

LOCAL ROADS SPENDING AND URBAN SPRAWL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSAL RELATION IN THE DETROIT METROPOLITAN AREA

By:

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ABSTRACT

Urban sprawl is a phenomenon with widespread negative consequences. Causes of sprawl are complex, and explaining it remains an empirical puzzle to urban scholars. In this study, we examine the causal relationship between local roads spending and community growth, used as a proxy of sprawl. The purpose of the study is to determine whether or not local roads spending is a growth promoting or deterring factor to local communities. Our findings, in the context of the Detroit Metro Area of Michigan, indicates that local roads' spending facilitates community population growth, particularly in communities that are located increasingly away from an urban core or central city. Also, community attributes such as fiscal health, proxied by property tax revenue does facilitates growth. Increasing expenditure for fire protection services, however, tends to discourage community growth. We conclude that local roads spending is sprawl promoting in metropolitan areas. Implications for land resources, and social and economic well being of communities in metropolitan areas are also discussed.