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The Truth About Traffic and Jobs in San Antonio

For those from San Antonio, its very likely they are, or know someone who has worked in a warehouse. Why is that? Why not a tech company, a restaurant, a school, or something more? Perhaps it’s due to their limited options. This essay will discuss the issues of a stagnant job market and traffic congestion in San Antonio, as it has been a problem post covid. With the city’s rapid growth, traffic has become a major problem affecting daily commute times and the overall quality of life in the city. Simultaneously the job market in San Antonio is growing but faces challenges like accessibility and an equal distribution of opportunity. I believe improving public transportation infrastructure in San Antonio will alleviate traffic congestion improving commute times and enhance job market accessibility, thereby promoting economic growth and reducing regional inequalities.

Firstly, we will discuss how accessible public transit reduces congestion improves commute times of those in the city. To do this we’ll reference a study by Professor Micheal Anderson of U.C. Berkley. The study discusses the relationship between public transport and traffic congestion, findings reported concludes that overall public transit reduces commute times. To go more in depth in this study researchers “Duranton and Turner estimate that increasing a city’s bus fleet by 18 buses (10%) changes annual VMT by – 1.3% to 0.6%” (Anderson), VMT meaning Vehicle miles traveled, so in theory adding 10% more busses would improve commute time times by 0.6 to 1.3 percent. Meaning commutes would be shorter but this alone does not significantly impact congestion but does improve quality of life as it means people are getting to places quicker due to slightly less congestion. The study then talks about “Parry and Small…[they] calculate that the Washington transit system reduces total congestion by 184,000 person-hours per day, or 2.0 person-minutes per peak transit passenger mile carried.” (Anderson) this would suggest investments in public transit are very useful in reducing congestion and improving quality of life as citizens would not like more congestion, and that is what would happen if these systems disappeared overnight or were not maintained properly. Overall Mr. Anderson’s study effectively analyses the relationship between traffic commute times, congestion, and quality of life. His findings exhibit no recognizable bias as it is all based on reason and facts from credible sources.

 Next, we will discuss the relationship between quality of life and how commute times affect that. To do this we will be referencing a study by expert city planner and civil engineer David M. Levinson, and his colleague Ajay Kumar. The study goes on to detail “two key issues are the degree of concentration or clustering both within and outside the central city and the distribution of employment relative to population.” (Levinson and Kumar). This meaning in large cities like San Antonio people are very concentrated in certain areas but their employment is usually not within those same areas causing congestion and longer commute times. They go onto discuss how a “a growing city may provide greater opportunities for households and economic establishments to relocate, resulting in shorter time and distance commutes.” (Levinson and Kumar). This quote is important to show that a growing city like San Antonio should have shorter commute times and more opportunity which would attract skilled workers, but this is not the case as of 2023 San Antonio is home to the 27th and 32nd most congested high ways costing the city an annual 6.5 million just with those two roads alone, that is not to talk about the total 19 spots on the “Texas 100 Most Congested Road Segments” list that Bexar county holds (“Most Congested in Texas”). If Bexar County did not hold roughly a fifth of the most congested roadways in Texas there is no question that its citizens would be much happier with their reduced commute times, leaving more time to do more pressing tasks. The solution to improve this is public transit. To review in this paragraph, we’ve discussed how the issues of clustering inside and outside the city and how that affects commute times, how a growing city should attract workers and reduce commute times, and how the congestion of San Antonio’s highway system affects quality of life, the ability to attract workers, and commute times.

Furthermore, in this section we will discuss the importance of accessible and efficient public transportation, in regard to attracting skilled workers, thereby enhancing the job market of the region. To do this we will be referencing a study from avid writer and PhD graduate Richard Florida, in this study Florida makes key points like “The presence of a good transportation network, including public transit, is a key factor that skilled workers consider when choosing a place to live” (Florida). This quote is important because it supports the theory that public transport is critical for a growing city as it improves the satisfaction of workers and commute times thus making it likely for more adequate works to move in. Mr. Florida goes on to confirm this by saying “efficient public transportation systems reduce commute times, which can significantly improve job market accessibility and overall worker satisfaction” (Florida). This quote is important as it provides support for the previous point that public transport enhances the satisfaction of and the available pool of workers in the city. “Talent is associated with the diversity index, confirming the hypothesis that talent is attracted to places with low entry barriers for human capital” (Florida​). This quote shows that the places attracting the best talent have low barriers to entry for human capital, implying that accessible and efficient public transport can be one of those low barriers. By reducing commuting times and increasing the ease of movement, public transportation can make a region like San Antonio more appealing to skilled workers. To recap, in this section we’ve discussed the relationship between public transport and skilled workers, as well as how public transport can improve the job market in San Antonio.

Moreover, in this section we will discuss the current state of San Antonio with its leaders and the stagnation of the growth in the job market. “We are experiencing exponential population growth, but if you look at the job growth, there's a significant discrepancy there” (Saucedo-Herrera). This quote is important as it comes from the CEO of San Antonio’s Economic Development Foundation and tells of rapid growth but a stagnant job market that does not reflect this growth to the average person. This means residents of San Antonio see the growth but cannot participate as the opportunities may not present themselves. Saucedo goes onto describe that “the discrepancy is that we are not producing the level of talent, the educational attainment, at a four-year level and also the certification level, to make sure that we're moving the needle in the long term” (Saucedo-Herrera). This quote is shows that the real problem is education, more specifically a lack of 4-year degrees and or certifications. To recap, in this section we’ve discussed the current economic state of San Antonio in relation to its stagnant job market. We’ve also detailed that education is the cause of this stagnation.

In conclusion, I believe improving public transportation infrastructure in San Antonio will reduce traffic congestion enhancing commute times and improving job market accessibility, thereby promoting economic growth and reducing regional inequalities. First, we discussed how accessible public transit reduces congestion improves commute times of those in the city, then the relationship between quality of life and how commute times affect that. As well as, the importance of accessible and efficient public transportation, regarding attracting skilled workers, thereby enhancing the job market of the region. Then in the final section we discussed the current state of San Antonio with its leaders and the stagnation of the growth in the job market. Lastly, with this information it begs the question of how, why, and who has allowed San Antonio to get to this level.

Work Cited

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