

## **TRB AME 20 Young Scholars Transportation Research Webinar**

**Thursday, May 27, 2021    Noon (Eastern)**

### **Understanding Mobility Change in Response to COVID-19: A Los Angeles Case Study**

**Yougeng Lu**, PhD Candidate, Urban Planning and Development

Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California



**Yougeng Lu** is a Ph.D. candidate in Urban Planning and Development at Sol Price School of Public Policy, USC, and a Research Assistant with METRANS Transportation Center. Lu's research interests include air pollution, environmental justice, land use planning, spatial analysis, transportation, and big data.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people's lives throughout the world. In the US, the pandemic response has been largely left to state and local governments, resulting in a patchwork of policies. We examine compliance with COVID-19 related policies in Los Angeles County across income and race/ethnic groups. We found that low income and race/ethnic minority groups are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Case rates are higher, as is the likelihood of being unemployed. At the same time, race/ethnic minorities are more likely to be employed in essential services, such as retailing or medical services. Thus, they may have fewer options to avoid exposure. We find a strong relationship between income/ethnicity and mobility. Low-income and ethnic minority groups reduce travel less than middle- and high-income groups during the shelter-in-place order, consistent with continuing to travel for essential work. As public health rules are relaxed, high-income and white groups respond much more positively, suggesting more discretionary travel. Our results are consistent with higher-income workers being more likely to be able to work at home than lower-income workers. Low-income/minorities may have less capacity to shield themselves from the virus risk. Our results show how race and socioeconomic disparities are revealed in mobility patterns.

## **Equity and Wildfires in California: Evidence from the 2018 Camp Fire and Literature**

**Sarah Grajdura**, PhD Candidate, Civil and Environmental Engineering

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of California, Davis



**Sarah Grajdura** is a Ph.D. candidate in the civil and environmental engineering department at UC Davis. Her research interests surround the combining of qualitative and quantitative methods to creatively study transportation issues, in particular wildfire evacuation behavior and traffic modeling.

Fast-moving wildfires pose a host of safety and equity concerns. Starting with evacuation, temporary housing, rebuilding, and through terminal evacuee resettlement, in this project, **Equity and Wildfires in California: Evidence from the 2018 Camp Fire and Literature**, Sarah reviews the literature relating to equity and looks at the 2018 “Camp Fire” as a case study using a joint quantitative and qualitative dataset.

**School Transportation Equity for Vulnerable Student Populations through Ridehailing:  
An Analysis of HopSkipDrive and Other Trips to School in Los Angeles County**

**Samuel Speroni**, PhD Student, Urban and Regional Planning

Department of Urban Planning, University of California, Los Angeles



**Sam Speroni** is a doctoral student in the UCLA Department of Urban Planning and a researcher with the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies and UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies. Sam's primary research interest lies at the intersection of transportation, education, and new mobility, where he looks for ways to improve equitable access to educational opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged student populations. His research extends to many other aspects of travel behavior and transportation systems, all with an emphasis on equity. Prior to UCLA, Sam was a high school English teacher and school administrator in Charlotte, North Carolina, through Teach for America.

**School Transportation Equity for Vulnerable Student Populations through Ridehailing:  
An Analysis of HopSkipDrive and Other Trips to School in Los Angeles County**

Is an applied planning research project analyzing high school students' ridehail trips to school for HopSkipDrive. The project specifically focuses on three vulnerable student population groups: foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, and students with disabilities. Sam analyzes trips for these students and for California high school students in general through three lenses: the characteristics of the neighborhoods in which these trips originate, the characteristics of the trips to school themselves, and how HopSkipDrive trips would have compared to public transit, which is the logical and viable alternative in Los Angeles. This project received the national Neville A. Parker Award for outstanding master's capstone in transportation policy and planning from the Council of University Transportation Centers (CUTC).

## **Neighborhood Change and Travel Behavior in California's Transit Rich Neighborhoods**

**Hannah King**, PhD Candidate, Community and Regional Planning

Department of Urban Planning, University of California, Los Angeles



**Hannah King** is a doctoral student of transportation planning at UCLA. Prior to coming to UCLA, she spent several years in sea level rise and economic development planning at the state of Florida. Her current research interests center on travel behavior, transportation equity, transportation finance, and GIS for transportation.

In this project, **Neighborhood Change and Travel Behavior in California's Transit Rich Neighborhoods**, Hannah examines neighborhood sociodemographic change and travel behavior in California's transit-rich neighborhoods, how this has changed in recent years, and if patterns are different across California's major metropolitan areas. We explore how changes in neighborhood composition and employment in transit-rich neighborhoods have changed and the relationship of these changes to transit and vehicle use. Our focus is to illuminate some of the demographic and economic drivers of declining transit use and increasing vehicle ownership. We also explore whether patterns of neighborhood change in California are consistent with classical patterns of gentrification.