

TTP220 Transportation Policy and Planning

Assignment 3: White Paper on Strategies

Due Thursday, June 12 at 1pm

Purpose

In their long-range transportation plans, MPOs aim to address a variety of problems: congestion, air quality, sprawl, safety, equity. To address these problems, MPOs turn to a variety of potential solutions, from traditional approaches such as road building to more innovative approaches such as congestion pricing. The challenge for MPOs is to find solutions that effectively address each problem without aggravating the others. Examples of strategies include:

Pricing	Transit	Non-Motorized	Land Use
HO/T lanes	Light-Rail Transit	Pedestrian infrastructure	Transit-oriented development
Congestion pricing	Commuter Rail	Bicycle infrastructure	New Urbanism
Parking pricing	Bus-Rapid Transit	Traffic calming	Smart Growth
	Paratransit	Safe-Routes-to-School	
Voluntary trip reduction programs	ITS applications	Social marketing programs	E-activities

Although MPOs rely on modeling to forecast the implications of the projects and policies in their plans, the models are limited in their ability to represent non-traditional projects and policies and do a poor job of accounting for secondary effects. Empirical evidence can also be useful in evaluating the potential effectiveness of proposed projects and policies, though not all of them have yet been studied. Assessments of the empirical evidence are thus useful in the decision making process. The purpose of this assignment is to prepare a “white paper” on one of these strategies, by which I mean an informative paper that provides an overview of a policy issue, analyzes the arguments for and against, and assesses the available evidence to produce a useful guide to decision makers

Products

In this assignment, you will prepare a paper of *no more than* 10 pages double-spaced (with 12-point font and 1-inch margins) on your selected strategy. This paper should be in the style of a “white paper.” You will also be giving a 15-minute Powerpoint presentation in class. The paper will be worth 20% of your final grade, and the presentation worth 10%. I will grade your papers and presentations based on the quality of your research, the clarity with which you lay out the pro and con arguments, the thoughtfulness of your conclusions, and the quality of your written and oral presentation.

Task 1: Research

First, you will need to do a fair bit of research. Probably the best place to search for relevant material is the TRIS database, available via the BTS website. Another good place to look is the Victoria Transport Policy Institute website. You might also try a Google search to find examples of arguments for and against the policies – but remember to look at these arguments critically. I

can also give you tips on where to look for information and help you think about the different arguments for your specific topic. Be sure to check the tips I gave you for the first assignment, and be sure to include sufficient citations using an accepted citation format.

Task 2: Presentation

Your presentation should follow this outline, more or less:

1. Describe and define the strategy, including its variations. Include examples where different versions of the approach have been adopted, if any. You may need to narrow your strategy down to a manageable number of important approaches for the next step.
2. Explain the “pro” argument(s) for these approaches. Identify the primary goals for the approaches as well as possible secondary benefits. Outline the logic for these arguments.
3. Explain the “con” argument(s) for these approaches. Discuss whether the “con” position depends on claims that the approaches are not effective at achieving their primary goals or on concerns over possible negative impacts.
4. Review the available evidence on the effectiveness of the approaches. Determine whether the evidence supports the “pro” or the “con” arguments. Identify questions for which inadequate evidence exists
5. Offer your own conclusions about the effectiveness of the approaches based on available evidence. It’s OK to say that there simply isn’t enough evidence yet to say.

Task 3: Writing

Your presentation should provide a good starting point for actually writing your paper. Follow the same outline, and focus on the key points for each section. If you felt like there were holes in your presentation, or classmates raised important issues, go back and do additional research. If there were places in the presentation where you weren’t sure what you wanted to say, think through the logic of your argument again. Be sure to use specifics as much as possible and be rigorous in your use of citations.

Task 4: Review

Force yourself to get a complete draft finished by June 9th. Then leave the paper alone for at least a day and let it simmer in your mind for awhile. In the meantime, give your paper to a friend and have him or her look not just for typos and grammatical errors but also for passages that just don’t make sense, discontinuities in your logic flow, or gaps in your evidence. Tell your friend to be brutal! For this paper, it would be good to pick a friend who is *not* in the transportation field and will *not* know all the jargon and acronyms. Do the same critique yourself, after you have let the paper sit for at least a day.

Task 5: Polishing

Take your friend’s comments and your own comments and make final edits to your paper. Read it through one more final time to see if there are any spots that still need polishing. Check formatting to make sure it looks nice. Print, look it over, fix and print again if need be. Submit.