

Interviewer: We read your paper¹, but we were just wondering, [are] there specific things *you* might like to talk about?

Baum-Snow: If you look at cities that built more highways, they decentralized² more, and that's basically what my paper does. And that's a pretty simple relationship that exists in the data and it holds up to lots of statistical scrutiny, so, each highway that passes through a city causes a loss of about twenty percent of the city's population to the suburbs, and it's a pretty robust empirical observation.

Interviewer: Well thank you! There's definitely statistical evidence in your paper that we'll look into even more to help support our project! So we also have a question: were highways *the* major cause of suburbanization, would you say (or decentralization of major metropolitan areas), or were there other major factors as well?

Baum-Snow: That's a good question...I think probably they were the largest, the most important factor for decentralization in the US, but by no means were they the only factor. So, if you kind of run the numbers, you calculate that highways caused about a third to a half of the decentralization that occurred between 1950 and 1990. And, the rest could be explained by a host of factors: rising incomes have been proposed; people get richer, they look to consume bigger houses and more space; the decaying central cities is another explanation that's been put forward. Cities had increases in crime rates, increases in racial violence, especially in the '60's, and reductions in school qualities, at least for the richer residents, and there was a lot of migration of poor people to cities in the '50's and '60's that may have precipitated some migration out by the wealthier residents of a lot of cities. So that's another explanation that's been put forward. And, along with decentralization of populations, is the decentralization of jobs, which has, I think, exacerbated the population decentralization, so it was kind of a multiplayer player there. So all these things I think were at play.

Interviewer: Ok great that's great, thank you! Do you know if there would be other methods of transportation that would lead to suburbanization, aside from highways? I mean, could trains do the same thing?

¹ "Did Highways Cause Suburbanization?", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2007.

² decentralization: the process of redistributing or dispersing functions, powers, people or things *away* from a central location or authority (in this case, *cities*)

Baum-Snow: Most other transport, like public transit, and any other type of big transport infrastructure that could be built, I think generally that's likely to lead to centralization³ rather than decentralization just because you have to walk (at least on one end you're walking.) So because of that, at least at the work end, it's going to cause centralization of jobs.

Interviewer: Thank you! Then I wanted to go back a little bit to your mention of decentralization of employment, [such as] jobs and maybe commuting patterns. And we also read over one of your other papers – I think it was about the...I forget the exact title...

Baum-Snow: Changes In Commuting Patterns...?

Interviewer: Right, and so I think what we got from that, at least right now, is that highways did cause decentralization, but there's no direct link between decentralization and changes in commuting patterns and employment locations – is that basically what you'd be saying?

Baum-Snow: The way I would summarize what really happened is highways caused people who weren't commuting, sort of, within small regions near city cores to people commuting within larger suburban regions. So it's not like you build highways and it causes a whole bunch of people to move to the suburbs and maintain their jobs in the city, but it really causes those people and jobs to decentralize. It caused *people* to decentralize somewhat more it turns out, but still, it kind of caused suburbs.

Interviewer: Sounds good. And if you're running out of time, definitely just let us know.

Baum-Snow: Yup, you have four minutes.

Interviewer: Four minutes, ok. Are there any other sources you could point us towards aside from your papers? I'm talking about the link between highways and suburbanization and demographic change and highways *causing* suburbanization. And also economic effects maybe.

Baum-Snow: So there's some work, it's not about suburbanization, but it's about economic effects of highways, which I think is kind of related by...[call interference]...Duranton and Matt Turner, which you might want to take a look at. And they show that when you build highways, they cause cities to grow in population, and it also caused a change in driving patterns – people basically just drive further when there's more highways in the metropolitan area.

³ centralization: opposite of decentralization (*into* cities)

Interviewer: Do you know of any negative effects of suburbanization?

Baum-Snow: So I would say that the big negative is that when you decentralize jobs, companies' productivity gets hurt some because companies tend to benefit from being close to each other. And this is why downtowns exist in the first place. So that's one thing, and I guess there's another cost, and that is that people are traveling longer distances – there might be some environmental costs there. Those are two big costs.

...so actually, I think I've got to go, but good luck on your website, it's sounds like you're looking [into] a lot of interesting questions.

Interviewer: Right, and thank you very much for your time!

Baum-Snow: Ok, no problem. Have a good day.

Interviewer: Thanks! You too! Bye.