HAVE WE REACHED PEAK TRAVEL AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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SEVERAL INDICATORS OF TRAVEL DEMAND IN THE U.S. HAVE PEAKED IN THE PAST YEARS:

IN ABSOLUTE TERMS...

...and in relative terms, for vehicles...

- **Vehicles per household**: peaked at 2.05 (2001, 2006)
- **Vehicles per licensed driver**: 1.16 (2001, 2006)
- **Vehicles per person**: 0.79 (2006)

...and miles driven

Peak in Average Miles Driven (per person, per driver, per vehicle, per household) in 2004

[Source: Re-created from Sivak (2014), based on FHWA data]
WHY ARE WE SEEING THESE TRENDS?

1. The recession?
   - The peaks occurred before the recession – but have certainly been sharpened by it

2. Increased reliance of Millennials (and others) on communications technology
   - Most evidence suggests that the net impact of technology is to increase travel...

3. Demographic changes?
   - Some “drivers” may have naturally plateaued (women driving/entering workforce)
   - Others have in any case changed (delayed/declined marriage, childbearing; aging population)

4. Other:
   - Increases in the cost of travel (gas prices, increasing congestion)
   - Slowdown in urban sprawl
   - Generational changes in travel attitudes and behavior (e.g. growth of “urban” lifestyles, sharing economy, environmental concern, less attachment to cars)

WILL THESE TRENDS CONTINUE?

- It depends!
  - They are the result of multiple influences, operating in counteracting directions
  - A prospering economy has historically been associated with more travel
    - and recent travel trends show an uptick as the economy improves
  - But if the costs of travel rise, travel will decline
  - Will attitudes change as
    - Millennials marry and have children?
    - Retiring Boomers are replaced by immigrants?

WHAT IF THEY DO?

- Profound implications for
  - Transportation finance (falling gas tax and toll revenues)
  - Infrastructure needs
  - Automobile and associated industries

ADDITIONAL STUDIES FROM NCST

- National Center for Sustainable Transportation work in progress:
  - White paper on future passenger travel demand in the U.S.
  - New survey of travel-related attitudes and behavior of Gen Y (Millennials, ages 18-30)

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