

Mobility Mindset of Millennials in Small Urban and Rural Areas

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Millennial Generation, Americans born between the years of 1983 and 2000, are now the largest generation in the United States (1). This generation has significantly different lifestyle and transportation trends than previous generations which is leading to the need for change in transportation policy and planning.

Several recent studies have been conducted in urban areas to identify the lifestyle and transportation trends of Millennials and how these trends affect transportation. These studies show that they 1) more significantly than any previous generation, are driving less, 2) are most likely to live in urban and walkable neighborhoods, and 3) are more open to non-driving forms of transportation. While the recession may play a part in the new travel behavior of this generation, other factors like the reduced prevalence of licensed drivers of this generation; interest and adoption of other modes of transportation; and a high dependence on mobile, internet-connected technologies also have an influence. It was also found that this generation had a “relative propensity for urban lifestyle components (whether they live in cities or in suburbs) (2). Many of these findings support the six livability principles.

While there is now better understanding of Millennial transportation needs and preferences in urban areas, no studies have been done in rural and small urban areas, therefore leaving a gap in understanding if the same preferences and viewpoints exist for Millennials living in these communities.

Conducting a similar study in small urban and rural areas is necessary as significant differences exist between urban and rural/small urban areas. Differences including population density, transportation infrastructure, and technology infrastructure in a rural and small urban area may also affect the Millennial lifestyle and transportation needs and preferences (and certainly affect what is available to them). It will be interesting to see if the “relative propensity for urban lifestyle components” also exists in rural and small urban areas.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this proposed research project is to understand whether Millennials¹ in small urban and rural communities² have the same mobility and livability mindset as those in large cities.

¹ Millennials are defined as those individuals born from the early 1980's to the early 2000's. For the proposed study, we will consider only individuals between the ages of 18 and 34, consistent with the age range used by Sakaria et al (3).

² As defined in the *Small Urban and Rural Livability Center* proposal, according to federal guidelines, a small urban area has a population between 50,000 and 200,000 whereas a rural area includes cities and towns with a population less than 50,000.

RESEARCH APPROACH/WORK PLAN

This proposed research project is divided into the seven following tasks:

- Task 1: Project Management,
- Task 2: Stakeholder Engagement,
- Task 3: Literature Review,
- Task 4: Survey Development,
- Task 5: Survey Deployment,
- Task 6: Survey Analysis, and
- Task 7: Report & Dissemination.

TASK 1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Task 1 will be used to develop status update reports every other month and manage the financial side of the project. In addition, it will involve a twice monthly internal call between the researchers.

Deliverable No. 1: Bi-Monthly Status Update Reports

TASK 2: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Task 2 is stakeholder engagement. The project will begin by engaging the stakeholders in a virtual kick-off meeting. The objectives of the project will be presented in addition to the proposed methodology to allow the stakeholders to provide input and recommendations. A Stakeholder Conference Call will be held every other month to update stakeholders on the progress of the research and ask for recommendations and comments. The budget reflects the calls, assuming approximately fourteen participants for a time period of one and a half hours.

Deliverable No. 2: Kick-Off Meeting

Deliverable No. 3: Stakeholder Conference Call

TASK 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Task 3 is a literature review. This task will entail learning more about the most recent research on Millennials, particularly their preferences with regards to transportation. Searches will be performed using TRIS Online, Google Scholar, Web of Science and others.

Deliverable No. 4: Literature Review

TASK 4: SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Task 4 entails survey development. The survey will be developed in Survey Monkey or the like, as needed by Survey Sampling International (SSI) for distribution. The survey will be distributed by SSI, similar to the aforementioned TCRP's (3) methodology. A draft of the survey will be developed and then sent out to colleagues for participation to determine if any questions need to be modified for clarity. Questions on the survey may include: age, gender, car ownership (how many cars), ethnicity, income, education, international travel, annual income, Bike Friendliness rating, Public Transportation offerings, presence of a university, economic "rating," foreclosure rate, unemployment rate, convenience questions, time-saving questions, living with roommates, debt, number of children, and freedom of travel options. The total survey will be structured to take on average, no longer than 17 minutes. The survey will be distributed to urban and non-urban areas.

Deliverable No. 5: Survey Tool

TASK 5: SURVEY DEPLOYMENT

Task 5 involves survey deployment. The survey will be distributed by SSI. A combination of web and phone will be utilized to distribute the survey to the desired populations.

TASK 6: SURVEY ANALYSIS

Task 6 involves analysis of the collected survey data. The analysis may involve both a simple summary and some statistical analysis, dependent upon the data collected in Task 5.

TASK 7: REPORT & DISSEMINATION

Task 7 will compile the results into a report. In addition, this task will involve a webinar to disseminate the findings of the surveys. The Western Transportation Institute, and in particular the identified researchers, have extensive experience creating and deploying a webinars on findings from research studies.

Deliverable No. 6: Report

Deliverable No. 7: Webinar

DELIVERABLES

As described in the work plan, a total of seven deliverables will be produced. They are described as follows:

- Deliverable No. 1: Bi-Monthly Status Update Reports
- Deliverable No. 2: Kick-Off Meeting
- Deliverable No. 3: Stakeholder Conference Call
- Deliverable No. 4: Literature Review
- Deliverable No. 5: Survey Tool
- Deliverable No. 6: Report
- Deliverable No. 7: Webinar

Bibliography

1. **Dutzik, Tony and Baxandall, Phineas.** *A New Direction: Our Changing Relationship with Driving and the Implications for America's Future.* s.l. : U.S. PIRG Education Fund and Frontier Group, 2013.
2. **APTA.** *Millennials and Mobility: Understanding the Millennial Mindset.*
3. **Sakaria, Neela and Stehfest, Natalie.** *Millennials & Mobility: Understanding the Millennial Mindset and New Opportunities for Transit Providers.* Washington DC : Transit Cooperative Research Program, 2013.