Dear Editor:

I would like to submit the manuscript entitled “The Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Public Transit Demand in U.S.” by Luyu Liu, Harvey J. Miller, and Jonathan Scheff for consideration as a **research article** for publication in the PLOS Special Collection “Spatiotemporal COVID-19 Rapid Response.” Analyzing data from a widely used transit smartphone app for 113 transit systems across the United States, we show that COVID-19 had major but differential impacts on public transit demand that we explain using data on job type mix, socioeconomic factors and a measure of community awareness in each community. We also show implications for pandemic spread and the social equity dimensions of transit usage during the pandemic. This paper is a first step towards understanding the heterogeneous impacts of a major pandemic on transit systems. Thankfully, there is only a small literature on this topic due few events in recent history, and these studies have focused on single transit systems. Our study is the first comprehensive analysis at a national-level.

We declare that this manuscript is original, has not been published and submitted before, and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere. The first two authors, Luyu Liu and Harvey J. Miller, declare no competing interests. The third author Jonathan Scheff, who helped to edit and review the draft and provide hourly transit demand data, is currently employed at Transit app Inc. as a data scientist. There has been no significant financial support for this work that could have influence its outcome. As Corresponding Author, I confirm that the manuscript has been read and approved for submission by all the named authors.

We suggest the following Associate Editors: i) Chaowei Yang; ii) Junfeng Jiao; iii) Frank Goetzke.

We hope you find our manuscript suitable for publication and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Sincerely,

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