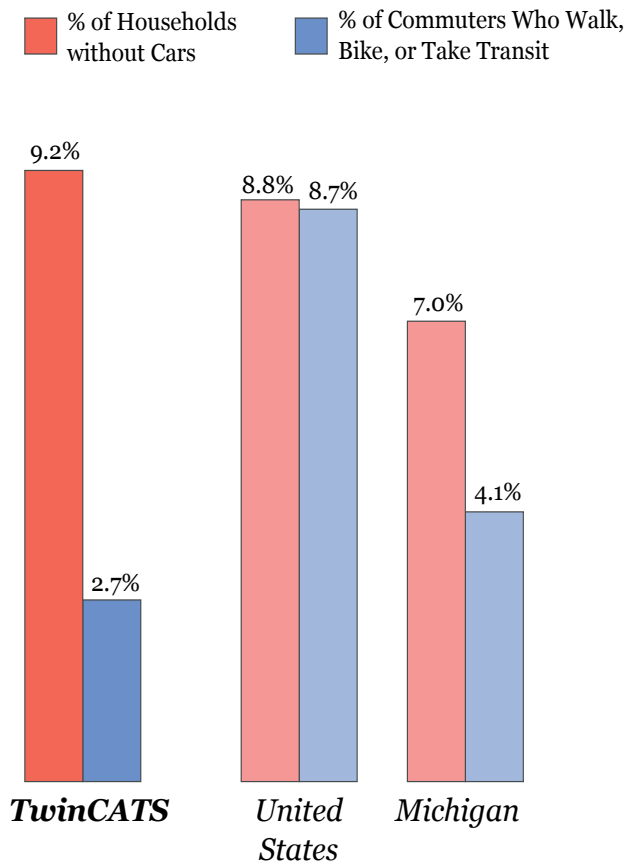


Section 3.5: Local Car Access

Lack of access to cars, whether due to choice or the prohibitive costs of ownership and maintenance, is a major driving force of people relying on walking and biking as a primary mode of transportation. The U.S. Census Bureau, through its American Community Survey, tracks the number of households that neither own nor lease a private automobile. This statistic provides a strong indicator of how likely residents of a give area are to rely on walking and biking to meet their basic transportation needs.

Using American Community Survey statistics averaged over the period from 2005 to 2009, Figure 3.7 shows that the TwinCATS area has proportionately more households without cars than do either Michigan or the country as a whole. Despite this lack of car access, TwinCATS also has proportionately far fewer workers that walk, bike, or

Figure 3.7 State and National Comparison of TwinCATS Car Ownership and Commuting, 2005-2009

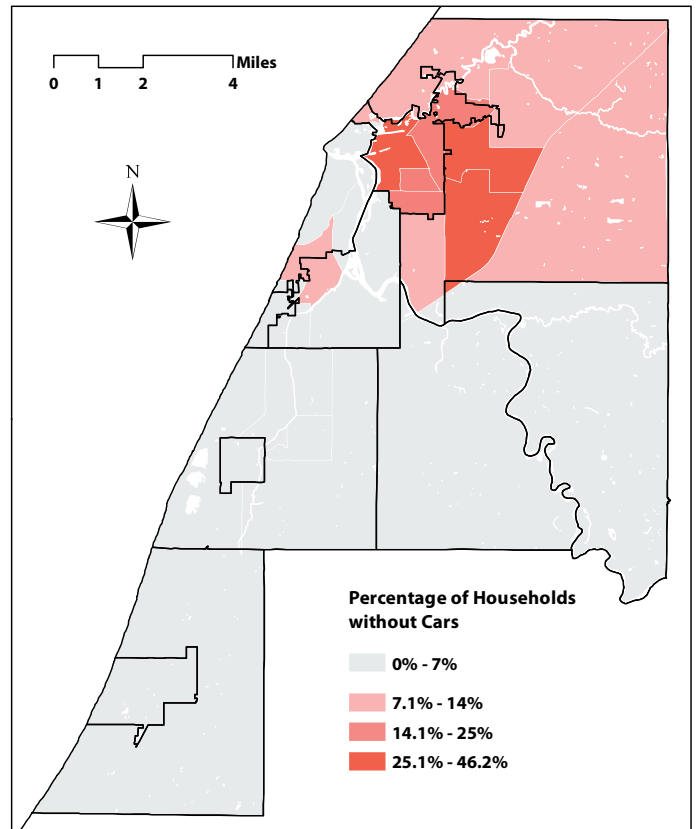


Data are from the American Community Survey, 2005-2009.

take public transportation to their jobs. This disparity hints strongly at a lack of non-motorized access to job locations throughout the region.

Figure 3.8 shows the specific TwinCATS neighborhoods with less car access than the state average. Along with a small swath in southern St. Joseph and northern St. Joseph Township, these low-access neighborhoods are heavily concentrated in Benton Harbor and Benton Township. This acute lack of access corroborates the many pedestrian and bicyclist crashes in Benton Harbor and Benton Township, and it throws into stark relief the many obstacles to non-motorized transportation in this area (see Section 3.2).

Figure 3.8: Map of TwinCATS Neighborhoods with Prevalence of Households without Cars, 2005-2009



Data are from the Merican Community Survey, 2005-2009. Colored regions of map represent neighborhoods with car ownership lower than state average.

Section 3.6: Planning and Policy Environment

Regional non-motorized plans such as this one necessarily exist within a broader planning and policy context, consisting of federal and state policy, the policies and plans of neighboring regions, as well as those of the individual municipalities that make up the TwinCATS area. This section takes a brief look at this planning and policy environment.

Federal Policy

Current federal transportation legislation is spelled out in the 2005 bill SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users). This legislation lays out a number of planning requirements centered on non-motorized transportation. In a March, 2010 policy statement, the federal Department of Transportation (DOT) highlighted some of these requirements:

- The metropolitan planning process will address the safety of non-motorized users (23 CFR 450.306(a)).
- As part of their minimum standards, metropolitan transportation plans will include pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities (23 CFR 450.322(f)).
- Metropolitan plans and transportation improvement programs will provide for the development and management of transportation facilities that include “pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities” (23 U.S.C. 134(c)(2)).
- “Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities” must also be targeted by documented public participation plans (23 CFR 450.210(a)).

In addition to these planning requirements, the federal DOT also stated that transportation agencies should “consider walking and bicycling as equals with other transportation modes.” In doing so, the federal DOT urges transportation agencies to “go beyond minimum design standards” for non-

motorized facilities and to develop facilities to meet the anticipated demand for walking and biking. For the full text the recent federal DOT policy statement, see http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/policy_accom.htm.

State Policy

The basis for Michigan transportation policy is contained in Public Act 51, passed in 1951. This act, as currently amended, requires at least one percent of state transportation funds to be spend on non-motorized transportation. Recently, the state of Michigan bolstered this commitment to non-motorized funding with the passage of Public Acts 134 and 135. These acts reaffirm the one percent requirement for non-motorized funding, as well mandating that local agencies develop 5-year programs for non-motorized facility improvements. The acts also enumerate the elements of complete streets policies and encourage local agencies to adopt them.

In addition to adopting a state-level complete streets policy, the state of Michigan has also been involved in non-motorized planning. The state’s 2005-2030 expresses the legitimacy of non-motorized travel on the state’s roadways and calls for the integration of non-motorized projects into the state’s call for projects.

Local and Regional Planning

While federal and state policies set a general framework for the development of non-motorized facilities, a number of local and regional plans have taken a more concrete look at non-motorized transportation in Southwest Michigan.

- The Michigan Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources jointly produced a plan in 2007, entitled Michigan Trails at the Crossroads, to build a connected trail network across the state building new and upgrading existing facilities.
- AASHTO and the Adventure Cycling Association have combined to develop