Conventional wisdom argues that travel is a "derived demand": a means to an end with no inherent value as an activity. This presentation proposes the concept of undirected travel: cases in which travel is desired for its own sake. The reasons that people enjoy undirected travel (e.g., speed, control, and aesthetics) may also motivate them to undertake excess travel even in the context of mandatory trips. Preliminary results from a study of more than 1900 residents of the San Francisco Bay area provide suggestive evidence for a positive utility for travel and for a desired travel time budget. This has clear policy implications: the way that people react to policies intended to reduce vehicle travel will, in part, depend on the relative weights they assign to their utility for travel. Improving our forecasts of travel behavior may literally require that we view travel as a "good" as well as a "bad" thing.

Patricia Mokhtarian is a professor in the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering; associate director of the Institute of Transportation Studies; and chair of the interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Transportation Technology at the University of California, Davis (UCD). She has published over 50 refereed journal articles on telecommunications/ travel relationships, attitudes toward mobility, and individual response to congestion and transportation demand management measures. She is the founding chair of both the International Telework Association and Council and the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Committee on Telecommunications and Travel Behavior.