

Transportation Needs of Service Sector Employees in the Resort Corridor

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About the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center

The Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center (UTC) is the Region 9 University Transportation Center funded under the US Department of Transportation's University Transportation Centers Program. Established in 2016, the Pacific Southwest Region UTC (PSR) is led by the University of Southern California and includes seven partners: Long Beach State University; University of California, Davis; University of California, Irvine; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Hawaii; Northern Arizona University; Pima Community College.

The Pacific Southwest Region UTC conducts an integrated, multidisciplinary program of research, education and technology transfer aimed at *improving the mobility of people and goods throughout the region*. Our program is organized around four themes: 1) technology to address transportation problems and improve mobility; 2) improving mobility for vulnerable populations; 3) Improving resilience and protecting the environment; and 4) managing mobility in high growth areas.

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Disclosure

Principal Investigator, Dr. Mehmet Erdem and Co-Principal Investigator, Dr. Shashi Nambisan conducted this research titled, "Transportation Needs of Service Sector Employees in the Resort Corridor" at College Hospitality and College of Engineering, University of Nevada Las Vegas. The research took place from November 2023 to August 2026 and was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in the amount of \$78,060. The research was conducted as part of the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center research program.

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Abstract

This study examines the determinants of commute-related stress by integrating behavioral and situational perspectives within Las Vegas contexts. Grounded in the spillover theory, this study conceptualizes commuting stress as a cross-domain process in which strain generated during commuting extends into broader psychological outcomes. Employing an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model, this study identifies the key components associated with commuting stress using survey data from 1,224 union workers in the Strip Corridor in Las Vegas. Findings reveal that experiential and situational factors play a dominant role in shaping stress perceptions. Specifically, traffic disruptions and behavioral adaptations (e.g., leaving earlier) emerge as the most significant predictors, followed by travel time, whereas commuting frequency and travel distance exhibit no significant effects. These results provide actionable insights for hospitality operators, transportation planners, and policymakers.

Transportation Needs of Service Sector Employees in the Resort Corridor

Executive Summary

This study examines the determinants of commute-related stress by integrating behavioral and situational perspectives within Las Vegas contexts. Grounded in the spillover theory, this study conceptualizes commuting stress as a cross-domain process in which strain generated during commuting extends into broader psychological outcomes. The research aimed to answer two key questions:

- RQ1: What are the situational factors associated with hospitality employees' commuting stress?
- RQ2: What are the behavioral factors associated with hospitality employees' commuting stress?

Employing an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model, this study identifies the key components associated with commuting stress using survey data from 1,224 union workers in the Strip Corridor in Las Vegas. Findings reveal that experiential and situational factors play a dominant role in shaping stress perceptions. Specifically, traffic disruptions and behavioral adaptations (e.g., leaving earlier) emerge as the most significant predictors, followed by travel time. In contrast, commuting frequency and travel distance exhibit no significant effects which contradict traditional transportation which emphasize these as primary determinants of commuter outcomes.

These findings provide actionable insights for hospitality operators, transportation planners, and policymakers. Suggestions for hospitality operators include:

- Providing flexible scheduling to align with more stable traffic conditions.
- Integrating real-time traffic intelligence into internal work systems for institutionalized support mechanisms.
- Develop partnerships with local transportation providers such as employer-sponsored shuttle service, coordinates carpool systems, and local transit options.
- Minimize commute stress spillover with flexible grace periods and designated decompression spaces.

Suggestions for transportation planners include:

- Shift from capacity expansion to reliability by improving consistency and predictability of travel.
- Develop targeted solutions to address event-driven disruptions.
- Work with employers to develop synchronized commuting strategies.

Suggestions for policymakers include:

- Adapt transportation performance measures to emphasize travel-time reliability and perceived predictability along with well-being considerations.
- Invest in technologies and practices, such as AI, to promote system-level coordination and reduce individual compensatory actions.

This project has resulted in three publications:

- Erdem, M., Nambisan, S., Moon, J., Bai, B., Byzyka, J., Werner, W.B., & Khan, B. (2026, July 16). Transportation needs and commuting stress among hospitality employees: A perspective from the Las Vegas Corridor [Conference session]. 2026 International Federation of Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (I-CHRIE), Las Vegas, NV, USA.
- Erdem, M., Nambisan, S., Moon, J., Bai, B., Byzaka, J., Werner, W., & Khan, B. (2026). Transportation Needs and Commuting Stress Among Hospitality Employees: A Perspective from the Las Vegas Strip Corridor. ICHRIE Research Reports, 11(4), 3.
- Nambisan S., Byzyka, J., Erdem, M., Bai, B., Koneti, S., Moon, J., Werner, W.B., & Khan, B. (2025, Dec. 19). Transportation needs of service sector employees: A case study in Las Vegas, Nevada, in the U.S. [Conference session]. 8th Conference of the Transportation Research Group in India (CTRG 2025), Guwahati, Assam, India.

Introduction

Transportation systems play a foundational role in shaping not only mobility patterns but also employees' psychological well-being (Liu et al., 2024; Zijlstra & Verhetsel, 2021). In service-intensive urban economies such as Las Vegas, where the hospitality and tourism sector dominates employment structures, commuting experiences represent a critical factor for workforce sustainability (Duncan et al., 2013; Li et al., 2021). Employees working in the Strip Corridor are exposed to unique commuting conditions characterized by high congestion, temporal variability, and event-driven disruptions, all of which cause substantial uncertainty in daily travel experiences.

Despite extensive research on commuting, prior studies have predominantly focused on structural determinants such as travel time, distance, and modal choice (Handy & Thigpen, 2019; Zhu et al., 2025). While these factors provide valuable insights into transportation efficiency, they offer a limited understanding of how commuting conditions translate into psychological strain. In particular, existing research largely treats commuting as an isolation domain, neglecting how stress generated during commuting may extend into other areas of individuals' lives.

Drawing upon the spillover theory (Wilensky, 1960), which posits that experiences in one domain can transfer into another, this study argues that commuting stress could be conceptualized as a cross-domain phenomenon. Specifically, repeated exposure to unpredictable and demanding commuting conditions can deplete individuals' cognitive and emotional resources, thereby influencing their well-being in subsequent domains, including the workplace (Chatterjee et al., 2020; Ditmore et al., 2018). From this perspective, commuting is not merely a logistical activity but a critical antecedent of broader psychological outcomes (Pindek et al., 2023).

Accordingly, this study advances a behavioral-situational framework grounded in the spillover theory, emphasizing how variability and adaptive responses within the commuting domain generate strain that may extend beyond the commute per se. By doing so, this research shifts the analytical focus from infrastructure-centric determinants to experience-based and resource-based mechanisms, providing a more comprehensive understanding of commute-related stress.

Consequently, this work aims to answer the following key questions:

- RQ1: What are the situational factors associated with hospitality employees' commuting stress?
- RQ2: What are the behavioral factors associated with hospitality employees' commuting stress?

Spillover Theory and Commuting Stress

The spillover theory provides a suitable lens for comprehending how experiences in one domain influence outcomes in another (Danna et al., 2023). More specifically, this theory postulates that stress, emotions, and resource depletion generated in one context transfer across domains, thereby shaping individuals' overall well-being and functioning (Abdou et al., 2024). In the context of commuting, this perspective suggests that the psychological strain experienced during travel will not remain confined to the commuting domain but instead carries over into subsequent activities, including work (Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024).

Within this framework, commuting stress can be conceptualized as a resource-depleting process. Situational variability—such as traffic disruptions and unpredictable travel conditions—imposes cognitive demands that require continuous monitoring and adjustment (De Reuver & Biron, 2024). In response, individuals engage in behavioral adaptation strategies, such as leaving earlier or modifying routines, in an attempt to regain control. While these strategies may reduce uncertainty, they will simultaneously consume temporal and psychological resources, leading to cumulative strain.

This dynamic reflects a key mechanism of spillover. Employees who expend significant cognitive and temporal resources managing their commute may arrive at work with reduced capacity for attention, emotional regulation, and task performance (Sandow, 2014). In service contexts, emotional labor and customer interaction are critical; thus, such spillover effects can have direct implications for service quality and organizational outcomes (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023). Accordingly, addressing commute-related stress represents an essential managerial and operational priority within hospitality settings.

Consequently, a nuanced understanding of the antecedents of such stress is essential for developing targeted and context-sensitive interventions. By integrating situational variability and behavioral adaptation within the spillover framework, this study postulates commuting stress as an emergent and dynamic process. Specifically, it posits that external uncertainties and internal coping responses interact to produce cross-domain strain, which ultimately may influence employees' workplace functioning and service delivery performance.

Methodology

This study sample comprised unionized employees working within the Strip Corridor in Las Vegas. Data collection was conducted between March 25 and April 25, 2025, during which a total of 1,700 responses were obtained. A self-administered questionnaire was developed and administered via Qualtrics to capture both structural and experiential dimensions of commuting, as well as perceived commuting-related stress.

The antecedents of commuting stress—namely commuting frequency, travel distance, travel time, behavioral adaptation, and perceived traffic disruptions—were operationalized as categorical variables in accordance with the measurement framework. Commuting stress ($\alpha = .843$) was conceptualized as a latent construct and measured using three items on a 7-point Likert scale: (1) “I am stressed about my commute to/from work,” (2) “I worry about traffic accidents making me late to/from work,” and (3) “Large special events (e.g., football games, concerts, sporting and entertainment events, etc.) adversely impact my commute to work causing stress.”

Following data screening procedures, 1,224 complete and valid responses were retained for subsequent analysis. The analytical strategy involved descriptive statistics to profile the sample and key variables, followed by ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis conducted in R to examine the relationships between commuting characteristics and perceived stress.

Findings

Sample Profile

As depicted in Table 1, the sample was relatively balanced by gender, with males representing 45.6% and females 51.8% of respondents. The largest age group was 28-43 years (41.1%), followed by 18-27 years (34.4%), indicating a predominantly working-age population. Ethnic composition was diverse, with White (38.6%), Asian (22.5%), and Black (16.2%).

Regarding travel mode, the majority of participants relied on private motor transportation (41.8%), followed by public transport (31.1%). In terms of work shift, the largest shift group was the AM shift (49.2%), followed by the PM shift (20.3%), the night shift (15.3%), and the mixed/irregular shift (15.3%). Finally, most respondents were employed full-time (73.8%).

Table 1: Profile of questionnaire respondents (N=1,224)

Characteristics	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	558	45.6
	Female	634	51.8
	Other	32	2.6
Age	18-27	421	34.4
	28-43	503	41.1
	44-59	198	16.2
	60-78	76	6.2
	79+	9	0.7
Ethnicity	Prefer not to answer	17	1.4
	White	472	38.6
	American Indian	21	1.7
	Black	198	16.2
	Pacific Islander	14	1.1
	Asian	276	22.5
	Latino	183	15.0
	Other	39	3.2
Travel Mode	Prefer not to answer	21	1.7
	Private Motor	512	41.8
	Multi-mode	218	17.8
	Public Transport	381	31.1
	Ride Sharing	113	9.2
Work Shift	AM Shift	602	49.2
	PM Shift	248	20.3
	Night Shift	187	15.3
	Mixed/Irregular	187	15.3
Employment Type	Full-Time	903	73.8
	Part-Time	221	18.1
	On-Call	100	8.2

Regression Results and Relative Importance of Predictors

The OLS regression results revealed a clear and meaningful pattern in which experiential and behavioral variables exert a significantly stronger influence on commuting stress than structural variables (see Table 2). The model is statistically significant, with an F-statistic of 37.220 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the set of predictors collectively explains variation in the dependent variable beyond what would be expected by chance.

Table 2: OLS Regression Results

Variable	β	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Intercept	3.631	12.127	<.001	[3.043, 4.218]
Frequency	-0.051	-0.971	0.332	[-0.154, 0.052]
Travel Time	0.198	2.637	0.008	[0.051, 0.345]
Distance	-0.012	-0.345	0.730	[-0.077, 0.054]
Behavioral Adaptation	0.324	9.025	<.001	[0.254, 0.395]
Traffic Disruptions	0.186	5.178	<.001	[0.116, 0.257]

Note: $R^2 = 0.133$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.129$, F-statistic = 37.220 ($p < .001$)

Specifically, the coefficient estimates provide further insight into the relative importance of each predictor. *Behavioral Adaptation* emerges as the most influential determinant ($\beta = 0.324$, $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that individuals who engage more intensively in adaptive behaviors (i.e., leaving earlier) experience higher levels of commuting stress. Importantly, this finding challenges the conventional assumption that such behaviors are purely beneficial coping strategies. Instead, it indicates that behavioral adaptation may function as a double-edged mechanism, simultaneously mitigating uncertainty while increasing cognitive and temporal burdens.

Perceived *Traffic Disruptions* also exhibit a strong positive effect ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the central role of situational variability in stress formation. This result underscores the importance of unpredictability as a key driver of psychological strain. Unlike predictable congestion, which can be anticipated and incorporated into daily routines, disruptions introduce an element of uncertainty that requires continuous monitoring and adjustment. This aligns with broader psychological literature suggesting that uncertainty is more stressful than stable adverse conditions.

Travel Time is also statistically significant ($\beta = 0.198$, $p < 0.008$), despite a smaller effect size compared to behavioral adaptation. This indicates that longer commutes contribute to stress, but their impact is less pronounced than that of variability and adaptive behavior. This distinction is critical, as it suggests that policies aimed solely at reducing average travel time may have limited effectiveness if variability remains unaddressed.

In contrast, commuting *Frequency* and travel *Distance* do not exhibit statistically significant effects. This finding is particularly noteworthy, as it directly contradicts traditional transportation models that emphasize these variables as primary determinants of commuter outcomes. The lack of significance suggests that the mere repetition or spatial extent of commuting does not inherently generate stress, provided that the experience remains predictable and manageable.

The model explains approximately 13.3% of the variance in commuting stress, which is consistent with expectations for behavioral research involving complex psychological outcomes. While the explanatory

power is moderate, the theoretical coherence of the results indicates that the included variables capture critical mechanisms underlying stress formation. To sum up, the findings support a process-based interpretation in which commuting stress emerges from the continuous interaction between external variability and internal adaptation.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer nuanced and multi-level implications for hospitality operators, transportation planners, and policymakers, particularly within service-intensive urban environments such as Las Vegas. As illustrated in Figure 1, moving beyond conventional infrastructure-centric approaches, the results emphasize the importance of managing temporal variability, behavioral burden, and experiential uncertainty as central determinants of commute-related stress.



Figure 1: Summary of practical takeaways

Implications for Hospitality Operators

Mitigating Behavioral Burden through Flexible Work Design

The strong effect of behavioral adaptation indicates that employees are actively modifying their routines to cope with commuting uncertainty. This pattern suggests that the burden of systemic inefficiencies is being internalized at the individual level, potentially resulting in cumulative fatigue and reduced psychological well-being. To address this issue, hospitality operators are recommended to adopt flexible scheduling mechanisms, including staggered shifts, adjustable start times, and compressed workweeks where operationally feasible. Such practices enable organizations to align work schedules with more

stable traffic conditions, thereby reducing employees' reliance on costly anticipatory behaviors and enhancing perceived control over commuting experiences.

Reducing Uncertainty via Real-Time Information Integration

The significant influence of traffic disruptions highlights the critical role of information support in shaping commuting experiences. In this regard, hospitality organizations can play a proactive role by providing employees with real-time traffic intelligence, including predictive commute dashboards, congestion alerts, and route optimization tools. More importantly, embedding such information within internal systems, such as employee portals or shift management platforms, can institutionalize support mechanisms. This integration reduces informational asymmetry, facilitates proactive decision-making, and mitigates stress arising from uncertainty.

Enhancing Predictability through Transportation Partnerships

The findings revealed that commuting stress is driven more by temporal unpredictability than by absolute distance. Consequently, reducing variability—rather than merely shortening travel distance—becomes a more effective intervention strategy. Hospitality operators, particularly large-scale resorts and casino complexes, can collaborate with transportation providers to establish structured commuting solutions, such as employer-sponsored shuttle services, coordinated carpool systems, and partnerships with local transit agencies. These initiatives transform commuting from an uncertain experience into a more predictable and systematized process.

Managing Spillover Effects into Workplace Outcomes

The observed linkage between behavioral adaptation and commuting stress underscores the presence of spillover effects, wherein strain experienced during commuting transfers into workplace domains. In service contexts, such spillovers can adversely affect emotional labor, service quality, and employee engagement. To mitigate these effects, organizations should implement buffer-oriented human resource practices, such as flexible grace periods during high-disruption periods and designated decompression spaces. These interventions acknowledge the psychological carryover of commuting stress and help prevent its translation into diminished service performance.

Implications for Transportation Planners

Shifting from Capacity Expansion to Reliability Management

The dominance of behavioral adaptation as a predictor of commuting stress suggests that commuters are compensating for systemic unreliability. This indicates that the transportation system effectively transfers the burden of reliability onto individuals. Transportation planners should therefore prioritize reliability-centered interventions, including AI-based real-time traffic monitoring, predictive congestion modeling, and dynamic routing systems. By improving the consistency and predictability of travel conditions, such measures can reduce the need for widespread compensatory behaviors.

Addressing Event-Driven and Non-Recurring Congestion

The significant role of traffic disruptions further highlights the importance of managing non-recurring congestion, particularly in event-driven environments such as the Las Vegas Strip. Traditional infrastructure expansion strategies are insufficient to address such variability. Instead, planners should adopt targeted solutions, including event-specific traffic coordination, adaptive signal control systems,

and integrated corridor management. These approaches aim to stabilize traffic flow during peak variability periods, thereby enhancing predictability rather than merely increasing throughput.

Integrating Workplace Dynamics into Transportation Planning

The findings indicate that commuting experiences are closely intertwined with workplace structures, particularly in industries characterized by shift-based labor. As such, transportation planning should not operate in isolation but rather in coordination with organizational practices. Planners should collaborate with major employers to develop synchronized commuting strategies, such as aligning transit schedules with shift patterns and supporting employer-based mobility programs. This integrated approach reduces temporal mismatches and enhances overall system efficiency.

Implications for Policymakers

Reframing Performance Metrics toward Experience-Based Indicators

The non-significance of commuting distance and frequency challenges traditional transportation metrics, suggesting that these indicators fail to capture the experiential dimensions of commuting. Policymakers thus should shift toward experience-based performance measures, such as travel time reliability, variability indices, and perceived predictability. Incorporating these indicators into policy evaluation frameworks enables a more accurate and user-centered assessment of transportation systems.

Prioritizing Psychological Well-Being in Transportation Policy

The findings underscore that commuting is not merely a logistical activity but also a psychological experience shaped by uncertainty and perceived control. Accordingly, transportation policy should extend beyond efficiency-oriented objectives to include well-being considerations, emphasizing stability, predictability, and stress reduction. This represents a paradigm shift from infrastructure expansion toward experience optimization.

Promoting System-Level Coordination and Behavioral Efficiency

The widespread reliance on behavioral adaptation suggests systemic inefficiency, wherein individuals compensate for structural shortcomings through time-intensive adjustments. Policymakers therefore should focus on reducing the necessity of such behaviors by promoting system-level coordination, including investments in AI-based real-time information systems, integrated mobility platforms, and cross-sector collaboration. These initiatives enhance system reliability and reduce the aggregate societal costs associated with anticipatory commuting behaviors.

Conclusion

This project examined the spillover effect of commute stress on hospitality works in the Las Vegas Strip Corridor. Through 1,224 questionnaire responses and ordinary least squares analysis, experiential and behavioral variables exerted significantly stronger influence on commuting stress than structural variables. Unlike traditional transportation models that emphasize commute frequency and travel distance, these variables were not statistically significant in this study. Instead, the most influential predictors for stress were behavior adaption (i.e., leaving earlier), perceived traffic disruptions, and, less so, travel time. These findings highlight the impact of commute travel variability on stress and provide actionable insights for hospitality operators, transportation planners, and policy makers.

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Data Management Plan

Products of Research

An electronic survey using the Qualtrics platform was employed to collect data from 1,224 union workers in the Strip Corridor in Las Vegas.

Data Format and Content

Survey response data in spreadsheet format (likely .xls), containing responses on commuting frequency, travel distance, travel time, behavioral adaptation, traffic disruptions, and commuting stress ratings.

Data Access and Sharing

Describe how the public can access the data.

Reuse and Redistribution

State the restrictions on how the data can be reused and redistributed by the general public.