



THE PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA (PPIC) AND THE
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR FEDERAL POLICY RESEARCH

invite you to attend a

PPIC LUNCHEON BRIEFING: Commuting & Suburbanization in California

Thursday, April 20, 2006

12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m.

Room 2261, Rayburn House Office Building

For Californians, old commuting patterns have given way to a hodgepodge of travel routes and modes, according to a recent study by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). The unexpected consequence of so many variations on the traditional suburb-to-city pattern is a stabilizing effect on commuting, helping to keep in check the time many Californians spend getting to work.

From 1990 to 2004, California commute times dropped by 9 percent, to 20 minutes – despite an increase in workforce size. Study author, PPIC policy analyst Elisa Barbour, noted “Routes, destinations, and commuter behavior have diversified, which can make it easier to absorb more commuting without major time effects.” Nevertheless, enough Californians have such long commutes that the state’s average time increased by 10 percent, to 27 minutes, over the past decade and a half. Moreover, the proportion of workers who commute 45 minutes or longer increased, and California’s average commute time is 10 percent higher than the nation’s average. “Despite the fact that a typical worker’s commute time went down, the increase in the state average underscores the huge variation in commuting,” says Barbour.

But through the variation weaves a common thread — the suburbanization of jobs. Commutes to suburbs comprised 48% of commutes in the state in 2000, up from 1990. “The decentralization of jobs and homes has a complicated effect on commuting, leading to both long, congested suburb-to-central city commutes and relatively short suburb-to-suburb commute times,” says Barbour. “As policymakers invest in transportation, it’s critical to consider changing commute patterns because investment choices will help shape public demand by influencing travel options and development patterns.” Statewide, 75% of Californians drive alone; 9% carpool; 4% ride a bus; 3% bike or walk; and 1% take a subway, train, or ferry. And as far as commute times go, public transit generally cannot compete: Solo drivers have the shortest average commute (26 minutes), and transit users the longest (47 minutes).

The study’s author, Elisa Barbour, will present an overview of the report’s major findings and discuss their policy implications at a luncheon briefing. The luncheon will be held Thursday, April 20, 2006, at 12:00 noon in Room 2261 of the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C. Copies of the report will be available at the briefing, as well as <http://www.ppic.org> .

To attend this lunch briefing, please reply (acceptances only, thank you) to 202-546-3700, or send email to ransdell@calinst.org . We look forward to seeing you on Thursday, April 20.