

- **Millennials' Transit Preferences in the Suburban Context** (*Jeremy Halpern, Joseph L. Schofer – Northwestern University*)

Recently, trade organizations such as the American Public Transportation Association and mainstream media have called attention to reported declines in private car usage, highlighting the role of Millennials as purportedly avid users of public transit. These reports do not take into account that the majority of Millennials, defined as those born in the early 1980s—early 2000s, live in dense urban areas. Do those traveling in the suburbs have similarly strong preferences for public transit? How do they rank certain transit-related factors compared to other age cohorts?

Chicago's Pace Suburban Bus Service conducted customer satisfaction surveys on 32 service attributes assessing customers' decisions to use Pace. Using factor analysis, the 32 attributes were reduced to three key factors: passenger comfort, passenger certainty and service availability. Results indicate that certainty is significantly more important to Millennials than to other age cohorts. While age alone does not significantly differentiate passengers on overall satisfaction, it does interact with other attributes.

Demographics such as age and income are easier to quantify than perception of service quality and access. Transit operators may be tempted to rely on these in determining where to focus service. Results of this study indicate those factors alone are poor predictors of use and satisfaction. Millennials are more sensitive to changes in overall satisfaction in deciding whether to recommend Pace bus service to others.

This study fills a gap in prior research, which has largely focused on urban areas by quantifying differences in transit preference between age groups in the suburban context.