Sustainability and Displacement: Assessing the Spatial Pattern of Residential Moves Near Rail Transit

There is a public perception that rail transit contributes to gentrification of nearby neighborhoods and the displacement of low-income residents. This is a particular concern in Los Angeles, the home of what is currently the most ambitious rail transit construction program in North America. We use a unique data set of income tax filers in Los Angeles County to track the income and locations of households over a 21-year period that spans the opening of much of the Los Angeles rail transit system. The data allow us to construct detailed measures of household flows out of rail neighborhoods. We analyze out-mobility flows, by income level, in half-mile areas around rail stations, comparing those neighborhoods to similar half-mile “control” neighborhoods with no rail transit. The resulting quasi-experimental approach estimates the effect of rail station openings on low-income moves out of rail neighborhoods. We find that baseline move-out rates, without considering the effect of new rail stations, is almost 30 percent year-on-year—a strikingly high move rate that we believe indicates a high level of housing insecurity in the neighborhoods that we study. The estimated effect of rail station openings is mixed, with some specifications showing statistically significant rail-station effects that increase the move-out rate by an additional one to three percentage points, but other specifications do not give statistically significant rail station effects. We also use the data to analyze where households move when they leave rail station neighborhoods, and the pattern varies substantially for low versus high income households, with low income households in some cases moving much longer distances.

Classroom 16
Thursday 15 March 2018
12.00 – 1.00pm

*Refreshments will be served. Please RSVP at:
https://goo.gl/forms/PfgwslQlhikJ6b9j2

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Marlon Boarnet is Professor of Public Policy and Chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Spatial Analysis in the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California. His research focuses on land use and transportation, links between land use and travel behavior and associated implications for public health and greenhouse gas emissions, urban growth patterns, and the economic impacts of transportation infrastructure. He has ranked among the top twenty-five most cited U.S. planning scholars for the past three years. He is a fellow of the Weimer School of the Homer Hoyt Institute for Real Estate, and he is a fellow of the Regional Science Association International. He is vice-president and president-elect of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning. Boarnet has advised California state agencies on greenhouse gas emission reduction in the transport sector, the World Bank on transportation access as a poverty reduction tool, and numerous public and private entities. He has been principal investigator on over two million dollars of funded research, supported by agencies that include the U.S. and California Departments of Transportation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Policy Research Center, the California Air Resources Board, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Boarnet’s academic web page is at:
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