

# ANALYSIS BRIEF

## SHORT TRIPS



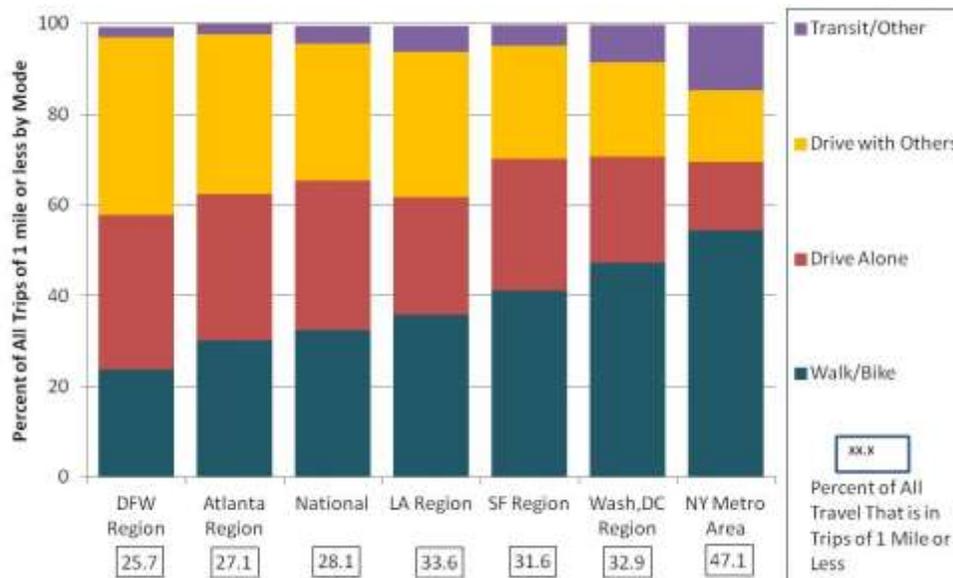
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People interested in decreasing the negative aspects of auto use wonder whether some (or most) of the shortest trips that people make could be shifted to walk or bike. This brief explores the characteristics of trips 1 mile or less in distance. In the 2009 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) 28 percent of all daily travel is reported in trips less than one mile in length. It surprises people that most of these short trips are in private vehicles--over 60 percent of trips one mile or shorter are in private vehicles and only 29 percent are by walking and biking.

The proportion and characteristics of these short trips varies between different areas. For example, overall people in the State of California walk more than people in other parts of the country, and they also walk more often for these very short trips. In the data for California (CA-NHTS), just over 1/3 of all (33.9 percent) reported trips are less than one mile in length, with 58 percent reported as vehicle trips and 37 percent reported as walking or bicycle trips.

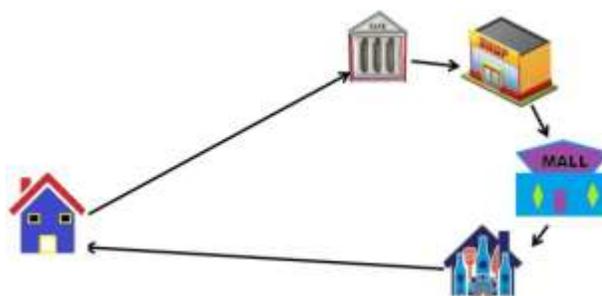
Metro areas around the country have different percentages of short trips and different levels of walking and biking for those short trips, as shown in Figure 1. For example, people in the Dallas-Fort Worth region report that 25.7 percent of all daily travel is in trips of one mile or less, and that they walk or bike for less than ¼ of these short trips. At the other end of the spectrum, people in the New York Metro Region (NYMTC) report that a little less than half—47.1 percent—of their daily travel is in trips of one mile or less, and that they walk or bike for over half of these short trips. In the middle is Southern California (the Los Angeles 6-county planning region) where 33.6 percent of all daily travel is reported in trips of 1 mile or less in distance and just over one-third of these are by walking or bicycling.

Figure 1 – Percent of Trips That Are One Mile or Less by Mode and Percent (in boxes) of All Reported Travel in Short Trips of 1 Mile or Less



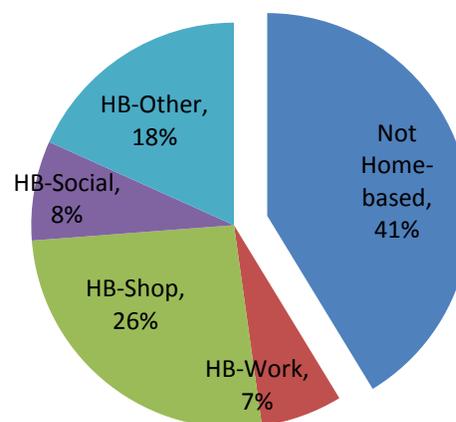
It is important to keep in mind how a trip is defined: the NHTS collects trips as distinct segments, that is, any movement from one address to another. In practice trip segments are combined into tours: Figure 2 illustrates a tour that has a number of short trip segments anchored by a longer trip from home.

Figure 2 – Example of Short Trips in a Tour



In the 2009 NHTS, 41 percent of vehicle trips 1 mile or less in length are in tours with neither end at home (not home-based). The other 59 percent are vehicle trips that begin at home, go directly to one destination, and return home (home-based trips). Figure 3 shows the proportion of trips one mile or less in distance that are reported as vehicle trips by general purpose. Shopping and errands (home-based shop and home-based other) are the two most frequent reasons for short vehicle trips.

Figure 3 – The Purpose of Vehicle Trips that are 1 mile or Less in Distance



Although not everyone can shift these short vehicle trips to walking or biking, more can be done to address the barriers people face in their communities. For example, over one-third of those people (ages 16 and older) who reported driving for a short home-based trip expressed concerns about the safety of travel, compared to a quarter of people who walked or biked, and drivers on short trips also noted the absence of sidewalks and walkways in their areas.

The NHTS data shows that when destinations and activities, like shops and restaurants, are close by people will walk to get there. People in very dense urban areas are more than 30 percent more likely to take a walk on any given day, 70 percent more likely to walk to work, and 1.3 times as likely to walk for shopping and other purposes.

Communities encourage walking by developing commercial areas where people park their car and walk to shops and services. Planners can help identify hazards and complete the streets to make all users feel safe while walking and biking. Advocates can encourage people to walk and bike for short trips through public education campaigns, and policy makers can help develop performance measures to encourage more walking and biking.

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