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## **As Voters Relocate to Suburbs, Will They Still Support Transit Improvements?**

*Mineta Transportation Institute's free research report could help policy makers predict trends.*

**San Jose, Calif., July 2, 2013** – Over the last fifty years, as more voters have moved to the suburbs, they enjoy fewer benefits from public transit access. Given that fact, would they still support public investment in transit improvements? Researchers analyzed voting patterns on 20 transit-related ballot propositions in California-wide elections from 1990-2010. The results are now released in a [Mineta Transportation Institute](#) (MTI) research report, [California Voting and Suburbanization Patterns: Implications for Transit Policy](#). The peer-reviewed study, available for free download, was conducted by Matthew J. Holian, PhD, and Matthew E. Kahn, PhD.

“The results of our study provide a rich picture of California voters’ attitudes toward transportation policy,” said Dr. Kahn. “This report will help policy makers to better understand citizen preferences and to better predict how future trends will shift support toward or against transit. We also suggest ways that policy makers can increase support for transit, including some counter-intuitive ways, such as improving urban schools and avoiding unnecessary land use regulations that raise the price of urban homes.”

In addition to statistical analysis of all 20 propositions, the researchers present three case studies that provide context, and they use the data to test additional hypotheses. These case studies generate new knowledge about voter preferences for public investment in public transit and environmental regulation. By documenting the correlates of support for all transit-related propositions from 1990-2010, this study becomes a valuable reference for policy makers, citizens, and others.

The report presents evidence supporting two main hypotheses: First, economics logic predicts that a voter is more likely to support a transit investment if she is more likely to use it (the access effect). And second, this is also true if the voter is a homeowner who believes that her property value will appreciate because of the home’s proximity to an increasingly valuable piece of transport infrastructure (the capitalization effect).

Further, the report says that evidence of these two effects suggests that there will be consequences from the median voter living further and further from city centers. As the population suburbanizes, this trend predicts that, all else equal, support for public transit projects will decline.

Finally, considering the central role of land value in the report’s theoretical model, the report ends with some thoughts on the possibility of using tax increment financing, value capture, and other methods to finance public transit infrastructure.

Dr. Holian noted, “Creative financing mechanisms hold the promise of increasing the amount of capital available for transit, and also of ensuring that scarce transit investment funds are used for the highest-value projects.”

The full report includes seven figures and 27 detailed tables. For a PDF of the MTI research report (no cost, no registration), go to <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1105.html>

#### **ABOUT THE PROJECT INVESTIGATORS**

**Matthew J. Holian, PhD**, is an associate professor at San Jose State University in the Economics Department and a research associate at the Mineta Transportation Institute. He completed his PhD in economics in 2008 at the Ohio State University. His scholarly publications have appeared in journals such as *Journal of Housing Economics* and *Public Choice*. His research focuses on industrial, public, transportation, and urban economics.

**Matthew E. Kahn, PhD**, is a professor at the UCLA Institute of the Environment, the Department of Economics, and the Department of Public Policy. He is a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Mineta Transportation Institute. Before joining the UCLA faculty in January 2007, he taught at Columbia and the Fletcher School at Tufts University. He has served as a visiting professor at Harvard and Stanford. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Green Cities: Urban Growth and the Environment* (Brookings Institution Press, 2006) and the co-author of *Heroes and Cowards: The Social Face of War* (Princeton University Press, 2009). In September 2010, Basic Books published his book titled *Climatopolis*. His research focuses on environmental, urban, real estate, and energy economics.

#### **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](http://transweb.sjsu.edu)

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