

TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH  
**E-CIRCULAR**

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Number E-C026

March 2001

**Personal Travel**  
*The Long and Short of It*

**Conference Proceedings**  
**June 28–July 1, 1999**  
**Washington, D.C.**

## Personal Travel *The Long and Short of It*

Conference Proceedings  
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## Introduction

The Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) and the American Travel Survey (ATS), both conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation, can be used to develop a complete description of personal travel by residents of the United States. The conference, “Personal Travel: The Long and Short of It,” held at the Swisshotel Watergate, Washington, D.C., from June 28 through July 1, 1999, brought together a diverse group of people to address this topic. Demographers, travel behavior analysts, transportation policy analysts, and survey methodologists were among those who attended. The conference was supported by two TRB Committees: Travel Survey Methods (A1D10), and National Data Requirements & Programs (A5016).

The NPTS is a survey of daily travel by people in households in the United States. This survey is conducted every 5–7 years, and collects information about trips by all modes of transportation. It is the only authoritative source of national data on the amount and nature of daily personal travel, and the only source that allows us to assess how travel has changed in the nation as a whole. The 1995 survey is the fifth in a series that began in 1969, and was continued in 1977, 1983, and 1990.

The ATS contains information on the origin, destination, volume, and characteristics of long distance trips made by residents of the United States. Long trips were defined as those where the destination is 100 mi away from home or more. ATS data provide insight into America’s long-distance transportation choices, including foreign and domestic travel.

This conference was a unique forum to describe the full continuum of personal travel, bringing the users of daily and long-distance travel data together. This was the first time the results of both surveys were presented at a joint conference. The objectives of the conference included

- Suggesting policy and planning applications for travel analyses;
- Identifying additional research priorities;
- Improving data elements in these or similar travel surveys; and
- Providing ideas for future NPTS and ATS surveys, or combined versions of the two surveys.

Two keynoters set the stage for exploring travel behavior. Brad Edmondson, former editor of the magazine, *American Demographics*, started the conference with a strong message. He admonished the audience to “Wake up! People in the U.S. are not going to give up travelling in their own car.” *American Demographics* commissioned a study on attitudes of drivers. In that survey people regarded their automobile as their most important personal space. The study showed that Americans love to drive, with 45 percent agreeing with the statement “Driving is my time to think and be alone.” Edmondson felt that carpooling and public transit were not likely to entice many away from their cars. He showed how private firms and public agencies are using Internet-based and other surveys to influence behavior. One example was an Internet-based survey of potential customers for a hybrid (electric and gasoline) vehicle. In Adelaide, Australia, surveys were used to give individuals specific and detailed alternatives to driving alone based their actual current travel.

Martin Wachs, Director of the University of California Institute of Transportation Studies, delivered the luncheon address. His presentation was particularly thought-provoking as he discussed five issues.

1. Transportation in the new century will be to a far greater degree integrated with telecommunications and the flow of information; our use of data and our need for data will have to quickly change to reflect this.

2. We will see new patterns emerging in the relationship between transportation and urban form and these will suggest new forms of data collection and new forms of analysis.

3. We simply must improve our understanding of patterns of goods movement and integrate it better with our analysis of people movement.

4. We will have to look more closely at transportation and global warming, and build data and analytical capabilities that will enable us to do plausible evaluations of alternative transportation policies on the basis of sustainability.

5. Equity will be one of the major themes in transportation policy for the coming decade, and we need to sharpen our tools of analysis and create data support systems for more penetrating analyses of equity in transportation policymaking.

Parallel paper sessions and participant panels further investigated important issues. Paper presented explored topics such as:

- Age, gender, and life-cycle effects on travel;
- Geographic factors in travel;
- Air quality issues; and
- Mode choice and travel forecasting.

The highly interactive panels invoked dialogues among panel members and the audience. The discussions about methodological issues were especially timely in developing the pilot study for the 2000 NPTS/ATS. Discussions during the stimulating panel of European and Australian travel behavior researchers were particularly useful for the design of the pilot test of the 2000 NPTS/ATS. The ideas generated at the conference emphasize the problems and possibilities of a coordinated survey to obtain information on how Americans travel without artificially segregating data into daily or long-distance components.

Special recognition must be made to the Planning Committee, who both designed the conference concept and implemented those plans.

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- Heather Contrino, Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)
- Ed Kashuba, FHWA
- Susan Lapham, BTS
- Susan Liss, FHWA
- Nancy McGuckin, Consultant
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# Contents

## I. CONFERENCE SESSION DISCUSSIONS

<b>Opening Session—Partners in Information</b> .....	7
Welcoming Remarks, <i>Ashish Sen</i>	
Interaction Between Data Analysis and Policy, <i>Gloria Jeff</i>	
Conference Goals, <i>Alan Pisarski</i>	
Question-and-Answer Follow Up	
 <i>Keynote Address 1</i>	
<b>New Ideas for Tracking Travelers</b> .....	17
<i>Brad Edmondson</i>	
 <b>Changing Individual Travel Behavior</b> .....	29
Question-and-Answer Follow Up	
 <i>Keynote Address 2</i>	
<b>New Expectations for Transportation Data</b> .....	37
<i>Martin Wachs</i>	
 <b>Panel 1—Feedback From Data Users: Implications for Content</b> .....	45
 <b>Panel 2—European Issues</b> .....	49
Introduction	
Question-and-Answer Follow Up	
 <b>Panel 3—Economics and Travel</b> .....	59
Introduction	
Bringing Travel Surveys Together, <i>Alan Pisarski</i>	
Tourism Spending, <i>Doug Frectling</i>	
U.S. Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts, <i>Sumiye Okubo</i>	
Estimating World Travel Activities, <i>Rick Miller</i>	
Understanding Travel Behavior, <i>Don Pickrell</i>	
Comments	
 <b>Panel 4—Policy: What Have We Learned?</b> .....	83

<b>Panel 5—Methods: Reflections from the Conference on ATS and NPTS 2000</b> .....	87
Introduction	
Issues to Consider, <i>Kay Axhausen</i>	
Planning a Coordinated Survey Effort, <i>Susan Lapham</i>	
Changing Roles and Responsibilities, <i>Ed Kashuba</i>	
Question-and-Answer Follow Up	
<b>Closing Session—Identifying Trends</b> .....	99
<i>Alan Pisarski</i>	
 <b>II. PAPERS</b>	
<b>Older Travelers: Does Place or Race Make a Difference?</b> .....	103
<i>Sandi Rosenbloom and Brigitte Waldorf</i>	
<b>Analysis of Long-Distance Travel Behavior of the Elderly and Low Income</b> .....	121
<i>Nevine Labib Georggi and Ram M. Pendyala</i>	
<b>Influences on Mobility Among Non-Driving Older Americans</b> .....	151
<i>Edward L. Evans</i>	
<b>Long-Distance Travel by Low-Income Households</b> .....	169
<i>William J. Mallett</i>	
<b>Understanding Automobile Ownership Behavior of Low-Income Households: How Behavioral Differences May Influence Transportation Policy</b> .....	179
<i>Alissa D. Gardenhire and M. William Sermons</i>	
<b>Variations in Long-Distance Travel</b> .....	197
<i>Stacey Bricka</i>	
<b>Redefining Conventional Wisdom: Exploration of Automobile Ownership and Travel Behavior in the United States</b> .....	207
<i>Deb Niemeier, Lorien Redmond, Jennifer Morey, Jamie Hicks, Patricia Hendren, Jie Lin, Erin Foresman, and Yi Zheng</i>	
<b>Using the NPTS and the ATS Together: A Case Study</b> .....	221
<i>Patricia S. Hu and Jenny Young</i>	
<b>Estimating Long-Distance Travel Behavior from the Most Recent Trip</b> .....	237
<i>A. J. Richardson and R. K. Seethaler</i>	

<b>Estimation of the Demand for Inter-City Travel: Issues with Using the American Travel Survey</b> .....	255
<i>Piyushimita Thakuriah, Deepak Virmani, Seongsoon Yun, and Paul Metaxatos</i>	
<b>Long-Distance Trip Generation Modeling Using ATS</b> .....	271
<i>Wende A. O’Neill and Eugene Brown</i>	
<b>Evaluating the Accessibility of U.S. Airports: Results from the American Travel Survey</b> .....	287
<i>Ho-Ling Hwang, Shih-Miao Chin, Janet Hopson, and Felix Ammah-Tagoe</i>	
<b>Air Travel Market Segments: A New England Case Study</b> .....	307
<i>Evelyn Addante</i>	
<b>Methodological Research for a European Survey of Long-Distance Travel</b> .....	321
<i>K. W. Axhausen</i>	
<b>Is It Necessary to Collect Data on Daily Mobility and Long-Distance Travel in the Same Survey?</b> .....	343
<i>Jean-Loup Madre and Joëlle Maffre</i>	
<b>Redesign of the Dutch Travel Survey: Response Improvement</b> .....	365
<i>Ger Moritz and Werner Brög</i>	
<b>Influence of Consumer Culture and Race on Travel Behavior</b> .....	379
<i>Johanna P. Zmud and Carlos H. Arce</i>	
<b>Mobility and Mode Choice of People of Color for Non-Work Travel</b> .....	391
<i>Steven E. Polzin, Xuehao Chu, and Joel R. Rey</i>	
<b>Use of Electronic Travel Diaries and Vehicle Instrumentation Packages in the Year 2000: Atlanta Regional Household Travel Survey</b> .....	413
<i>Jean Wolf, Randall Guensler, Simon Washington, and Lawrence Frank</i>	
<b>Cognitive Laboratory Approach to Instrument Design</b> .....	431
<i>Maria Youssefzadeh</i>	
<b>Moving Beyond Observed Outcomes: Integrating Global Positioning Systems and Interactive Computer-Based Travel Behavior Surveys</b> .....	449
<i>Sean T. Doherty, Nathalie Noël, Martin-Lee Gosselin, Claude Sirois, and Mami Ueno</i>	

<b>Identifying Passenger Corridors on the U.S. Highway System Using ATS Data</b> .....	467
<i>Shih-Miao Chin and Ho-Ling Hwang</i>	
<b>Older Vehicles and Air Pollution: Insights from the 1995 NPTS</b> .....	491
<i>Jennifer Dill</i>	
<b>Improving Air Quality Models in New York State: Utility of the 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey</b> .....	515
<i>Nathan S. Erlbaum</i>	
<b>Enhancing Understanding of Non-Work Trip Making: Data Needs for the Determination of TOD Benefits</b> .....	537
<i>John Niles and Dick Nelson</i>	
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
<b>Conference Program</b> .....	549
<b>Conference Participants</b> .....	568