ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: More students, more parking: Transportation at community colleges

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Community colleges are experiencing rapid growth and expansion as more jobs require an education beyond a high school diploma. Community colleges are commuter schools, with students using their automobiles. Increased automobile commuting is bad for the environment, requires additional, expensive, parking, and the increased congestion can strain the town-gown relationship. Many four-year higher education institutions have implemented policies, known as transportation demand management (TDM), to promote sustainable transportation by essentially providing alternatives to automobile commuting. Two forces provide an incentive towards implementing sustainable transportation policies: strained finances and enrollment growth. The purpose of the paper is to examine the existing polices and plans of six community colleges in three states experiencing high enrollment growth: Virginia, Illinois, and Chicago. The results indicate that while sustainability is a popular topic, sustainable transportation is not. Organized and effective sustainable transportation will require some adjustment for the campus community; it is not low-hanging fruit. The political backlash of attempting to affect commuter behavior is one possible reason for the reluctance to enact significant transportation policy changes. Research indicates that extensive sustainable transportation policies are possible, as shown by the experiences of Delta Community College. All a community college needs is good leadership, good organization, and the political will to institute change necessary to provide a more sustainable campus for their students, staff, and faculty.