

ACCESSIBILITY OBSERVATORY

Major American cities get a report card each year on their mobility, focusing chiefly on how fast motorists can drive on their highways. Now, however, cities have another way of understanding their transportation systems thanks to the work of the Accessibility Observatory at the University of Minnesota.

The Observatory goes beyond congestion rankings to focus on accessibility: a measure that examines both land use and the transportation system.

A program of the Center for Transportation Studies, the Observatory focuses on the research and application of accessibility-based transportation system evaluation.

The Observatory is guided by a threefold mission:

- To advance the field of transportation system evaluation through research of new data sources and methods for accessibility evaluation
- To develop standards and tools to facilitate the use and communication of accessibility-based metrics in transportation planning, engineering, and evaluation
- To apply our tools and expertise in support of continual improvements in the planning, design, engineering, and analysis of transportation systems

The Observatory is the only organization in the nation focused on measuring transportation accessibility rather than congestion. Its research allows organizations such as state DOTs, transit systems, and metropolitan planning agencies to benchmark themselves against other cities/states, using the same data and methodology.

Background

The Observatory uses the methods and tools developed in earlier University of Minnesota research conducted under the Access to Destinations Study and the Transportation and Regional Growth Study.

Access to Destinations laid the groundwork for accessibility evaluation at the University of Minnesota. The multi-phase effort incorporated theoretical as well as practical research and included researchers from a variety of fields.

The Transportation and Regional Growth Study was a research and educational effort designed to aid the Twin Cities region in understanding the linkages between land use, community development, and transportation.

Research publications Accessibility Observatory publications:

Access Across America: Walking 2014
Access Across America: Auto 2015
Access Across America: Transit 2016

Access to Destinations Study publications:

Access to Destinations reports
Access to Destinations conference
proceedings and presentations
Access to Destinations book
(Elsevier, 2005)

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA