

# **An Austin Without Cars? A Travel Demand Model**

Chris Dsida & Reuven Herzog



Image source: Culture Map Austin

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# Chapter 1: Introduction



Image source: Culture Map Austin

# Project Definition

Our project is a hypothetical study of closing an entire district to cars. We are exploring the Austin, Texas, MSA, and our alternative scenario envisions making the entire downtown district - bounded by Interstate 35, Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd; Lamar Blvd; and Cesar Chavez St - accessible only to public transit vehicles and active transportation (e.g. pedestrians and cyclists).

Our primary concern is the direct effects of the institution of this "moat." Will drivers aggressively shift to alternative modes, or will they instead direct their trips elsewhere? How many trips currently use downtown as a cut-through, and where will these trips be re-routed?

A proposal as bold as this will surely have effects beyond the traffic realm. The most obvious one is a question of economics: how many businesses will flee the downtown car-free zone; will this kill the downtown core? While these questions are fascinating, they are beyond the scope of our study.

WRITE A QUICK OVERVIEW HERE OF THE REST OF THE REPORT  
(AFTER IT'S COMPLETED)



# Chapter 2: Zones



Image source: Culture Map Austin

# Study Area



Image source: Dallas Federal Reserve

The Austin-Round Rock, Texas Metropolitan Statistical Area\* (MSA) consists of five counties in central Texas: Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties. The city of Austin in Travis County anchors the region in terms of population and employment. Nearly half of the MSA's 2.2 million inhabitants reside in Austin itself, while the census tracts with the highest concentration of jobs are located in its central business district.

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# Alternative Description

Our study alternative arises from a hypothetical question: What if we completely closed downtown Austin to cars? We are imagining a scenario where downtown Austin is surrounded by a cordon that only public and active transit can pass through. This cordon is defined by Interstate 35; Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.; Lamar Blvd.; and Cesar Chavez St.

For the following zonal analysis, this closely corresponds to Travis County Census Tracts 7 and 11, and is encircled in red on the map below.

These two districts include roughly 107,000 jobs, around 10% of the entire Austin MSA's employment, and a negligible percentage of residents. Still, it is worth examining how this restriction of access affects traffic, total VMT, and accessibility.

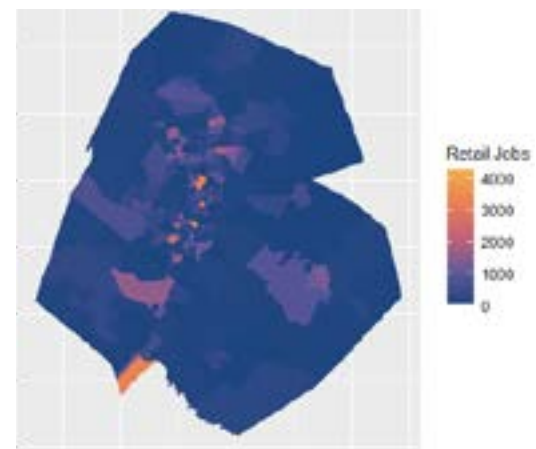
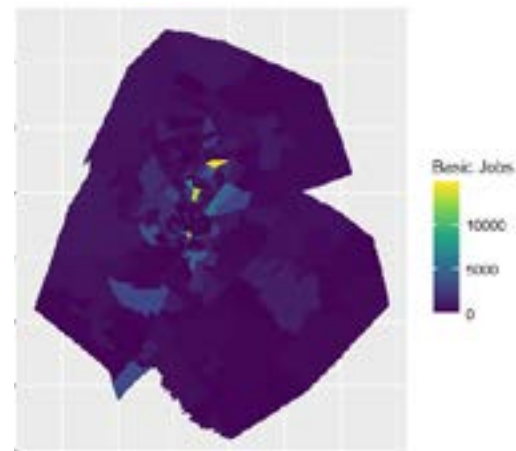
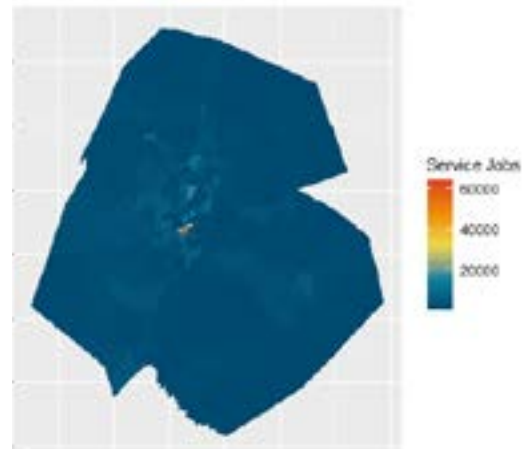
It's also notable that the pattern of who commutes into downtown is not strictly correlated with distance. While the largest share of commuters into downtown comes from downtown itself, other areas that send high numbers of commuters to downtown are middle-and outer-ring suburbs.



# Employment Characteristics

The Austin MSA has 1.1 million jobs. Of these, the service sector dominates (67%), followed by basic (23%), and retail (10%).

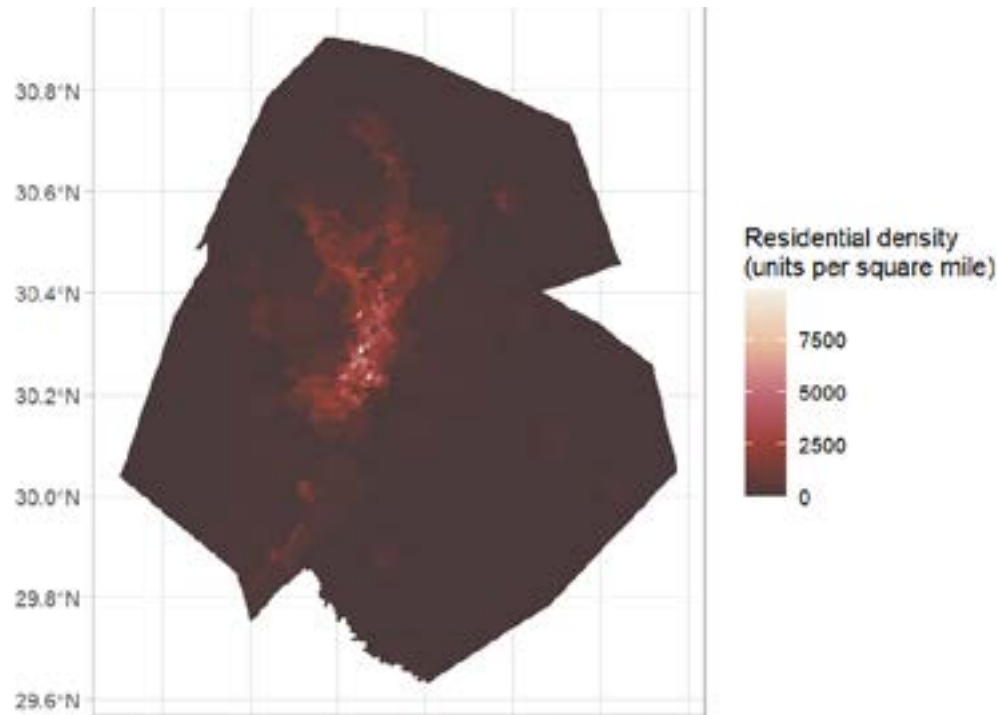
The spatial distribution does vary across sectors, however. The service sector features a high concentration near downtown. The basic sector also highlights downtown, though other regions of high employment emerge in clusters in the northern part of the MSA, as well as higher pockets of employment across the region. Retail is the most balanced across the region, with tracts of high employment across the northern and southern suburbs.





# Population Characteristics

## Residential Density

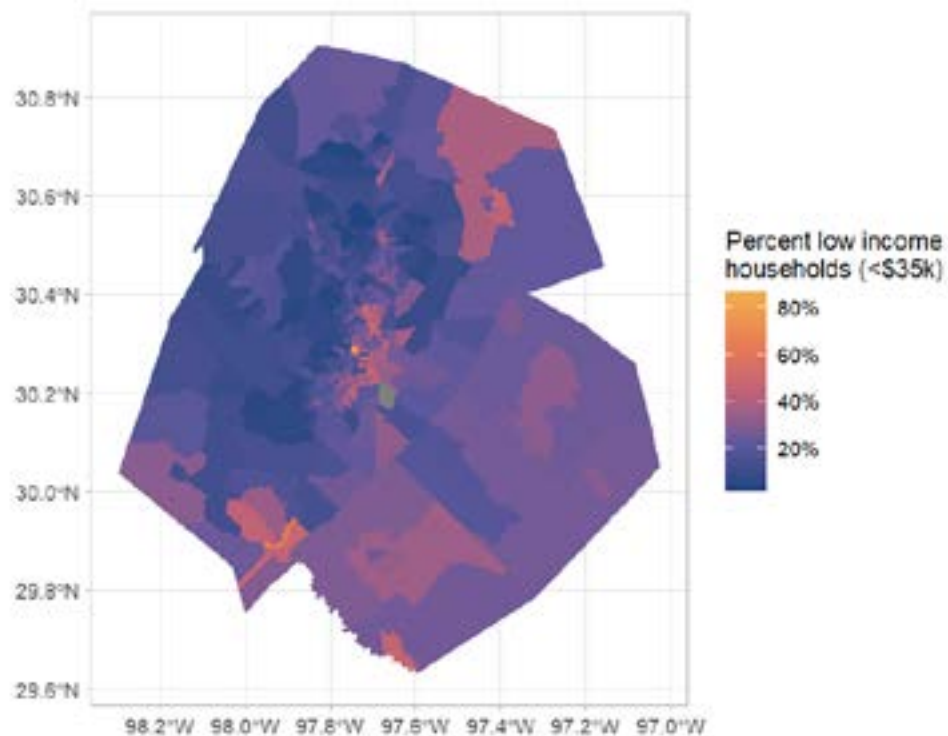
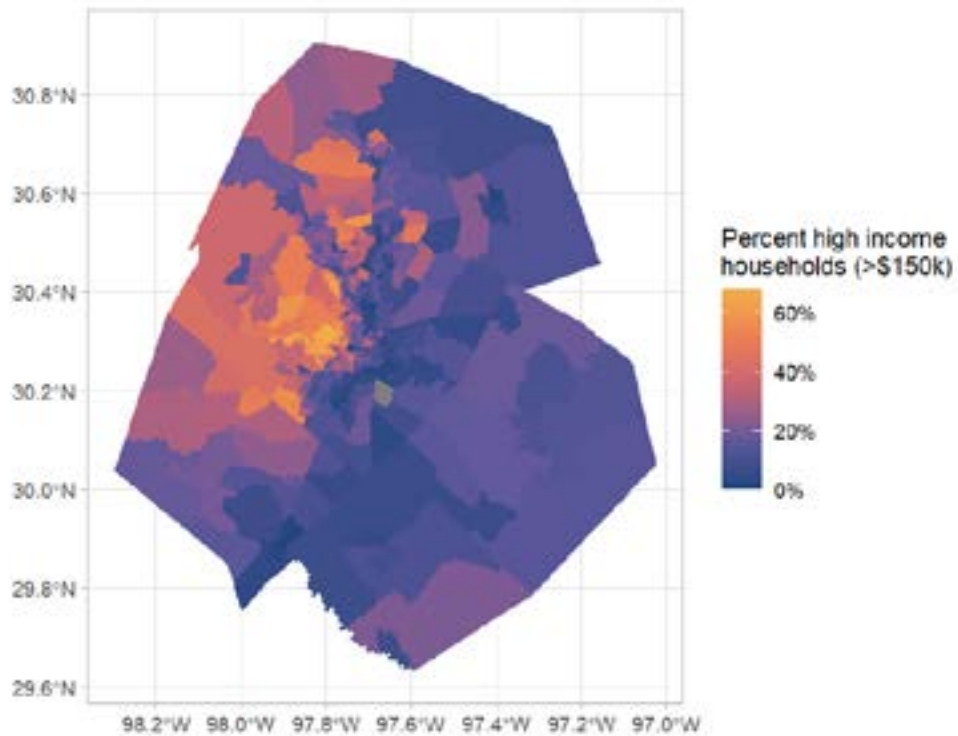


The region's residents live in areas concentrated along a generally north-south axis, with densities highest closer to Downtown. Housing unit density can be useful in determining an area's suitability for different travel modes. For instance, transit service works best in areas where a large number of people live or work in a relatively compact area.

On the following page, the percentage of households in a given census tract that fall into the highest and lowest income quintiles are mapped. Given the relationship between household income and travel patterns (both in terms of mode and volume of travel), this will likely be important in our model. Tracts that are on the west side of the region tend to have greater percentages of high-income households, while the east side and center tend to have greater percentages of low-income households.

# Population Characteristics (cont.)

## Spatial Distribution of Income



# Population Characteristics (cont.)

## Race and Segregation

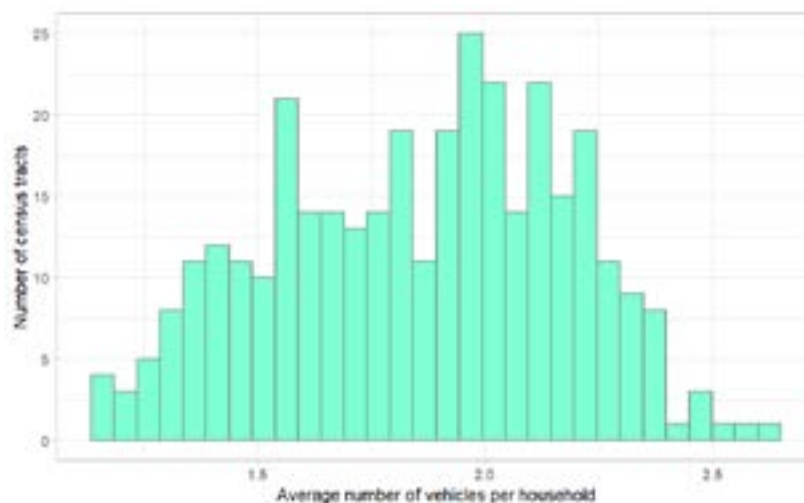
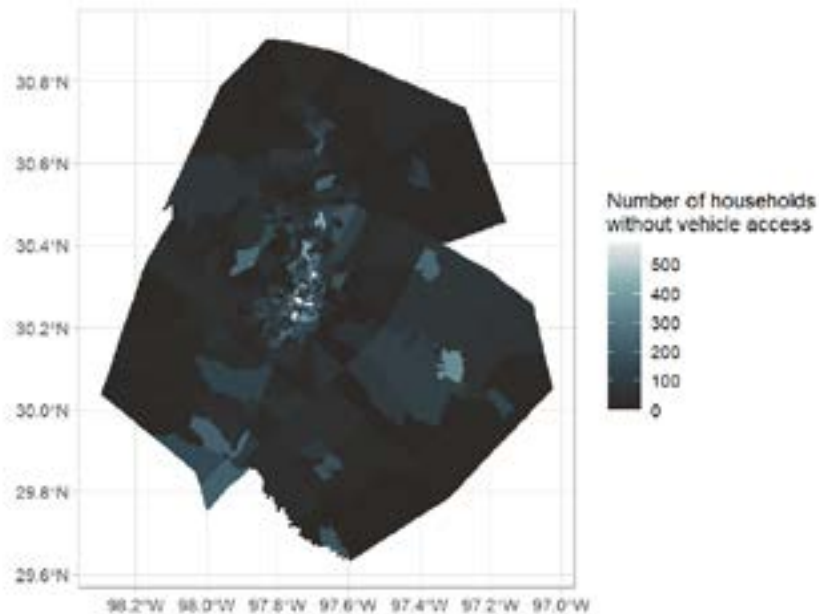
Much like with income, the Greater Austin region is divided geographically in terms of race. The western portion of the region is significantly whiter, on average, than the central and eastern portions. While race may not play a role in terms of how we model travel behavior in the MSA, this data will allow us to assess whether the alternative has any disproportionate impacts on different racial or ethnic groups.



# Population Characteristics (cont.)

## Vehicle Access

Access to a car (obviously) plays a major role in one's ability to drive places as a form of travel. Therefore, we have calculated both the average number of available vehicles per household, as well as the number of households with no vehicle access for the MSA.

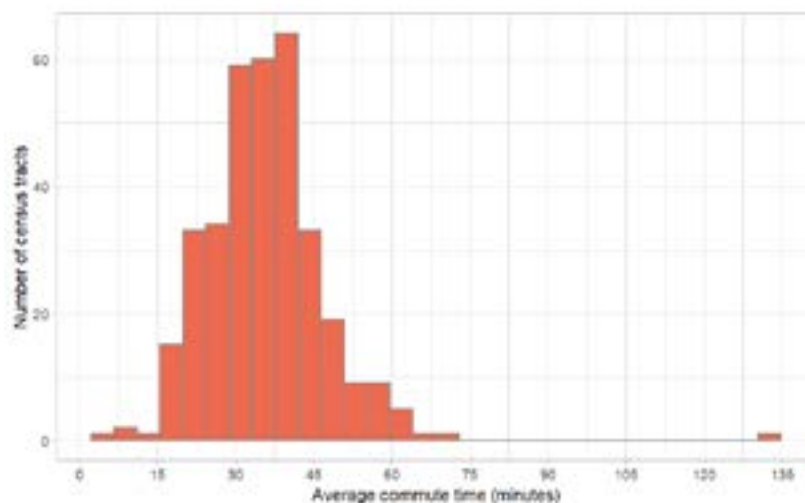
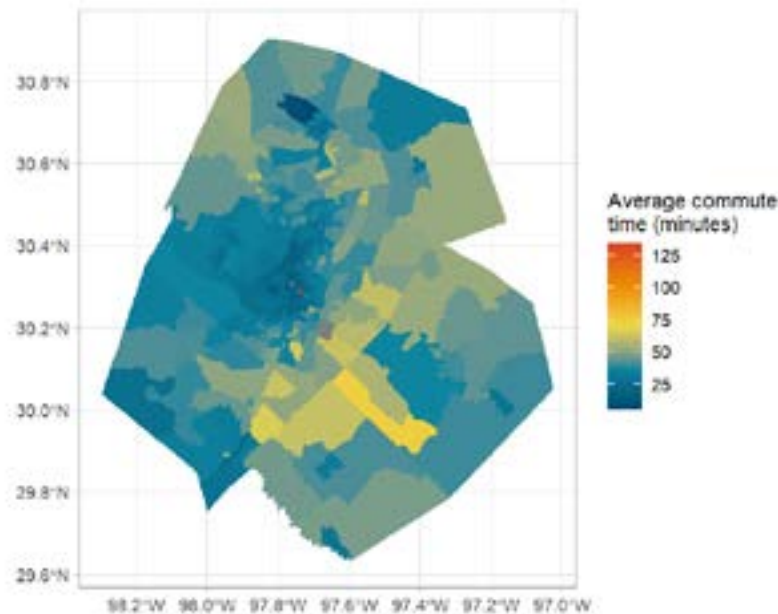




# Population Characteristics (cont.)

## Commute Times

Intuitively, people who live closer to the center of the MSA, which is where the jobs are concentrated most heavily, experience the shortest commute times. The bulk of workers' commutes are between 15 and 45 minutes, as shown below.



# Chapter 3: Network Analysis



Image source: Culture Map Austin

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# Chapter 4:

# Accessibility Calculations



Image source: Culture Map Austin

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# Chapter 5: Vehicle Access



Image source: Culture Map Austin

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# Chapter 7:

## Destination Choice



Image source: Culture Map Austin

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# Chapter 8: Mode Choice



Image source: Culture Map Austin



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# Chapter 9: Effects on Transit



Image source: Culture Map Austin

# Header 1

## Subheader 1

The Austin-Round Rock, Texas Metropolitan Statistical Area\* (MSA) consists of five counties in central Texas: Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties. The city of Austin in Travis County anchors the region in terms of population and employment. Nearly half of the MSA's 2.2 million inhabitants reside in Austin itself, while the census tracts with the highest concentration of jobs are located in its central business district.

For the purposes of this travel modeling exercise, the MSA will be broken into travel analysis zones (TAZs) consisting of census tracts. Relevant employment and population information about these census tracts is included in the following sections of this report. Because the alternative being studied does not involve any land use or population changes, the relevant data for our modeling scenarios will be the same as the existing conditions.

\*Also known as Greater Austin, sometimes including Georgetown, TX in the official MSA name  
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# Header 1

## Subheader 1

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# Chapter 10: Effects on Highways



Image source: Culture Map Austin

# Header 1

## Subheader 1

The Austin-Round Rock, Texas Metropolitan Statistical Area\* (MSA) consists of five counties in central Texas: Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties. The city of Austin in Travis County anchors the region in terms of population and employment. Nearly half of the MSA's 2.2 million inhabitants reside in Austin itself, while the census tracts with the highest concentration of jobs are located in its central business district.

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\*Also known as Greater Austin, sometimes including Georgetown, TX in the official MSA name  
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