

The Hidden Traffic Safety Solution: Public Transportation

Fact Sheet

The Problem

- According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, there were 35,092 fatalities as a result of auto crashes in 2015.
- That is an increase of 7.2 percent from 2014, the greatest increase in deaths in 50 years.

The Solution

Public transportation is a safer way to travel than auto for an individual.

- A person can reduce his or her chance of being in an accident by more than 90 percent simply by taking public transit as oppose to commuting by car.
- Traveling by public transportation is ten times safer per mile than traveling by auto.

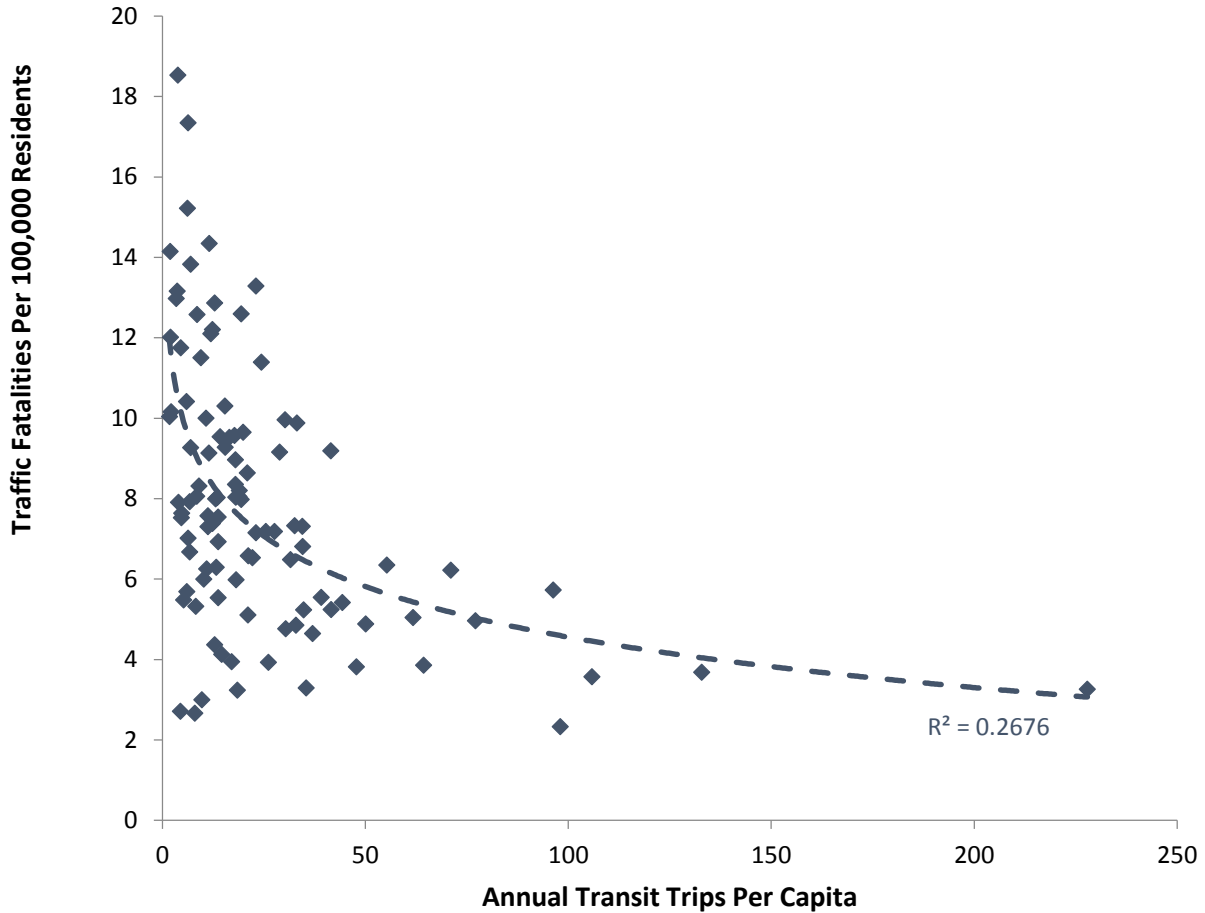
Transit oriented communities are safer than automobile oriented communities.

- Transit oriented communities are five times safer because they have a fifth the per capita traffic safety casualty rate (fatalities and injuries) as automobile oriented communities.
- Public transportation allows more efficient development, reducing the length of car trips and encouraging safer speeds.
- Cities that average more than 50 annual transit trips per capita have about half the average traffic fatality rates as cities where residents average fewer than 20 annual trips.
- Americans average about 1,350 annual trips on all modes. An increase from less than 20 to more than 50 annual transit trips represents a small increase in transit mode share, from about 1.5 percent up to about 4 percent.
- Americans would need to only increase their transit mode share of less than 3 trips a month per person.

Public transportation can help address high-risk and vulnerable driver groups.

- Efforts to reduce higher-risk driving, such as graduated licenses for teens, senior driving testing, and impaired and distracted driving campaigns, become more effective if implemented in conjunction with public transit improvements.
- Urban teens, for instance, take five times as many public transit trips and drive half as much and have about half the per capita auto death rate.

Traffic Fatalities Versus Transit Ridership for U.S. Urban Regions



This graph illustrates the relationship between per capita transit ridership and total (including pedestrian, cyclist, automobile occupant and transit passenger) traffic fatalities for 101 U.S. cities. As transit travel increases, per capita traffic fatality rates tend to decline. Cities where residents average more than 50 annual transit trips have about half the average traffic fatality rates as cities where residents average fewer than 20 annual transit trips.

Public transit passengers have far lower traffic casualty rates than automobile occupants.

Passenger Fatalities per Billion Passenger-Miles, 2000-2014 (BTS)

Travel Mode	Deaths Per Billion Passenger-Miles
Motorcycle	237.57
Car or light truck driver or passenger	6.53
Local ferry boat	2.46
Commuter rail and Amtrak	0.36
Urban mass transit rail (subway or light rail) ¹	0.33
Bus (transit, intercity, school, charter)	0.2
Commercial aviation	0.02

¹ Only a minor portion of reported rail transit deaths resulted from vehicle crashes: during the ten-year period there were on average 8 passenger deaths onboard trains, 15 passenger deaths at stations, and 3 employee deaths each year