



## **AM 3: Millennials to Boomers – Understanding Generational Mobility Trends**

### **Moderator**

Peter Buffa, Director, Barclays Capital – Public Finance

### **Panelists**

- Evelyn Blumenberg, Professor & Chair of Urban Planning, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs
- Blanca Castro, Senior Manager of Advocacy, AARP California
- Rudy Espinoza, Executive Director, Leadership for Urban Renewal Network
- Hasan Ikhata, Executive Director, Southern California Association of Governments and Board Member, Mobility 21

## **Summary**

This session went over challenges in transportation planning for populations with diverse mobility needs, focusing on the travel preferences of millennials and baby boomers. Many panelists echoed the understanding that everyone - regardless of age - needs transportation in the fastest and most efficient ways.

Panelists started off by discussing research findings about travel for young people. Some factors cited for a decline in vehicle-miles-traveled for youth were the temporary effect of the Great Recession, use of technology and a heightened sense of environmental consciousness. However, recent data from UCLA suggests few major differences in travel behavior based on age. Their study found 5 percent of millennials use public transportation compared to 2 percent for the general population, and age has not been a factor in the growth of walking as a modal choice.

The session also outlined travel statistics for older adults, noting baby boomers are the first generation in the United States to rely heavily on automobiles. The relationship between housing and transportation was strongly emphasized in discussing seniors. The majority of seniors (or 85 percent) responded they want to “age in place,” indicating a lack of interest in migrating to transit-heavy urbanized areas for those living in places with fewer transit options.

This panel then brought up equity issues in transportation planning, noting low income communities are more likely to use transit and active modal options. One panelist brought up the need to examine access to transportation technology for low income individuals given the growing dependence on it for mobility purposes.

The panel closed with thoughts from the regional planning agency that technology will inevitably widen variances in travel preferences for millennials relative to previous generations. While millennials will continue to drive, it could be assumed that they may also carpool, use shared mobility, or exercise other options. Overall, there will be more mobility options on the horizon so that everyone has an alternative to the single occupant vehicle.

## **Takeaway**

There are some notable generational differences between millennials and baby boomers, such as housing preferences and use of technology, but also many similarities in modal preferences. For example, technology is used by both groups for mobility. Ms. Castro noted AARP has a partnership with Uber to both help expand travel options and augment salaries for seniors at the same time.

It was said that there are significant variations in millennial travel behavior patterns across regions. Modal options in New York look very different compared to Phoenix, suggesting diverse preferences just within this age cohort.

There is much uncertainty about the way travel patterns will evolve. No one really knows how use of technology will alter travel patterns. For example, if TNCs only operate similar to taxis than there will be no VMT reduction benefit.

Transportation spending should address all modes. The region can build more capacity without adding more highway lanes, but we still need to keep cars, buses and trucks moving as a means to grow commerce and facilitate access to jobs.

Regarding social equity, Dr. Blumenberg pointed out the private automobile is an important travel mode across all classes. Even the poorest households use private automobiles to travel for jobs and other needs, even though public transit and walking rates are higher than the general population.

Caution was raised in approaching multi-generational transportation planning in “us vs. them” terms. Mobility is an issue that cuts across all ages. It was suggested transportation planners should seek multi-generational input at the conceptual stage of projects so all age cohort preferences and needs are considered.