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Access to Public Transit and Its Influence on Ridership for Older Adults in Two U.S. Cities

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Abstract

Growth in the population of older adults (age 60 and above) in coming years will challenge planners and transportation managers to provide travel options that support autonomy. To address barriers that older adults experience in using public transit, this research explores associations between older adults who do and do not ride fixed-route public transit and their neighborhood access to buses and trains. The research tests whether or not the distance between a transit destination and a transit stop or station is a significant factor in predicting frequency of transit ridership. Data from a survey of older adults in California and New York is used to regress frequency of riding public transit against explanatory variables, including demographic and socioeconomic variables, access and mobility measures, and neighborhood characteristics. Results suggest that self-reported walking distance to transit has a statistically significant influence on transit ridership in San José, California, but not in Buffalo, New York—in predicting transit ridership frequency. Older adults are more sensitive to walking distance than nondrivers. Models estimate that in San José, a five-minute increase in perceived walking time to transit decreases transit ridership frequency by 10 percent for nondrivers and by 25 percent for drivers. Older adults are likely to ride transit more often if they are male, nonwhite, and low income.

Full Text: PDF

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