

Contact: Donna Maurillo
MTI Communications Director
831-234-4009
donna.maurillo (at) sjsu.edu

**Mineta Transportation Institute Report:
Motivating Conformance with Land Use and Transportation Plans**

Strategies to avoid potential economic and inequity consequences of non-compliance.

San Jose, Calif., August 4, 2011 – The [Mineta Transportation Institute](#) (MTI) has released a report that offers insights into the potential economic and equity consequences to jurisdictions that do and do not implement California’s Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) land use plans in a given region. *Potential Economic Consequences of Local Nonconformity to Regional Land Use and Transportation Plans Using a Spatial Economic Model* was authored by principal investigator Caroline Rodier, Ph.D. The report can provide understanding of jurisdictions’ motivations for compliance and thus, strategies for more effective implementation of SCS. It also offers four specific recommendations. A free download is available at www.transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2902.html

California’s global warming legislation requires a reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. To reach those targets, the state has determined that recent growth trends in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) must be curtailed. Therefore, Senate Bill 375 requires regional governments to develop land use and transportation plans, or SCSs, that will achieve regional GHG targets largely through reduced VMT.

“Although the bill requires such a plan, it does not require local governments to adopt general plans that conform to it,” said Dr. Rodier. “In California, it is local, not regional, governments that have authority over land development decisions. Instead, SB375 relies on democratic participation and relatively modest financial and regulatory incentives for SCS implementation. As a result, it is possible that some local governments within a region may decide not to conform to their SCS. We wanted to learn what would motivate them to comply.”

Using spatial economic modeling, the study created four scenarios in which the effect of a jurisdiction’s non-conformity resulted in different combinations of centralization or decentralization of employment and housing in the region. For example, in one scenario, non-compliance contributes to housing and employment centralization, and it increases economic benefits for the average household in all jurisdictions in the region. However, residents in more centrally located or urban jurisdictions benefit relatively more than those in outlying or rural jurisdictions due to differences in transportation costs. In rural areas, these disparities may have negative economic consequences for lower income residents because transportation costs compose a more significant share of their budget relative to higher income groups.

Four recommendations

The study resulted in four recommendations. First, when developing SCSs that increase the centralization of activities in a region, it is necessary to understand the particular transportation needs of rural and low-income residents. If credible inequities are identified, then creative policy should be developed to address the problem without encouraging decentralizing even further.

Second, any risk of economic losses to communities that continue business-as-usual development patterns should be explicitly addressed when developing and communicating SCSs. These include higher costs for business operations, which may weaken a region's ability to compete economically with other regions both nationally and internationally.

Third, the possibility that non-conforming jurisdictions may benefit at the expense of other jurisdictions and the overall regional economy suggests that the distribution of jurisdictional benefits should be explicitly examined and addressed when the SCS is developed.

And last, the implementation of SB375 by local jurisdictions should be carefully monitored. If non-conformity becomes a significant problem, the legislature should consider amending SB375 to include strong sanctions for non-compliance.

The full report is available for free download from the Mineta Transportation Institute at www.transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2902.html

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Caroline Rodier is associate director of the Urban Land Use and Transportation Center (ULTRANS) at the University of California, Davis. Her major areas of research include transportation and environmental planning and policy analysis. She has extensive experience applying land use and transportation demand models to evaluate the travel, economic, equity and air quality effects of a wide range of transportation and land use policies, including intelligent transportation systems technologies, high occupancy vehicle lanes, transit improvements, road pricing, and land use control measures. Most recently, she has applied the Sacramento PECAS model with the SACSIM model to evaluate the equity, consumer surplus, and producer surplus of the Blueprint Plan for the Sacramento region. Dr. Rodier has also provided extensive research support to the California Air Resources Board in its development of the scoping plan for Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, including an international review of the modeling evidence on the effectiveness of transit, land use, and auto pricing strategies.

ABOUT THE MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) conducts research, education, and information and technology transfer, focusing on multimodal surface transportation policy and management issues. It was established by Congress in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and was reauthorized under TEA-21 and again under SAFETEA-LU. The Institute is funded by Congress through the US Department of Transportation's (DOT) Research and Innovative Technology Administration, by the California Legislature through the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and by other public and private grants and donations, including grants from the US Department of Homeland Security. DOT selected MTI as a National Center of Excellence following competitions in 2002 and 2006. The internationally respected members of the MTI Board of Trustees represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI's focus on policy and management resulted from the Board's assessment of the transportation industry's unmet needs. That led directly to choosing the San José State University College of Business as the Institute's home. Visit www.transweb.sjsu.edu

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