

Free Report Reveals How to Develop Effective Regional Transit

Mineta NTRC investigated Atlanta, Cleveland, Denver, St. Louis and applied it to Detroit

San Jose, Calif., March 20, 2014 – Transit agencies across the country could benefit from a comprehensive study of the factors that enable and inhibit the development of effective regional transit. Published by the Mineta National Transit Research Consortium (MNTRC), [*Detroit Regional Transit Study: A Study of Factors that Enable and Inhibit Effective Regional Transit*](#) focuses on Metro Detroit and four peer regions – Atlanta, Cleveland, Denver and St. Louis. Results and recommendations are applicable to other cities, as well. The report is available at no charge and no registration from <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1136.html>

Principal investigator Dr. Leo E. Hanifin of the University of Detroit Mercy and the team of a dozen researchers divided the project into six different areas and their influence on transit development and operation. These included leadership and politics; governance and law; finance; transit-oriented development; equity and access; and media and public opinion. The overall publication provides an overview and the key recommendations of these six separate reports, thereby summarizing the most significant results of the entire study.

“By investigating transit in four different peer regions, the researchers were able to fuse observations into insights that apply to the current situation in Metro Detroit,” said Dr. Hanifin. “The lessons, however, are not exclusive to the Detroit region. They are presented as case studies to allow future researchers and planners to select those findings and focal areas that apply to their particular regions.”

The UDM regional transit study team did not employ a traditional research methodology, driven solely by data. Rather, the investigators sought to learn valuable lessons from more than 60 people who have been leaders for many years in transit advocacy, development, and operation across the country – drawing especially upon their personal reflections regarding successes and failures. The wisdom derived from those experiences formed the foundation of this research.

In brief, a few of the most important recommendations include:

- Transit advocates and leaders must raise the volume and bandwidth of communication and action for regional thinking in Southeast Detroit.
- They must organize a broad coalition that effectively advocates for transit planning, support, ridership and transit-oriented development in the Metro Detroit region.
- Businesses should provide most of the funds needed for the upcoming advocacy campaign to generate local support for the Regional Transit Authority’s plans to build and operate more and better regional transit in southeastern Michigan.
- Academic leaders should mobilize students from across Metro Detroit to provide the personnel for transit education and advocacy campaigns.
- Regional leaders, stakeholders, and advocates of transit must understand the public opinions of their regions, not just as a whole but as a collection of opinions by affinity groups with values and objectives correlated to their locales, ethnicities, political parties, ages, pastimes, etc.
- Leaders should not allow perfection to become an obstacle to progress. No transit plan will be perfect for any single stakeholder segment or individual, but making no progress toward improving transit in Metro Detroit is a worse option.

In addition to Dr. Hanifin, the research faculty team included Scott Anderson, MACS; Claudia Bernasconi, M.ARCH; Utpal Dutta, PhD, PE; Alan Hoback, SCD, PE; and Lloyd Semple, JD. Funding was provided by the US Department of Transportation through the Mineta National Transit Research Consortium, matched by the Michigan Department of Transportation and the University of Detroit Mercy. The publications are available for free PDF download at <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1136.html>

ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Leo Hanifin, ME, DE is a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Detroit Mercy. Throughout his career, he has been active in development of university, industry and government partnerships, including the Michigan Ohio University Transportation Center. Before joining UDM as Dean of the College of Engineering in 1991, Dr. Hanifin directed the launch and growth of the manufacturing center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute into a 300-person collaborative research/technology center. At the University of Detroit, he earned his BME in mechanical engineering, design option; a Master of Engineering in solid mechanics; and a doctorate in engineering. Dr. Hanifin was a Hughes Fellow at the University of California, Los Angeles. Before joining academia, he held positions in the computer, aerospace and automotive industries. Dr. Hanifin is currently a member of the Detroit Regional Transit Authority's Citizens Advisory Committee and the M-1 Rail Board of Directors.

ABOUT THE MINETA NATIONAL TRANSIT RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

The Mineta National Transit Research Consortium (MNTRC) is composed of nine university transportation centers led by the Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University. The Consortium was organized in January 2012 after winning a competition sponsored by the US Department of Transportation (DOT) to create consortia tasked with "Delivering Solutions that Improve Public Transportation." Member universities include Bowling Green State University, Grand Valley State University, Howard University, Penn State University, Rutgers University, San Jose State University, University of Detroit Mercy, University of Nevada Las Vegas, and University of Toledo. Visit transweb.sjsu.edu/mntrc

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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