

HOW OLD IS TOO OLD? THE AGING OF HOUSEHOLD TRAVEL SURVEY DATA AND WHAT YOU  
CAN DO ABOUT IT

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The collection of travel behavior data to support travel demand model updates can be an expensive and time consuming effort for many small and medium-sized MPOs. Unfortunately, survey response rates continue to decline, which means increased data collection costs. Ten years ago, it was possible to conduct a travel survey for about \$100 per household. Today, that cost is between \$185 and \$225 per household.

While fresh new data is essential for capturing origin-destination patterns in a region, what is often overlooked is the value remaining in the previous data set. Changing demographic patterns, land use patterns, and travel mode options lead to changes in travel for a portion of the population in a region, but what about those demographic cohorts that live and commute in the established land use areas with established transportation modes? To what extent do trip rates and trip lengths change over time for specific demographic groups and specific geographic areas of the region?

The purpose of this paper is to review established methods for “refreshing” data sets through collecting a smaller sample (in lieu of conducting a full wide-scale large sample survey). This will be accomplished through a review of methods developed in the 1980s by Stopher to refresh the data, as well as a review of travel behavior patterns by life cycle to develop a checklist that agencies can use to determine whether they can refresh or if they need a new data set. The analysis will draw on the publicly available National Household Travel Survey, as well as research conducted by the authors on the relationship between life cycle and travel patterns.