The City of Santa Barbara is a beautiful region, but geographic growth constraints have led to high housing costs in the South Coast. These high costs force employees to live in bedroom communities, leading to a jobs-housing imbalance. This imbalance increases commute times and associated climate and air pollutants; over ¾ of county-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are due to on-road vehicles.1 To ameliorate these problems, the City of Santa Barbara established the Average Unit-Size Density Incentive (AUD) Program, which aims to increase affordable, high-density workforce housing through development incentives. To understand the potential of the AUD Program, officials need better knowledge of South Coast residents’ commute behaviors and preferences. Planners also need to know whether certain factors may encourage a switch to alternative modes of transportation. To explore these questions, this project identified the following objectives:

**Project Objectives:**

1. Establish a baseline for commuter behavior, examining differences among housing types and locations.
2. Determine what demographic and behavioral factors affect people’s transportation preferences.
3. Analyze the influence of employer incentives and parking fees on a commuter’s preferred mode of transportation.

**Approach**

Design and distribute a survey to South Coast residents, divided into three sections:

- Questions About Current Commute Behavior
- Questions About Travel Behavior & Preferences
- Incentive Scenarios

**Results**

**Apartment vs. Single-Family Homes**

- **Daily Commute Milesage**
  - Apartments: 8 miles
  - Single Family Homes: 12 miles

- **Daily Emissions (kg CO₂)**
  - Apartments: 0 kg
  - Single Family Homes: 0 kg

**Respondents Inaccurately Perceive Their Walk Times to the Nearest Bus Stop**

On average, bus trips take 20 minutes longer than car trips.

**Parking Fees Determitate Driving Alone to Work & Encourage Use of Alternative Transportation**

- As a person’s commute days increase, (s)he is more likely to drive.
- A person who views the bus as very unpredictable is highly likely to drive.
- Not knowing the number of bus transfers makes someone more likely to drive.
- Women are more likely to drive than men.

**Recommendations**

- We suggest that the City of Santa Barbara:
  - Work with employers to create alternative transportation incentive programs and/or parking fee paired with an incentive.
  - Encourage use of alternative transportation with a parking fee.
  - Develop a commuter survey to better understand the commuting behaviors of residents.

**Conclusions**

The results of this project establish a baseline of commuter behavior that will be beneficial for future transportation and housing assessments in the South Coast.

Greenhouse gas emissions do vary by housing type. Apartment residents commute fewer miles and emit fewer GHG emissions than residents of single-family homes. Residents of the AUD zone do not emit significantly fewer GHG emissions or commute by alternative forms of transportation significantly more than residents of the one-mile buffer zone.

- Gender, commute days, and bus characteristics drive commute choices; commute distance and incentives do not.
- The likelihood that a respondent drives alone to work increases if he/she is a woman, has a negative perception of bus cleanliness, commutes multiple days per week, and is unaware of alternative forms of transportation. Incentives are not currently a significant factor in a resident’s decision. And, surprisingly, a person does not become less likely to drive alone to work as their commute shortens.

- Parking fees are effective at reducing driving alone, as are employer incentives.
- Respondents were more likely to choose an alternative method of transportation with a parking fee paired with an incentive. This likelihood increased as fee levels increased.

Carpooling was the most appealing alternative method of transportation shown.

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