cycle-transit coordination could work better, identifying changes that could make cycling and transit more appealing.

The report also included advice for policy makers. Among the recommendations:

- Make cycle-transit coordination a high and funded priority for local and regional planning organizations and transit agencies responsible for bicycle planning.
- Plan for increased demand in cycle-transit use, providing more secure bicycle parking and higher-capacity bicycle facilities on transit vehicles.
- Develop better orientation materials (publications, web pages, and videos accessible online) through which to promote cycle-transit travel.
- Study strategies for further facilitating physical access by bicycles to, from and within transit stations and terminals.
- Encourage the growth and expansion of bicycle share programs in US cities.

The full 96-page report includes 27 tables and figures, along with samples of the survey materials. The free, no-registration PDF document is available at http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1104.html

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bradley Flamm, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Community and Regional Planning at Temple University (Ambler PA). He teaches transportation planning, planning methods, and sustainable development courses. His research interests are focused on the environmental and energy impacts of transportation systems and on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change action planning at the municipal level. He chairs the Transportation Sub-Committee of Temple University's Sustainability Task Force and is co-chair of the Ambler Campus Sustainability Council. He has a BA from the University of California Berkeley in political science, a Master of Regional Planning from Cornell University, and a PhD in city and regional planning from the University of California Berkeley.

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ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE (MTI):

MTI conducts research, education, and information transfer programs focusing on surface transportation policy and management issues, especially related to transit. MTI was established by Congress in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act and won national re-designation competitions in 2002, 2006 and 2011. The Institute is funded by Congress through the US DOT Research and Innovative Technology Administration, by the California Legislature through Caltrans, and public and private grants. In 2006 the US Department of Homeland Security selected MTI as a National Transportation Security Center of Excellence. The internationally respected members of the MTI Board of Trustees represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI is the lead institute for the Mineta National Transit Research Consortium, an affiliation of nine university transportation research centers. MTI is affiliated with San Jose (CA) State University's College of Business. Visit transweb.sjsu.edu

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