

**Factors Underlying Non-Metropolitan-to-Metropolitan Commuting
Decisions in Northern Virginia Households**

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(ABSTRACT)

This study analyzes the wage and non-wage factors underlying non-metropolitan-to-metropolitan commuting decisions of households in five non-metropolitan counties in Northern Virginia. The potential fiscal and planning implications of these decisions are also discussed. Chapter one contains a description of the study area, problem statement and objectives. Chapter two reviews related literature on commuting, housing and job location, as well as rent and wage gradients. Chapter three provides a theoretical framework for analyzing household commuting decisions. Chapter four presents descriptive statistics, and introduces a switching regression system of equations to simultaneously estimate factors influencing commuting decisions and earnings in non-metropolitan and metropolitan labor markets. Chapter five reports the regression results, and simulates wage gaps and the distance of the metropolitan labor market draw for different groups of workers. Chapter six discusses potential fiscal implications of commuting and potential policies to manage growth in commuting.

The empirical result shows that the major incentive for workers to commute is a large age gap between metropolitan and non-metropolitan labor market areas. Household responsibilities, housing preference and ability to find local jobs represent non-wage factors underlying commuting decisions. Two study findings suggest that the local fiscal implications of non-metropolitan-to-metropolitan commuting households may be limited. First, commuting households are found to have fewer school-aged children, and require less local expenditures on education. Second, commuting households are more likely to be homeowners, have more rooms in their homes, and provide a larger tax base.

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