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THE 2010 URBAN MOBILITY REPORT REMAINS A FLAWED AND MISLEADING GUIDE TO URBAN TRANSPORTATION

Chicago, January 20, 2011 – The 2010 Urban Mobility Report released today by the Texas Transportation Institute does nothing to correct the problems identified in an independent analysis of the report released last year by Joe Cortright for CEOs for Cities. It continues to present an exaggerated and incorrect picture of the extent and causes of urban transportation problems and their solutions and fails to recognize the major contribution land use makes to time spent in traffic.

A detailed critique of the methodology and results of previous Urban Mobility Reports by CEOs for Cities released last October identified a series of flaws in the data and analysis in the UMR and outlined a series of improvements and alternative measures that can be used to assess urban transportation systems. (You can download a full copy of the critique, titled *Driven Apart*, at http://www.ceosforcities.org/work/driven-apart.)

A first review of the 2010 UMR reveals the following concerns about its accuracy and usefulness:

- Continues to rely on the Travel Time Index, which is built on the unrealistic baseline assumption that travel times should (and could) be no longer during peak periods as during non-peak periods and obscures the effect of land use patterns in creating longer travel distances.

- Eliminates references to a misinterpreted 1981 study of fuel economy that was the basis of earlier fuel consumption estimates, but doesn't explain how new numbers are generated and doesn't allow for the fact that some speed reductions associated with traffic actually lower fuel consumption.

- Replaces its inaccurate, model-based estimates of traffic levels with real world data from INRIX, but continues to rely on inaccurate speed volume models and has not corrected earlier over-estimated traffic congestion and associated economic costs.

Summary of Problems with the 2010 UMR

Problem Identified in *Driven Apart*	**UMR Change**	**Analysis**
Previous UMRs are based on a traffic model that overestimates congestion and travel times	The 2010 UMR adopts travel time data from INRIX, but apparently still uses the same travel speed model. (See UMR, page 59, references 7 and 11)	The 2010 UMR continues to greatly overstate traffic congestion
Fuel cost estimates are based on the misapplication of a 1980 study of low speed fuel economy	The 2010 UMR deletes the reference to the 1981 study.	The UMR now claims even higher fuel waste associated with congestion but provides no details as to how these estimates were produced.
The Travel Time Index conceals the effects of sprawl and trip distances on peak commute times	A working paper by the Texas Transportation Institute referenced in the 2010 UMR acknowledges that trip distances are an issue, but the UMR continues to use the Travel Time Index with no adjustments for distance.	Sprawling development, not traffic delays is the principal source of variations in travel time differences among metropolitan areas.
The Travel Time Index uses an unrealistic baseline of zero delay in peak hours	No change from earlier UMR reports	The "zero delay" baseline exaggerates the real world cost of congestion.

Most importantly, by ignoring – and thereby concealing – the effects of longer travel distances in some cities, the UMR continues to get the ranking of cities with the worst travel problems wrong.

For example, consider Nashville and Portland. According to the UMR, Portland has a worse traffic problem than Nashville, with a Travel Time Index of 1.23. and 36 hours of delay per year per traveler, compared to Nashville, which has a Travel Time Index of 1.15 and 35 hours of delay. But these data also mean that the average peak traveler in Nashville has to spend a total of 268 hours per year commuting compared to the commuter in Portland who travels only 193 hours per year. So the commuter in Portland travels 75 fewer hours annually because of shorter travel distance, due in large part to less sprawling development patterns.[1]

[1] The travel time index is the ratio of congested travel time to uncongested travel time. The Urban Mobility Report spreadsheet does not report total hours of travel, but it is possible to use the Travel Time Index and the reported delay values to compute average free flow hours of peak travel. In the case of Portland, if the 36 hours of congestion-related delay are equal to 17 percent of uncongested travel time, then free flow travel time is 157 hours, and delay is 36 hours, for a total travel time of 193 hours. This is computed as follows:

Un-congested Hours = Annual Hours of Delay / (Travel Time Index -1)
= 36 / 1.23 -1
= 36 / .23
= 157 uncongested hours

Consistent with conclusions presented in *Driven Apart*, the UMR completely misses the importance of land use planning as a key to reducing the burden of peak period travel.

The Texas Transportation Institute has not yet released the documents showing its methodology of the 2010 UMR. Nothing in the publicly released report indicates that the authors have rectified the problems identified in *Driven Apart*.

CEOs for Cities will continue to examine the Urban Mobility Report and its supporting material; we will report our findings at www.ceosforcities.org.

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CEOs for Cities is a civic lab of today's urban leaders catalyzing a movement to advance the next generation of great American cities. Joe Cortright is senior policy advisor to CEOs for Cities and lead author of Driven Apart: How sprawl is lengthening our commutes and why misleading mobility measures are making things worse. Driven Apart *was generously supported by The Rockefeller Foundation.*

Because total hours of peak travel per person is the sum of free flow travel time plus delay, the peak travel time in Portland per traveler was:

36 + 157 = 193 total hours of peak period travel per person per year

Algebraically, this formula simplifies as follows:

Travel Hours = TTI/(TTI-1)*Hours of Delay/Traveler