



Brian Taylor - UCLA's Chief
Transportation Expert

[It looks like a miracle:](#)

Californians aren't depending quite as heavily on cars for commutes and errands as they did a decade ago, according to a new survey by [Caltrans](#).

Although driving is still by far the most dominant mode of transportation across the state, accounting for about three-quarters of daily trips, researchers say a decrease in car usage and a rise in walking, biking and taking transit indicate that Californians' daily habits could be slowly changing....

In the decade since the survey was last conducted, in 2001, the rate of Californians walking, biking or taking transit on a typical day doubled to 22%, according to the data. During the same time period, the rate of Californians driving on any given day fell by about 12 percentage points.

From 2010 to 2012, more than 16% of daily trips were made on foot, the study said, taking an average of 10 minutes and covering one-third of a mile.

If something looks too good to be true, then it probably is. Since the survey taken in 2001, that means people answered these questions right after the biggest economic expansion since the 1960's; now, we are still recovering from the Great Recession. And according to the LAT's piece, the survey "suggests" that trips are down. My UCLA colleague Brian Taylor, who can find the dark cloud in any transportation news, worries that trips are down just because the economy is doing poorly.

Still, the composition of these numbers seems like cause for optimism. The survey also indicates a shift in the *composition* of trips, not simply their numbers. That could conceivably result from an economic downturn, as people can no longer afford autos. Or it could mean that people are getting out of their cars.

The question is whether any transportation demand models suggest a relationship between trip composition and macroeconomic performance. I don't know the answer, although someone should. I'll report back if anything materializes.

In the meantime, there is at least some cause for hope going into the weekend.