Thesis Title: EQUITY OF TRANSIT IN THE TWIN CITIES: A BENEFIT-BASED STUDY OF THE RACIAL EQUITY OF ACCESS TO TRANSIT
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Abstract:

With many cities in the United States building new transit lines and expanding existing transit services there is no clear understanding of whom the new transit is being built to serve, whether the new services will be equitable to all racial and ethnic groups, and the impact it will have on potentially transit dependent populations. Through an analysis of the residential proximity to transit, the differences in the racial demographics served, and the frequency of transit service at each transit stop, this study focuses on understanding the unequal distribution of travel opportunity in the Twin Cities while reframing the debate on transportation planning and the creation of new transit lines beyond an analysis of service areas and economic benefits into understanding benefit-based claims of racial and ethnic inequality. This study looks at the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota where a significant investment in new transit services has occurred over the last several decades, as they built a new light rail and streetcar system, which is currently in the planning and construction phases for expansion. This study asks how equitable is the existing services towards all racial groups in the region, and whether the currently planned transit improvements represent a move towards equity. By conducting an analysis of the unequal distribution of travel opportunity in the Twin Cities we have been able to expand our understanding of the issues, and formulate specific recommendations to reduce both the benefit-based inequity as well as the procedural-based inequity found in the Twin Cities.