

# Do Drivers Dream of Walking? An Investigation of Travel Mode Dissonance from the Perspective of Subjective Wellbeing

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## Abstract

Transportation in most of the world has been dominated for decades by a fascination with the automobile. Nonetheless, there is an increasing recognition that to achieve a variety of economic, environmental, and public health policy goals it is important to attract and retain active travelers and users of public transportation. A challenge with the way transportation policy is developed, however, is that it tends to focus on utilitarian considerations, which may miss other potential aspects of transportation that users value. In particular, subjective wellbeing (SWB) has been proposed as a way to enhance our understanding of the preferences and choices of travellers, as well as a way to evaluate the benefits of transportation beyond utilitarian considerations. The objective of this paper is to analyze the modes that people commonly use, and to what extent they are aligned (or not) with a variety of affective values associated with SWB. In other words, we are interested in the potential for dissonance with respect to the primary mode of travel, from the perspective of affective values. The study is based on data collected from a sample of travellers in the city of Santiago, in Chile. Participants in the study were asked about their usual mode of travel, and then were asked to name the mode or modes that they associate with the affective values of freedom, enjoyment, happiness, poverty, luxury and status. The results indicate that users of public transportation experience the most dissonance in terms of affective values, and active travellers the least. For those travellers who experience dissonance, active travel is the mode most commonly associated with freedom, enjoyment, and happiness, public transportation is most commonly associated with poverty, and the automobile is most commonly associated with luxury and status.

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