

## **Quantifying the Influences of Telecommuting on VMT and Transit Usage**

**Recipient/Grant (Contract) Number:** University of New Orleans/69A3552348337

**Center Name:** Center for Equitable Transit Oriented Communities (CETOC)

**Research Priority:** Preserving the Environment

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**Project Partners:** N/A

**Research Project Funding:** \$120,000 (USDOT) + \$60,000 (matching funds) = \$180,000

**Project Start and End Date:** 06/01/2023 to 05/31/2024

**Project Description:** The Covid-19 pandemic, alongside changes in technology and shifts in the job market, has led to increasing numbers of workers in the U.S. telecommuting, or ‘working from home.’ As many workers and businesses shift to models allowing for some or all work to be carried out off-site, traditional patterns of commuting are shifting, causing potentially widespread impacts on all aspects of the transportation system. Much of the previously available data on telecommuting classified workers as either fully remote or fully on-site. In the post-pandemic economy, increasing numbers of workers are ‘hybrid’ telecommuters, working from home part-time. While telecommuting provides workers with the ability to decrease VMT by eliminating commutes, previous research has shown that in many cases those who work from home actually generate more VMT than their counterparts, perhaps due in part to having more time to generate non-work trips for leisure and other purposes. As telecommuting becomes increasingly popular, understanding the broader impacts of this trend on travel outcomes is necessary to allow for planning processes that limit VMT generation and its negative social, environmental, and health effects, and to reassess transit systems to meet the changing travel needs of the population. Using a dataset from California, where a proliferation of high-tech companies and industries allowed for the early adoption of telecommuting models, this research aims to quantify the influences of telecommuting on household VMT generation and transit usage. It will advance the current understanding of the influences of telecommuting on VMT and transit usage in three ways. First, it will explore these influences at the household level with precise locations of where people live to control for both sociodemographic characteristics and neighborhood built environmental features. Second, it will employ a hierarchical twostage modeling approach. Not only it is the appropriate method to analyze variables with large numbers of zeros, such as transit trip counts, but also it can handle a nested data structure and take spatial autocorrelation and heterogeneity into account. Third, this research will use data from California, where most telecommuting started earlier than elsewhere. That gives a longer time for the impacts of telecommuting to be felt.

**USDOT Priorities:** This research focuses on the issue of *Transformation* and planning for the future of our transportation systems using *Data-Driven Insight* into how people’s transportation

patterns and needs are shifting. It also addresses the USDOT strategic goal of *Climate and Sustainability* and its research priorities of *Decarbonization* and *Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure*, as well as the side effects these planning processes and outcomes have on issues of *Equity*.

**Outputs:** This research will generate: 1) one peer-reviewed publication; 2) one policy brief; 3) one conference presentation; 4) one or more webinar or training workshop; 5) an analytical model of quantifying the impacts of new technologies on transportation systems/travel behavior changes.

**Outcomes/Impacts:** The results of this research will allow planners and policy makers to make informed decisions regarding the future of transportation systems, including updating public transit projects to meet the changing travel needs of the population and making planning decisions for policies designed to target VMT reduction in the post-pandemic travel environment.

**Final Research Report:** (Link to be provided after project completion).