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Peer-to-Peer Carsharing in Los Angeles

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Issue

Access to safe, affordable, and reliable private vehicle transportation in Los Angeles is not equitably distributed. Low-income households and households of color often have private vehicle access rates far lower than citywide averages. This aligns with national trends where these types of households have also been shown to spend a much higher percentage of their incomes on transportation, nearly 30% of income on average. This inequity has major implications on quality of life, and also limits access to economic opportunities.

Carsharing, the practice of users renting cars for short periods of time, has the potential to greatly improve private vehicle transportation equity in Los Angeles, while also bringing about other key benefits to the city. Carsharing can lower the barriers to private vehicle access by eliminating high upfront vehicle costs, and removing hurdles posed by low credit scores. There are three main types of carshare models: station-based, free-floating, and peer-to-peer (P2P). A station-based carsharing model is when a company owns a fleet of vehicles that users rent from, and return to, a designated station. In a free-floating model, vehicles from a company's fleet can be picked up, and dropped off within a designated zone. Finally, with P2P, private car owners make their vehicles available on a company's platform, and users rent vehicles in their area.

Study Approach

This project's client, the Neighborhood Council Sustainability Alliance (NCSA), specifically wanted to examine how a P2P carshare pilot program could be designed to maximize the carshare benefits in Los Angeles. To research this topic, the authors did an extensive literature review, conducted interviews with key stakeholders, reviewed both public and private documents from carshare companies, and performed a statistical analysis on trip data from carshare operators.

Research Findings

Several key findings came from this research. Notably, carsharing has been shown to effectively expand private vehicle access to underserved and disadvantaged communities. Also, these programs can lead to reduced vehicle miles traveled, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and decrease rates of private vehicle ownership among members — effectively reducing the amount of vehicles on city streets.

Based on analysis of Mocean Carshare survey data, most users during the study period made less than $100,000 in household income annually. There is a relatively ethnically diverse group of Mocean users with the largest single group being Caucasian. Results also showed that most

Median Household Income by Census Tract

🟥 $0 - $35,000   🟧 $35,000 - $50,000   🟨 $50,000 - $75,000   🟩 $75,000 - $100,000   🟩 $100,000 - $150,000   🟩 $150,000 +
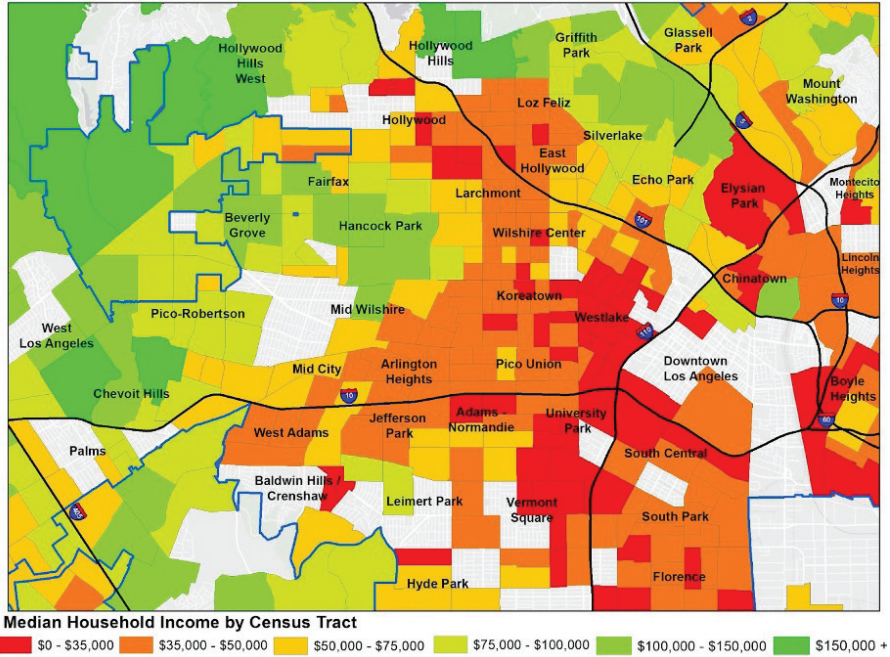
Figure 1. Median household income of Los Angeles residents by census tract

used carsharing services for the purpose of errands and leisure, as opposed to commuting to work (3.3%). Among Mocean survey respondents, 44% delayed or abandoned a car purchase, which suggests that carsharing is an effective way to convince families that a household vehicle is not necessary.

Conclusions

Based on these results, this report makes several recommendations.

The first recommendation is for the City of Los Angele to continue with, and expand, their partnership with the station-based carshare operator BlueLA, while also launching a new carshare P2P pilot program.

Next, the pilot program should be launched in Hollywood as this neighborhood — with its high density, diverse mix of ethnicity and income levels, high visitation rate from

non-residents, and excellent connections to regionwide public transit — has many of the ideal conditions to sustain successful P2P carshare operations.

Further, the city should support this pilot program by designating up to 10 parking spaces in high-profile locations around Hollywood exclusively for P2P carshare vehicles.

Lastly, the city should leverage the Los Angeles Department of Transportation and LA Metro advertising infrastructure to promote P2P carshare services from providers like Getaround and Turo.

If these recommendations are followed, this pilot program will have a significant impact on equity for private vehicle access, help reduce traffic congestion, improve connections to transit, and can serve as a model for other Los Angeles neighborhoods to follow.

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Byrd, M., Diaz, R., King, S., Luong, H., & Seto, A. (2022). Designing a Carsharing Pilot Program for Los Angeles (Master's capstone, UCLA). Retrieved from: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/49w2j9cn.