Florida Department of Transportation Research

Capturing the Benefits of Complete Streets

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Current Situation

Many transportation investment decisions are based in large part on a return on investment in terms of increased vehicular throughput and increased travel speeds/reduced travel times. Alternatively, today's planning conventions also recognize the value of Complete Streets roadway projects that promote safety and quality access for all types of users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists. This leaves decision-makers with the responsibility of prioritizing transportation infrastructure with competing demands; vehicle efficiency vs multimodal quality. Economic development may be an important attribute for decision-makers to consider in their transportation investment prioritization processes. As such, it is important to understand the economic benefits of Complete Streets projects compared with non-Complete Streets type projects at different geographic scales such as within the community or the city as a whole to facilitate effective decision-making.

Research Objectives

This project sought to better understand and capture the economic impacts of Complete Streets projects and how these impacts could differ from more traditional capacity improvement projects.

Project Activities

As the body of research on Complete Streets continues to grow, University of South Florida researchers reviewed the existing literature and summarized their impacts and findings. Based on the results of this research, a set of economic measures was identified that may accurately measure the benefits of Complete Streets.

Employment information and property values for a Complete Streets corridor can be used to measure economic vitality. While the focus of this research was on quantitative measures, some qualitative information from local reports, articles, and discussions with local stakeholders could also be useful. For example, sales tax collections or sales volume information was not available but was captured in qualitative analysis.

These measures were then tested using case studies. Completed Complete Streets corridors in Gainesville, Fort Meyers Beach, and Cleveland, Ohio, were generally found to perform equal to or better than the city or county as a whole. As an example, both Gainesville and Cleveland found increased property values and increased property tax collections in their respective Complete Street corridors. In Fort Meyers Beach, property values and tax collections were lower following the implementation of the Estero Boulevard Complete Streets project; however, this decline was not worse than the overall downward trend observed in other parts of the city. Interestingly, job growth along Estero Boulevard significantly outpaced growth in the city.

Overall, research shows that Complete Streets projects are associated with increased property values and job growth. While a direct causal link cannot be established, these results are consistent with other recent research showing the economic benefits of Complete Streets.

Project Benefits

While a direct causal link cannot be definitively proven between Complete Streets and economic development, this project provides direction for further research into the many benefits of these types of context-sensitive design projects.

For more information, please see dot.state.fl.us/research-center