The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Access

Seminar summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected daily activities and travel behavior worldwide. Among others, unemployment rates have pushed millions of families into food insecurity, and the social distancing requirement and fear of contracting COVID-19 have changed the way that people access food with many people replacing in-store visits with online food shopping. This study examines food access under the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. We collected food access data along with relevant socioeconomic and demographic data in six largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) to investigate the food access pattern during COVID-19. Results show that during the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, people tended to travel shorter distances by visiting closer grocery stores, especially for those with better food environment. While there were significant more grocery store visits possible due to panic buying, those with no access to personal vehicles reduced their store visits. We notice a stronger positive correlation between trip chaining behavior and travel distance during COVID-19 compared before COVID-19. Compared to convenience stores and traditional grocery stores, large retailers and warehouse clubs attracted more customers during the pandemic. Among the six MSAs, areas with a higher percentage of confirmed COVID-19 cases tended to have fewer store visits during the initial stage of the pandemic. The study provides important insights into efforts aimed at enhancing food provision and food security and policies to help prepare for future shocks. This seminar series is co-organized by Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Transportation Institute, and Institute of Data Science at Texas A&M University.

Speaker's information

Dr. Daoqin Tong is an Associate Professor in the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning at Arizona State University. Dr. Tong received her M.S. in Civil Engineering, M.A.S. in Statistics, and Ph.D. in Geography from the Ohio State University. Dr. Tong's research has mainly focused on the use of spatial analytics including spatial optimization, GIS, spatial statistics and big data to support urban and regional studies concerning locational decisions, urban mobility, food access and public health. Dr. Tong's research has been published in high-quality journals in geography, transportation, planning, and regional science. Her work has been funded by multiple government agencies (e.g., NSF, DOD, and DOT) and local organizations.

Time: 8:00-9:00 p.m. US Central Time (Thursday, November 4, 2021)

Zoom Meeting ID: 732 641 0814 Passcode: 575829

Direct Link: https://tamu.zoom.us/j/7326410814?pwd=cGZKY045dmVkdzVRLy9MYWhocWorQT09

Faculty Host: Xinyue Ye, Dept. of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning & Urban Data Science Lab

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Landscape Architecture
& Urban Planning

Texas A&M
Transportation
Institute

TEXAS A&M
Institute of
Data Science