The COMMUTE Act, H.R. 1517

Background »

H.R. 1517: The COMMUTE Act creates a pilot project to supply states and local governments with access data to help better plan transportation networks and connect residents with every day destinations- such as jobs schools, health care and grocery stores.

The U.S. Department of Transportation already supplies states with congestion data, which measure how existing roads function. Until recently it has been difficult to analyze the cost-benefit of new projects based on improved access.

Today, the private sector offers these tools, and a few states are using it already. However the data is expensive and not available to everyone. The Transportation Access and System Connection Act creates a pilot project to make that data available to 5 States, 10 metropolitan areas , and 5 rural areas to test how that data can be used to optimize transportation systems across modes and communities.

What it does »

» Creates a pilot program to supply access data to five states, ten metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and five rural areas. The data will be provided using all transportation modes- biking, walking, transit and driving.
» The U.S. DOT will provide a data set for each area that measures accessibility. Each state will share that data with its local governments and researchers.The funding for the pilot program comes from US DOT administrative funds.
» The States and MPOs will use the data and report back to the U.S. DOT how the data is used, and highlight how such data impacted transportation investments. U.S. DOT will report results back to Congress.

Why it matters »

» The basic function of our transportation system is to connect people to destinations. We need a better way to measure how well our system does this– for all modes and all people.
» Funding for transportation is limited, and ensuring we are connecting as many people as possible to their daily destinations across modes will optimize our investments.
» This data provides information about all the trips people take- not just their commute to work. That will improve our planning process, and ensure we build communities and transportation systems that work for everyone.

To co-sponsor please contact »

To co-sponsor, or to learn more contact:
» Andrew Perlstein : Andrew.Perlstein@mail.house.gov
» Jake Bornstein : Jake.Bornstein@mail.house.gov

Why use Accessibility Data?

Why »

Accessibility data allows communities and planners to measure how well transportation projects will improve connectivity between residents and daily destinations such as work, schools, health care and grocery stores. Here's an example of how it was used in Madison, WI to understand the benefit of providing bike access U.S. Route 12/18.

The Problem »

Residents that live north of Route 12/18 do not have safe bicycling or walking access to the areas south of Route 12/18, which offers many jobs and services. Improving connections opens opportunities for residents and for businesses.

Perry St. bike connection project area

https://goo.gl/maps/FbzyR1594Cr

The Model »

This model uses Sugar Access[2] data on the number of households and destinations, and makes the following example:
- » Assumes nearby highway interchanges are not safely "bikeable."
- » Assumes an average bicycling speed of 8.5 MPH
- » Takes into account biking conditions on roads such as traffic speed, number of lanes and type of roads

Results »

The accessibility analysis shows that 5,692 households gain access to shops, jobs and other opportunities south of the Beltline Highway within a 15-minute bike ride.

The accessibility analysis shows that 21,105 households gain access to shops, jobs and other opportunities south of the Beltline Highway within a 30-minute bike ride.