

# TEMPORAL CHANGES IN GENDER-BASED TRAVEL ON FLORIDA'S COMMUTER RAIL SYSTEM

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## ABSTRACT

### INTRODUCTION

The poster presentation addressed gender-based travel issues and other issues such as trip purpose, mode choice, frequency of use, and the interrelatedness of these many issues using data from three comprehensive on-board surveys conducted in 1991, 1993, and 1994 by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) for the Tri-County Commuter Rail Authority (Tri-Rail). The issue at hand was to investigate the temporal changes in women's travel through the use of traditional travel variables such as trip distance, modes of access and egress, and trip purpose, among others. For example, the literature points out that, even though women have entered the workforce in substantial numbers during the past decade or so, women still make work trips which, on average, are shorter in distance than that of men due to a variety of reasons such as lower wages, the suburbanization of service and retail sector employment being more evenly distributed across geographic regions, and women retaining their traditional family roles as nurturers, shoppers, homemakers, and family crisis managers.

### METHOD

Descriptive statistics as well as a host of crosstabulations were used as the methods for analyzing the on-board survey data. From the three on-board surveys, approximately 8,500 records and myriad variables were analyzed, including like data for travel during the week (Monday-Friday) as well as during the weekend. Specifically, comparisons between the weekly and weekend travel for women were explored. The findings from the analyzes are contained in the next section.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings show that, based on the variables that were analyzed, the demographics and travel behavior of female travelers on Tri-Rail has changed over time. The major findings, as outlined in the poster presentation, are as follows:

#### Gender

Since 1991, female ridership, as a percent of total ridership, has increased;

#### Age

Overall, female ridership in the 23 to 34 age category has shown the greatest decline as a percent of total ridership since 1991;

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### Ethnicity

Overall, Hispanic females showed the greatest increase in use of Tri-Rail for their trip making since 1991;

### Annual Household Income

Since 1991, a greater percent of female riders are coming from households with lower annual incomes;

### Education Level

No significant changes have occurred in the level of education of female riders since 1991;

### Travel Frequency

The largest decline in usage is among the female riders who use the system 4 or more days per week;

### Trip Purpose

The work trip purpose exhibited the largest decline among female riders since 1991;

### Reason for Riding

Since 1991, fewer female riders indicated that the economy of riding the train was the reason for their use; and

### Alternative Travel Mode

Driving as an alternative travel mode to Tri-Rail has shown the greatest decline among female riders since 1991.

## **SUMMARY**

As more and more women enter the workforce and declines in federal, state, and local funding and ridership continue to occur, policy-makers, decision-makers, and transit providers such as Tri-Rail need to take a hard look at public transit's most captive rider, women, to address their specific mobility needs. The findings from the three on-board surveys as well as further market analysis should provide a basis for improving the mobility of women on all transit modes.