

- How Does the Rubber Meet the Road? Evaluating the Investment Outcomes of Transportation Studies in the Chicago Region (*Laurence Audenaerd - DePaul University*)

Studies are constantly being funded on a variety of transportation-related topics intent on improving the conditions of the Chicago area transportation system. This research typically requires sizable investments to develop complex models, acquire sufficient data and inculcate expertise. Besides driving follow-on studies or academic/industrial literature, there is often limited follow-through of the policy or decision impacts of these studies, even by the direct authors. This work presents some observations about what sorts of studies have greater impact than others and what specific elements impact policy directly.

Through a series of case study reviews of several recent transportation studies in the Chicago area, this research relates the effectiveness of the research methods to the policy changes and decision-making highlighting efficiencies and good practices. Examples include a study on the impact of flooding on regional traffic delay and a study on the impact of transit maintenance on service level and the regional economy. In today's current economic environment of "do more with less," the findings suggest that detailed research strategies are not always aligned with policy-maker needs and that an efficient comprehensive understanding of the salient issues can often times be highly valuable.