

Transit-oriented development's ridership bonus: a product of self-selection and public policies

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Abstract

Transit-oriented development is shown to produce an appreciable ridership bonus in California. This is partly due to residential self-selection—that is, a lifestyle preference for transit-oriented living—as well as factors like employer-based policies that reduce free parking and automobile subsidies. Half-mile catchments of station areas appear to be indifference zones in the sense that residents generally ride transit regardless of local urban design attributes. Out-of-neighborhood attributes, like job accessibility and street connectivity at the destination, on the other hand, have a significant bearing on transit usage among station-area residents. The presence of self-selection, shown using nested logit modeling, underscores the importance of removing barriers to residential mobility so that households are able to sort themselves, via the marketplace, to locations well served by transit. Market-responsive zoning, flexible residential parking policies, location efficient mortgages, and adaptive reuse of parking lots are also promising tools for expanding the supply of transit-based housing.