

Adults older than 60 less likely to use public transportation, study finds

July 28 2014, by Neil Schoenherr

Walking, biking or taking public transportation for work and errands can increase physical activity and offers other health benefits—but older people are much less likely to regularly use public transit, finds a new study of St. Louis adults from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

In an article published July 3 in the journal *Preventing Chronic Disease*, J. Aaron Hipp, PhD, and colleagues, including doctoral student Marissa Zwald, found that adults older than 60 were less likely to use public transportation.

Hipp, assistant professor at the Brown School, said that as older adults begin facing mobility challenges, infrastructure and policy changes can assist them in using public transportation more effectively.

Those changes could include bus shelters with seating; improved lighting; signage; and crosswalk signals that allow for slower walking speeds. The study also found lowering speed limits along bus routes can help transit riders and pedestrians feel safer walking, sitting and standing by the road.

The study showed that adults older than 60 were significantly less likely to have used public transportation five or more days in the previous week than participants between the ages of 18 and 29.

"Older adults deserve a mix of transportation options, including public

transit, which gets them to destinations and services that can encourage their independence," Zwald said. "Policies such as Safe Routes to Transit and incentives for public transit can encourage older adults, and people of all ages, to use public transportation."

The study involved analysis of a survey mailed to 772 adults in St. Louis in 2012. The survey was aimed at assessing perceptions of the built environment (parks, greenways and other infrastructure), physical activity and transportation behaviors of St. Louisans.

Other significant findings include:

- People of any age who used public transportation at least once in the previous week were more likely to meet [physical activity](#) recommendations by walking for transportation;
- Younger, employed people are more apt to use public transportation; and
- Perceptions of speeding traffic and high crime were cited as reasons people do not use public transportation.

The study had two objectives. The first was to further assess the relationship between personal characteristics and use of public transportation and walking for transportation. The second was to examine associations between personal behaviors and perceived environmental factors with frequency of public transportation use.

More information: Zwald ML, Hipp JA, Corseuil MW, Dodson EA. "Correlates of Walking for Transportation and Use of Public Transportation Among Adults in St Louis, Missouri, 2012." *Prev Chronic Dis*, 2014;11:140125. [DOI: 10.5888/pcd11.140125](https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd11.140125)

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