

Transportation and the New Generation

Why Young People Are Driving Less and What it Means for the Future

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FRONTIER GROUP

About Frontier Group

- ▶ Non-profit, non-partisan, multi-issue research and public policy think tank.
- ▶ Founded in 1996.

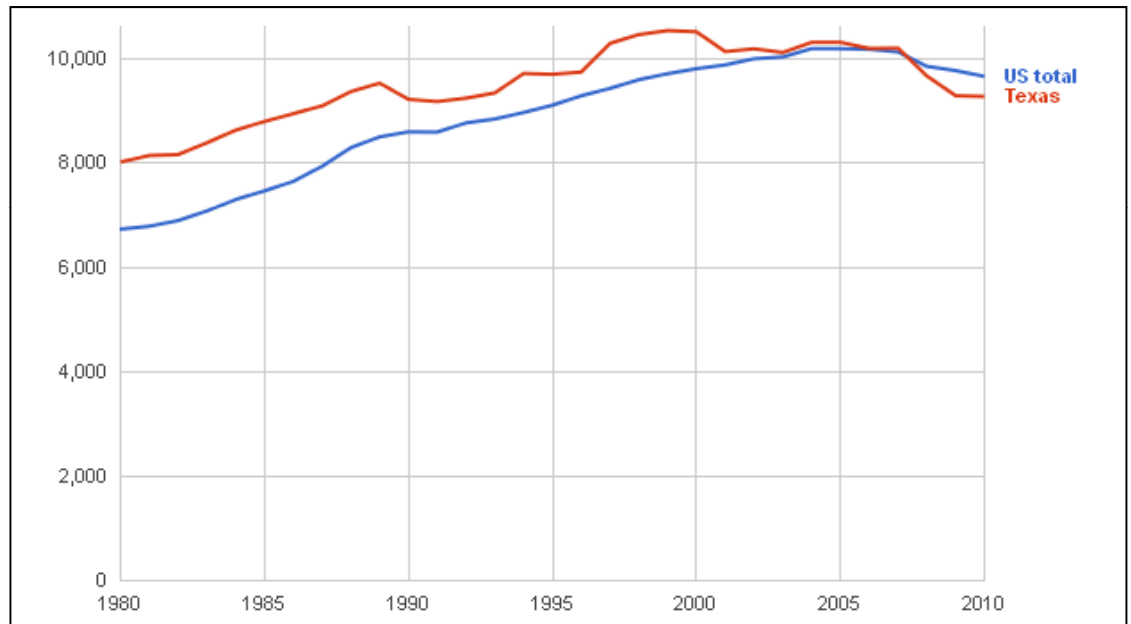
Today's presentation

- How are driving trends changing?
- Focus on youth trends.
- What are the implications?

Background: The longest decline in vehicle travel since World War II

- ▶ In absolute terms: Americans (and Texans) drove fewer miles in 2010 than they did in 2005.
- ▶ In per-capita terms: Americans drove fewer miles in 2010 than they did in 1999 and Texans drove fewer miles than they did in 1993.

Per capita vehicle-miles traveled, Texas and U.S.



Source: FHWA

What's happening: Peaking of long-term trends

The Case for Moderate Growth in Vehicle Miles of Travel: A Critical Juncture in U.S. Travel Behavior Trends

Prepared for

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

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Center for Urban Transportation Research
University of South Florida
4202 Fowler Ave. CUT100
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April 2006



Polzin (2006)

“The Case for Moderate Growth in
Vehicle Miles of Travel”

Saw stabilization of:

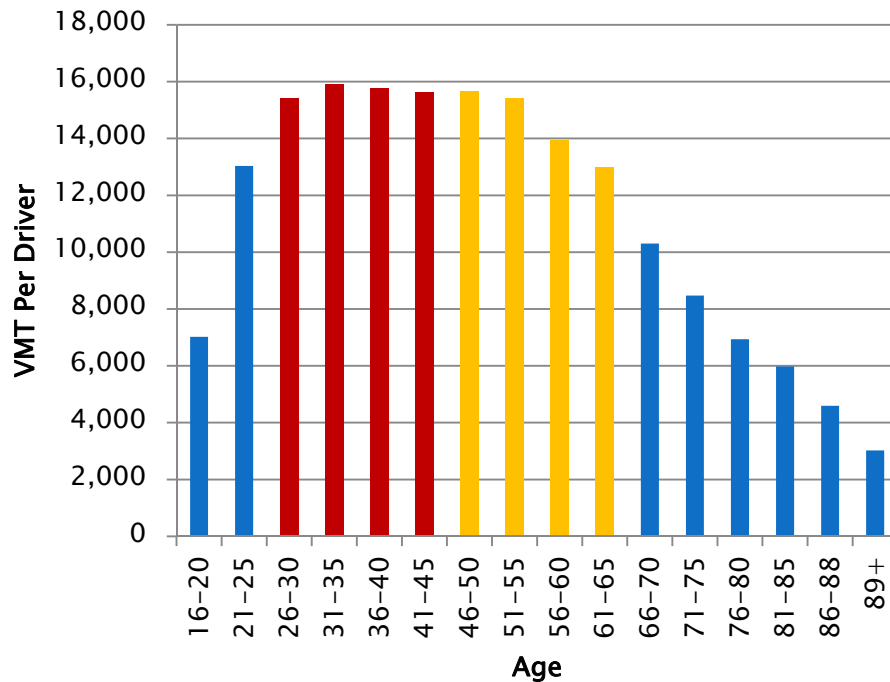
- Household size
- Female labor participation rate
- Number of zero-vehicle households
- Travel speed
- Transit ridership and bike/ped mode share

Plus increases in driving costs.

IN ADDITION: Cities hitting the
“Sprawl Wall”

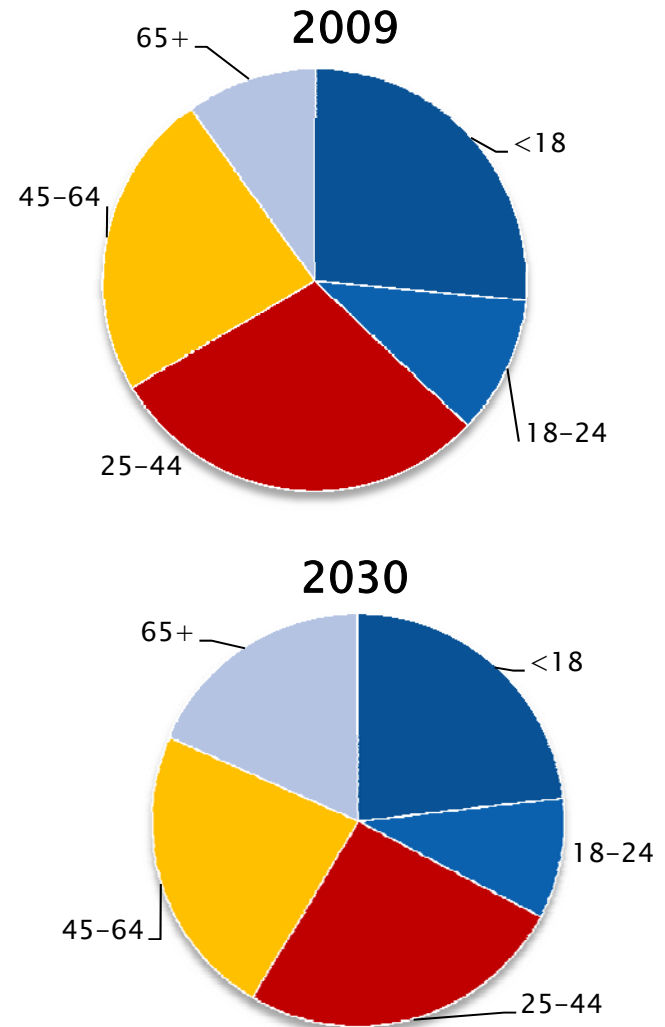
Add in changing demographics

Average annual vehicle travel by age, 2009, Texas



National Household Travel Survey

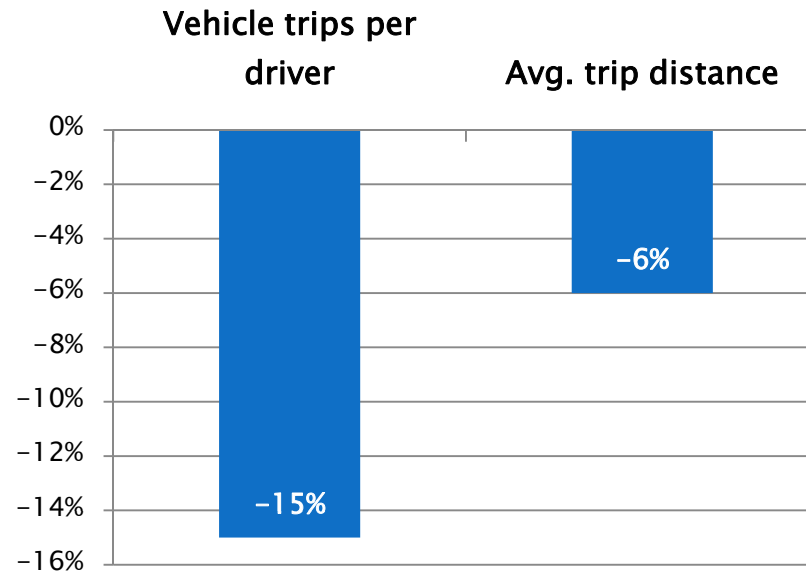
Texas population by age



Texas Dept. of State Health Services; Texas State Data Center

And larger shifts among youth

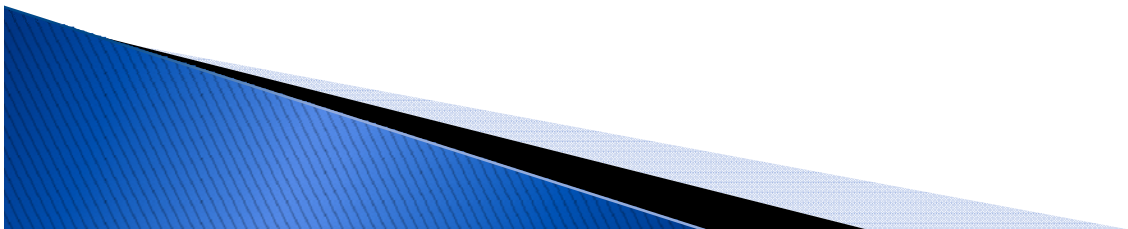
Vehicle-miles traveled declined 23% among 14 to 34 year olds from 2001 to 2009 (2009 NHTS). Fewer drivers. Fewer trips. Shorter trips.



The share of 14 to 34 year olds without a drivers license increased from 21% to 26% from 2000 to 2010 (FHWA).

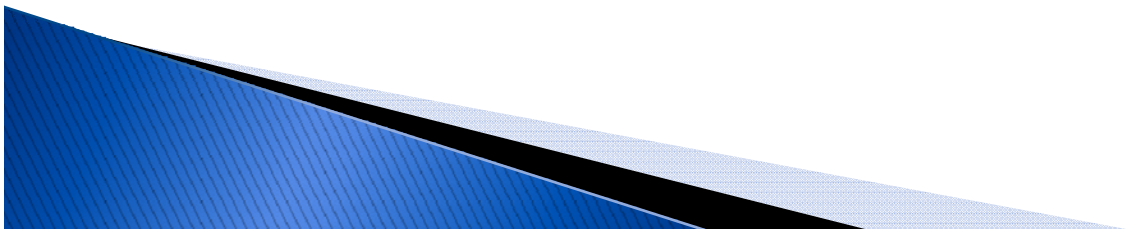
Non-driving modes *not* declining

- ▶ Use of transportation alternatives has increased from 2001 to 2009 (NHTS):
 - Biking trips up 24 percent.
 - Walking trips up 16 percent.
 - Transit passenger-miles traveled up 40 percent. (Trips up only slightly)



Texas-specific youth trends

- VMT/capita declined by 24% among 16–35 year-olds between 2001 and 2009 (NHTS)
- Total VMT declined by 12% among 16–35 year olds (NHTS)
- Share of 16–35 year olds licensed to drive declined from 73% to 67%. (FHWA)



Why are youth driving trends changing?

- Is it because of the economy?
- Is it because of changes in consumer preferences?
- Is it because of technology?

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Answer: Quite possibly, YES.

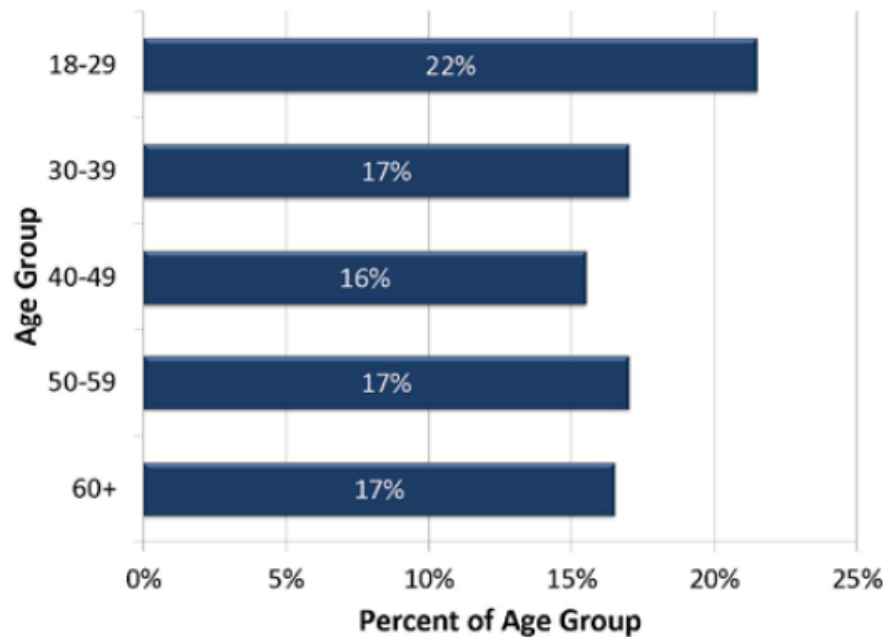
The economy

- ▶ Young people hit hard by recession: unemployment, delay in household formation, decline in vehicle ownership.
- ▶ Young people with jobs drive more miles than young people without.
- ▶ However:
 - Young people *with* jobs drove 16.5% fewer miles on average in 2009 than in 2001.
 - Young people in higher-income households (>\$70K household income) saw dramatic increases in transit use and bicycling and decline in VMT.

Changing housing and transportation preferences

Survey data consistently show that young people value urban lifestyles and proximity to transportation alternatives more than older generations, and are more inclined to alter their driving behavior for environmental reasons.

In the National Association for Realtors survey, participants were asked to rate the importance (on a scale of "very important," "somewhat important," "not very important," and "not at all important") of having (1) bus routes and (2) rail lines within walking distance of their homes. The percentages of participants that answered "very important" for bus routes and rail lines are averaged by age group and displayed below.

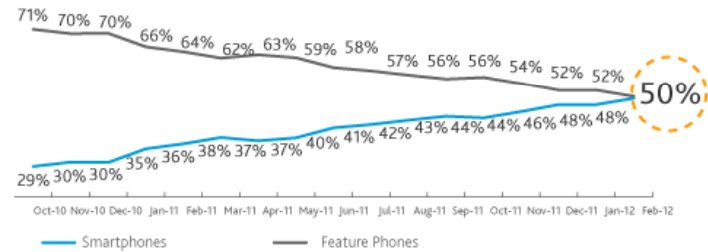


Technology

- ▶ Rapid penetration, particularly among young

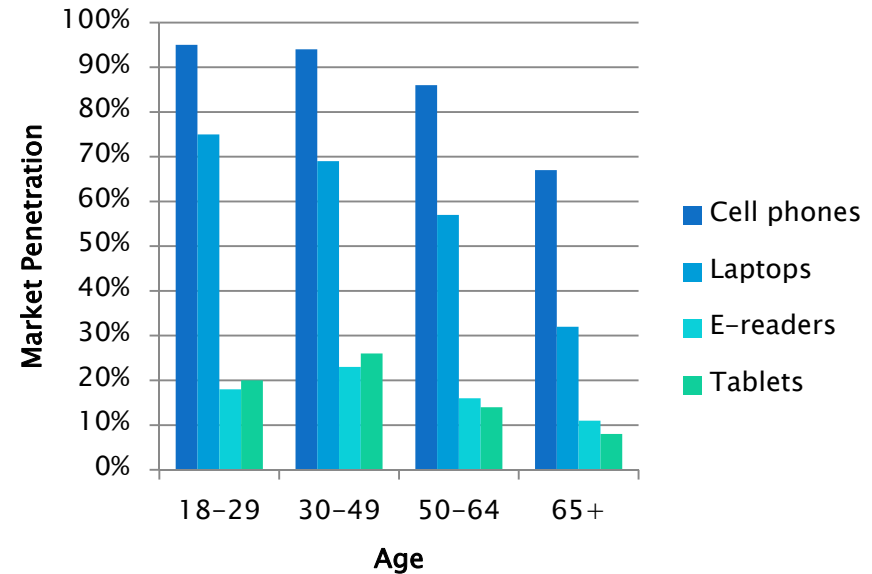
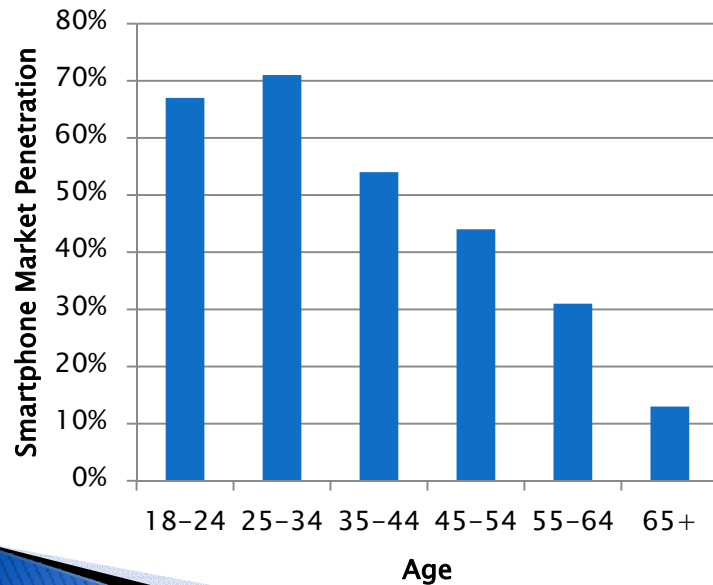
U.S. Smartphone Penetration

February 2012, Nielsen Mobile Insights



Read as: During February 2012, 50 percent of US mobile subscribers owned a smartphone

Source: Nielsen



Early 2012 figures from Pew Internet and American Life Project

Technology

- Young people report substituting social media for vehicle trips at higher rates than older people (KRC Research/Zipcar survey)
- New, tech-enabled transportation options increasingly coming into play: car-sharing, bike-sharing, real-time transit information.
- Cars and cell phones don't mix.

“The safety recommendation specifically calls for the 50 states ... to ban the nonemergency use of portable electronic devices (other than those designed to support the driving task) for all drivers.” NTSB, 12/13/11.



Photo: NHTSA

Technology: cultural shift?

- One third of students and young professionals in a 14-country survey considered the Internet to be as important as food, water or shelter. (Cisco Connected World Technology Report 2011)
- 46% of U.S. drivers age 18 to 24 would prefer to have Internet than own a car. (NYT, 3/22/12)



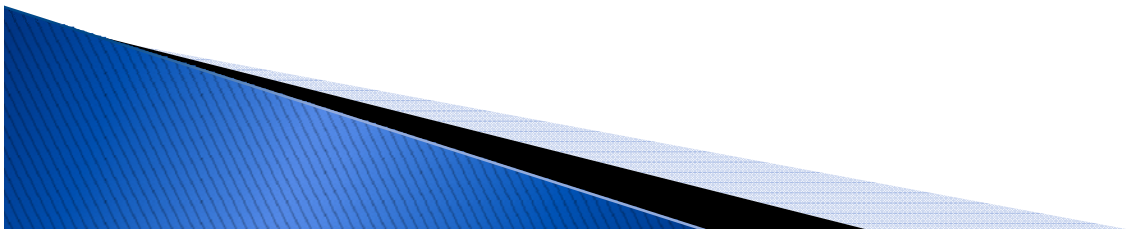
Photo: Oriol Gutierrez, POZ

Technology

- ▶ Makes transit use more appealing
- ▶ Use of travel time by train passengers in Britain (Lyons, Jains & Holley, 2007, updated 2011)

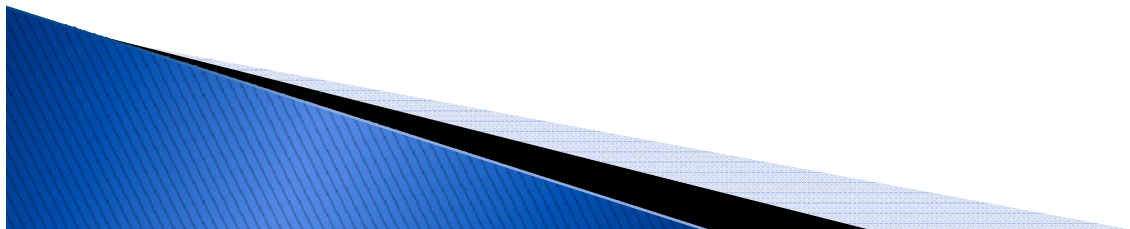
“Passengers in 2010 are 63% more likely to be texting or phoning for personal reasons and 83% more likely to be doing so for work (than in 2004).”

- ▶ 30% of travelers reported making “very worthwhile use of my time on this train today” (up from 24% in 2004)



Summing up

- ▶ Youth driving has declined sharply in the last decade.
- ▶ It is unclear whether the trend will accelerate, continue, or abate.
- ▶ There is strong reason to believe that at least some of the decline will persist even after the economy regains steam.



Not just the United States

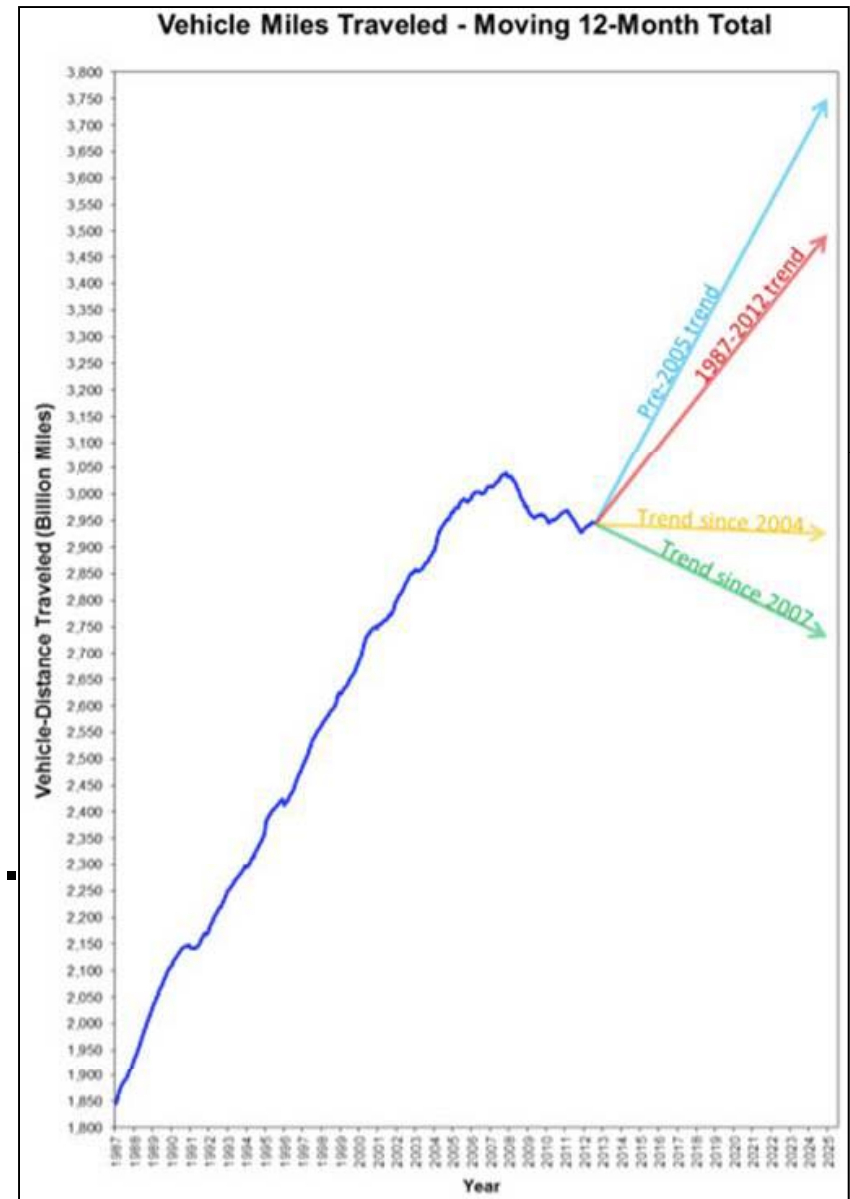
- ▶ “Peak car” occurring in numerous industrialized countries ...
- ▶ ... average travel per vehicle has declined in Britain, Japan, France, Germany ...
- ▶ ... percentage of young drivers with licenses has declined in Britain, Japan, Canada, Germany and other countries ...

Why this matters

Planning

- ▶ Allocation of resources depends on our expectations of the future.
- ▶ Need to make prudent decisions about how to invest in transportation.

▶ Chart: Phineas Baxandall, U.S. PIRG



Why this matters

Finance: less money available through traditional sources of transportation funding

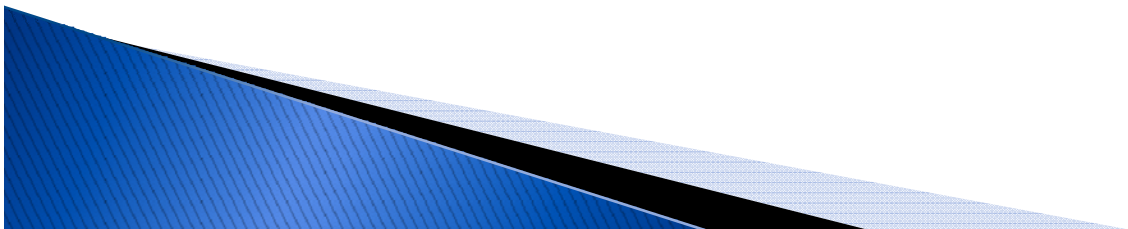
Old model:

- Rising or steady real gas taxes
- Fluctuating fuel efficiency
- Steady increases in VMT

Current situation:

- Declining real value of the gas tax
- Improved fuel efficiency
- Stagnant or falling VMT

Coupled with increased need for investments in repair, creates new competition for transportation dollars and (possibly) demand for new revenue sources.



Why this matters

Policy

- Political system responded to demands for more mobile, automobile centered transportation system in post-WWII era through Interstate highway system and land-use policy.
- Will policy leaders respond similarly to demands for a more flexible, less auto-dependent, more connected transportation system in 21st century?

Thank you.

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