

Understanding how Marginalized Genders Travel using NJ TRANSIT

Research Idea/Need

Through this project, NJ TRANSIT seeks to understand how people of marginalized genders (women, girls, and LGBTQ+ community members) travel on NJ TRANSIT to provide better accommodations for customers of all genders. While marginalized genders may face common socio-economic and structural barriers regarding travel needs, each gender demographic may face their own unique challenges and ultimate solutions may be different.

According to the National Household Travel Survey, women account for 55 percent of transit riders in the United States. LA Metro's "Understanding How Women Travel" study found that women use the Metro system more. Women have different travel patterns than men and have different commute demands. Similar research by Transport for London's series of reports "Understanding the Travel Needs of London's Diverse Communities" identified differences in trip making by gender including more and shorter trips, often with children and packages, as well as personal safety concerns. The NYU's Rudin Center's "The Pink Tax on Transportation" report found that women in New York City spend an average \$26 to \$50 more on transportation per month for safety reasons, and more if they are the family's main caregiver. The study also suggests that women's experiences on transit have led them to make different transportation choices than men.

These studies have determined that women have a disproportionate burden of the household's transport needs, while at the same time having more limited access to available means of transport. Their relative need for transportation and difficulties encountered in transit use may vary across changes in age, employment status, and family responsibilities.

A full understanding of how people of all genders travel cannot be achieved without studying the LGBTQ+ communities travel patterns and experiences. A 2021 Gallup poll found that 7.1 percent of U.S. adults identify as part of the queer community and nearly 21 percent of Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2003) Americans who have reached adulthood. The proportion of U.S. adults who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community has grown at a faster pace over the past year than in prior years. A report by New Jersey's Transgender Equality Task Force noted that there is a lack of gender identity data at the local, state, and federal level. One of their recommendations is for state agencies to begin collecting data to better understand the needs of LGBTQ+ New Jerseyans. The 2015 US Transgender survey found that 34 percent of respondents had one or more negative experiences (denied equal treatment or service, verbally harassed, or physical attacked) when using public transportation where employees thought or knew they were transgender. It is also important to note, that queer and trans people face a much higher likelihood of living in poverty and are significantly more likely to live in urban spaces without basic support structures. These factors together suggest that they rely more heavily on public transportation than the general populace.

The goal for this research project is to gather and analyze gender-specific data that reflects how people of marginalized genders travel that can be incorporated into future planning and can be used to make informed decisions and recommendations.

The fundamental issues that this study aims to address through data collection and analysis include:

- To identify and understand the mobility barriers, challenges, and concerns that women, girls, and members of the LGBTQ+ community face when using NJ TRANSIT;
- To provide recommendations on changes that address the concerns, challenges, and needs of women, girls, and LGBTQ+ riders so they can be incorporated into the design of both public transport infrastructure such as bus stops, train and light rail stations, as well as rolling stock;
- To identify ways to improve safety for customers who are from marginalized genders, and;
- To improve customer-facing employee training to better understand how to serve marginalized genders without bias or discrimination and with an understanding of the unique needs of these populations.

Description of the Research

Using data from NJ TRANSIT's twice-yearly customer satisfaction surveys, from other NJ TRANSIT travel surveys, from police reports, civil rights complaints and customer service complaints an in-depth review will be conducted to better understand how people of marginalized genders travel on NJ TRANSIT's various modes of service. This review of existing NJ TRANSIT data sources will help identify the decision making that goes into how people travel, what challenges to utility, safety, and comfort they face while traveling, and their needs at NJ TRANSIT stations and onboard NJ TRANSIT.

The review of existing NJ TRANSIT research data will be supplemented with a literature review of other studies that have been conducted regarding how marginalized genders travel, extensive stakeholder outreach, including and not limited to traveler interviews, surveys, focus groups, engagement with advocacy groups and travel diaries from transit customers. This data will further be supplemented by peer research through structured interviews with staff from other transit agencies that have conducted similar research, like LA Metro and Transport for London. In the interviews, the project team will ask about how they conducted their research, how they implemented the findings to improve their transit services, and how they have measured success.

Despite the gender disparities in travel behaviors, the data and analysis that inform the most important transportation planning decisions do not take all genders into consideration. NJ TRANSIT currently has limited information on how people of different genders travel, which limits the agency's ability to inclusively address the needs of NJ TRANSIT's diverse customer base

during planning, design, and operation of our system and services. Having access to specific research data that accurately reflects how marginalized genders travel, their decision-making process, travel concerns at different points in their age, family responsibilities, and employment status, will allow NJ TRANSIT to use this data to drive the planning, design and operation of our system and the training of our customer-facing employees to have an empathetic, awareness of different customer needs and to develop more effective, integrated solutions to address the needs of current and future women, girl, and LGBTQ+ customers.

Major Tasks of the Project

Task 1 – Literature Review and Peer Agency Outreach

The Principal Investigator (PI) and the project team will review and summarize the findings from existing studies about how women, girls, and LGBTQ+ customers travel including, but not limited to:

- Rudin Center: The Pink Tax on Transportation Women’s Challenges in Mobility
- LA Metro: 2019 Understanding How Women Travel (UHWT) study
- LADOT: Changing Lanes A Gender Equity Transportation Study
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland: Traveling in a Woman’s Shoes
- Findings, when available, from the National Center for Transgender Equality 2022 US Trans Survey
- Bogota: Women and Transport in Bogota
- National Center for Transgender Equality: 2015 US Transgender Survey
- NJ Transgender Equality Task Force: Addressing Discrimination Against Transgender New Jerseyans
- Transmobilities: Mobility, harassment, and violence experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming public transit riders in Portland, Oregon
(<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1382451?journalCode=pc20>)
- Trans* Folks in Motion: Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals' Experiences of Transit and Transit Spaces
(<https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1362&context=honorstheses>)
- The State of the LGBTQ Community in 2020 from the Center for American Progress
- Research conducted for the Transportation Research Board Standing Committee AME20 – Women and Gender in Transportation

The literature review should build upon the work conducted and discussed in other studies, articles, surveys, and reports that examine how women, girls, and LGBTQ+ customers travel and provide enhanced findings relevant to New Jersey, the tri-state area, and more specifically to NJ TRANSIT. Key transit agencies should be contacted to learn more about how they collect

data, study travel by marginalized genders, how the data is used to improve their transit system and how they measure success. Examples of best practices and lessons learned should be gathered as part of the agency outreach. Deliverables: Report of the literature review and peer agency outreach findings. The report will contain an overview of the research and data gathering methodology and will contain separate sections of the findings and analyses by each demographic group.

Task 2 – Review and Analysis of NJ TRANSIT data and other data sources

In this task, existing data sources will be reviewed and analyzed. NJ TRANSIT's most recent Customer Satisfaction Surveys, COVID Travel surveys, Origin-Destination surveys, and other data will be reviewed and analyzed to identify travel behavior trends about how women, girls, and the LGBTQ+ community travel on NJ TRANSIT. Civil Rights complaints, crime reports, and complaints filed with our Customer Service department will also be reviewed to identify issues, trends, and other emerging themes. Data from the American Community Survey, the National Household Survey and other U.S. Census data sources will also be reviewed in the context of how people travel and identify trends for comparison to NJ TRANSIT data. Prior to the data review, an NJ TRANSIT Steering Committee will be established to guide this task and identify data that should be reviewed and to also guide and provide input on subsequent tasks. The Steering Committee may include a representative from each of the NJ TRANSIT Company Employee Resource Groups (CERGs) that represent women, known as EmpoWer, and the LGBTQ+ community, known as Ride with Pride, staff from the operating groups, customer service, communications, planning, civil rights, the Police, capital programs, etc.

NJ TRANSIT will take the lead on analyzing data from recent Customer Satisfaction Surveys, COVID Travel Surveys, Origin-Destination surveys, civil rights complaints, crime reports filed with the NJT Police and complaints filed with the NJT Customer Service department and will share the findings with the project team. The Principal Investigator and project team will lead the review of American Community Survey, National Household Survey and US Census data and other data sources.

Deliverables: Creation of an NJ TRANSIT Steering Committee to guide this task and subsequent tasks. Like the deliverable for Task 1, the report will contain an overview of the research and data gathering methodology and will contain separate sections of findings and data analysis for each demographic group.

Task 3 – Focus Groups, Travel Survey, Public Outreach and Engagement with Stakeholder Groups

Two sets of focus groups will be conducted with women and LGBTQ+ customers in the northern and southern parts of New Jersey (or virtually, if COVID restrictions are in place or the project team feels a virtual focus group would be most successful). Every effort will be made to ensure that the customers selected for focus groups provide a diverse representation of NJ TRANSIT customer base, including diversity of age, race, ethnicity, income, sexual orientation, spoken languages, nation of origin, and use of NJ TRANSIT services. NJ TRANSIT will assist with

the recruitment process. NJ TRANSIT can also provide focus group space at our Headquarters Office space in Newark and possibly space in a South Jersey location. Separate groups will be held to allow for discussion of sensitive topics such as safety, sexual harassment, etc. Similar questions will be asked of each group to identify where the groups had similar or different points of view about how they travel or don't travel using NJ TRANSIT. Topics will include (but are not limited to): mode choice decisions, first experiences on transit, overall trip making and trip chaining patterns, transit use with others including children, safety, and security, etc.

Based on the findings from the focus groups, the literature review in Task 1, and the data review in Task 2, a targeted survey will be developed and administered to gather additional data specific to this research effort. The PI and project team will work closely with the Steering Committee to develop the research objectives, questions for the survey and the best way to administer the survey. The survey data will be analyzed, and a technical report of the findings will be developed.

The project team will also work with NJ TRANSIT to identify several community-based organizations (CBOs) that focus on women and families and/or the LGBTQ+ community. Priority will be given to CBOs that serve hard-to-reach populations (non-English speaking, low-English proficiency, not technologically inclined, and others) of women and families and LGBTQ+ community members. The project team, with assistance from NJ TRANSIT, will conduct participatory workshops at the CBOs that are selected. The CBOs should be geographically dispersed throughout the state and language translation and interpretation services should be provided, as needed, by the project team. The workshops should be scheduled at times that are most convenient to participants and should also include activities for children to encourage participation from individuals caring for children. The project team will develop a draft discussion guide and workshop activities for review and approval by NJ TRANSIT.

Several pop-up engagement events should be convened at key transit hubs and at key events (like NJ's Annual LGBTQ Pride Celebration in Asbury Park) throughout the state to gather additional information from customers to increase opportunities for stakeholder feedback. The project team should also engage the NJ TRANSIT CERGs EmpoWer and Ride with Pride to guide and support the outreach activities. Deliverables: Survey instrument, survey data and a summary of the survey findings. Focus groups, workshops, pop-up events and associated outreach guides and discussion guides. Summary of the findings from each event and overall findings for each demographic group. NJ TRANSIT can also cover the cost for Focus Group participant honorariums and survey incentives.

Task 4 – Travel Diaries

Customers from marginalized genders will be recruited to complete a travel diary that will be used to gather additional data about their travel experience on NJ TRANSIT. The travel diary will be designed to fill the qualitative and quantitative gaps that were not covered in other

project tasks and to gather additional data on the key areas of focus that emerge from the prior work.

The project team will work with NJ TRANSIT to recruit participants to complete a week-long Travel Diary documenting their travel experience on NJ TRANSIT. The project team will develop a travel diary form for capturing trip experience information and general trip characteristics (date, time, weather conditions, travel mode(s), trip purpose, origin/destination, access modes to/from transit etc.). The form will also be designed to capture data on each customer's full journey on NJ TRANSIT from leaving their origin point to reaching their final destination. Aspects of the journey may include their experience traveling to/from NJ TRANSIT stations/stops, purchasing their ticket or pass, waiting at the station/stop for NJ TRANSIT to arrive, interactions with operators/conductors and other NJ TRANSIT employees, interactions with other customers, seating choice, whether they were traveling alone or with others, onboard, exiting transit vehicles, transferring to another transit vehicle (if applicable), traveling from their alighting stop/station to their final destination, and other trip characteristics and observations. The travel diary will be developed by the team and used to identify behavioral patterns and preferences that survey data may not reveal. This data may be helpful to identify vehicle and station/stop design recommendations, operator and employee training guidance and other changes that could improve the transit experience for all customers. Deliverables: Survey and observations methodology documents, draft and final travel survey questionnaires, draft, and final observations forms. Report summarizing the survey and observational findings by each demographic group. NJ TRANSIT can cover the cost for incentives for Travel Diary participants.

Task 5 – Analysis and Study Findings/Draft Recommendations

The information gathered in the previous tasks will be analyzed and summarized in a visually appealing fashion using charts, graphs, photos, quotes, and other tools to share the mobility barriers and challenges and to tell the story of travel among women, girls, and the LGBTQ+ community. The draft report will include a preliminary list of "areas for improvements" and recommendations developed from the findings. Improvement areas could include planning, operations, design, safety, training, policy, or other types of improvements. Where possible, examples of where the recommendations have been successfully implemented by other transit agencies and any "best practices" should be included. Deliverables: Draft recommendations and draft report.

Task 6 – Final Report

NJ TRANSIT will review the preliminary recommendations and draft report and provide comments for incorporation into the final report. The PI and project team will also develop a PowerPoint presentation of the findings. The findings will be shared with NJ TRANSIT senior management and operating groups, planning, and design staff, the Empower and Ride with Pride CERGs and other key NJ TRANSIT stakeholders. The findings may also be shared externally at technology sharing events or via transportation-related conferences, webinars, etc.

Deliverables: Final recommendations by different demographics, a comprehensive report, an organized and complete set of all the data collected throughout the project, and a PowerPoint presentation.