



ARE US CITIES AND REGIONS OVERBUILDING ROADWAYS?

Does the United States have too much urban road infrastructure? The question, for all its simplicity, remains largely unanswered and anathema to national discourses about transportation investments. Outside of a few notorious projects and the worst excesses of urban renewal, the media and politicians treat road investments as inherently productive investments in the future and even shining examples of bipartisan cooperation. The connectivity of megaregions frequently grounds arguments for increased large-scale transportation investments, whether roads, high-speed trains, or airports. Yet the residents of urban areas with the most roadway per capita are generally the poorest, spend the most on transportation, have the highest likelihood of dying in a traffic collision, and generate the most transportation-related global and local pollution (Figure 1). For example, the metropolitan areas with the least roadway per capita have twice as much wealth and only a quarter as much driving.

This research project examines the interwoven questions of how, where, and why state and federal governments finance and construct large arterial and highway projects as well as whether the benefits of these projects tend to outweigh their financial, social, and environmental costs. Answering these questions will contribute to a larger inquiry into whether US cities, metropolitan areas, and megaregions have too much roadway.

This study was funded by the consortium of Cooperative Mobility for Competitive Megaregions (CM²). CM² is a USDOT Tier-1 University Transportation Center (UTC). CM²'s consortium partners include The University of Texas at Austin, Louisiana State University, Texas Southern University, and the University of Pennsylvania, with affiliates at Cornell University and Rutgers University.

Are US cities and regions overbuilding roadways in the post-Interstate era? (#CM2-61)

Erick Guerra,
University of Pennsylvania

2/1/2021-08/30/2022

Project Information Form:
http://sites.utexas.edu/cm2/files/2021/02/Year-5_Guerra_OverbuildingRoadways.pdf

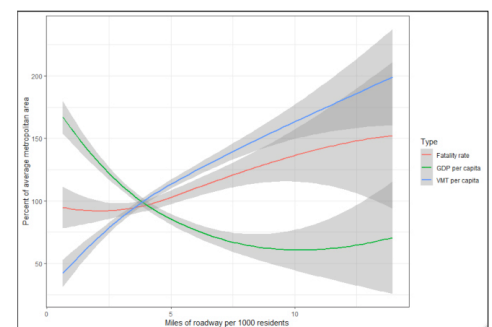


Figure 1. Traffic fatalities, GDP, and VMT per capita by the total roadway per capita in US metropolitan areas. The y-axis values are normalized by the average across metropolitan areas.