

Limitations:

While commute trips represent a significant proportion (19%) of miles traveled in the U.S., 'Mode of Transportation to Work' has limitations as an indicator of larger travel behaviors. First, the denominator of the indicator is limited to persons employed in paid work, and does not include students, volunteers, unemployed, children, or retired persons. Further, the American Community Survey data presents only the principal mode used based on daily frequency or longest distance was used in the case of those using multiple modes of travel on the same day, or during the sample week.

Secondly, 'Journey to Work' trips tend to be a longer distance trips¹. Because longer trips are more likely to be made by automotive means than shorter trips, this indicator tends to depict more automotive mode share than would be found if we looked more broadly at trips made. While automotive trips represent 83% of commute trips in Los Angeles County according to the 2008-2010 ACS 'Journey to Work' data, they account for only 73% of *all* trips as represented in the 2009 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), and only 36.2% of trips less than a mile in distance.

The National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), in which statistically sampled participants record their trips in a travel diary over the course of a day, provides a more nuanced depiction of travel behaviors. Unfortunately, the NHTS sample sizes are small enough that the data is not statistically stable for non-automotive modes in more rural counties. Because the HCI Project endeavors to provide statistically stable data for counties across the State, the more-limited "Journey to Work" dataset from the American Community Survey was used instead.

Opportunities to Improve this Indicator:

When used in conjunction with other indicators being developed as part of this project, including % of residents located within ½ mile of transit stop, mode of Journey to Work can provide valuable information on how land use and transportation decisions can either support or limit economic opportunity for lower income populations. This, and the fact that the data is often statistically stable at a census tract level, makes it a valuable indicator.

For the reasons already mentioned, however, this ACS data does not accurately represent the universe of travel behaviors in Californian counties. The table below summarizes some of the current sources for statewide travel data, their limitations, and opportunities for potential improvement.

^{1 1} Please refer to chart on the second page of the PDF for trip distance by destination.
http://nhts.ornl.gov/2009/pub/profile_2012.pdf

HCI- Mode of Travel to Work
Suggested Narrative Additions
August 2013

Data Source	Brief Description	Geography	Limitations	How could it be improved?	Resources and Information
American Community Survey (ACS) "Mode of Travel to Work" (conducted on a continuous basis)	ACS asks how each employed person "usually got to work last week" and offers a checklist of transportation options.	Active Transportation (AT) modes are statistically stable at a county level (rural counties) and at a census tract level (urban areas)	Only accounts for behavior of employed persons, Distance of journey to work trips favors automotive modes.	Include question for <i>persons not employed</i> "How did this person usually get to critical destinations (school, volunteer work, daycare) last week?"	2013 ACS Survey (Sample doc— transportation questions on page 10)
National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) (10 year—data from 2001 and 2008)	NHTS requests 1-day travel diaries from statistically sampled participants. California purchased an add-on to the 2008 survey to gauge Active Transportation behavior and barriers, and to understand Journey to School. Counties can purchase a statistical oversample to get more stable AT data.	AT modes are statistically stable only for urban counties. Counties can purchase a statistical oversample to get more stable AT data. (San Diego did this in 2008).	NHTS is a self-report, travel-diary survey. Because it is time and labor intensive and designed to provide <i>statewide</i> data, sample sizes tend to be small. NHTS is also suffering from declining response rates as it relies on landline telephone users for its universe of respondents.	Purchasing oversamples can help provide more statistically stable information at smaller geographies. Recommend a re-design of this survey at a National level to account for significant technological improvements and changes.	SACOG/UC Davis efforts to correlate NHTS data with built environment factors to understand travel behavior for modeling purposes. Scope of Work Related Projects