



**U.S. Department of Transportation**



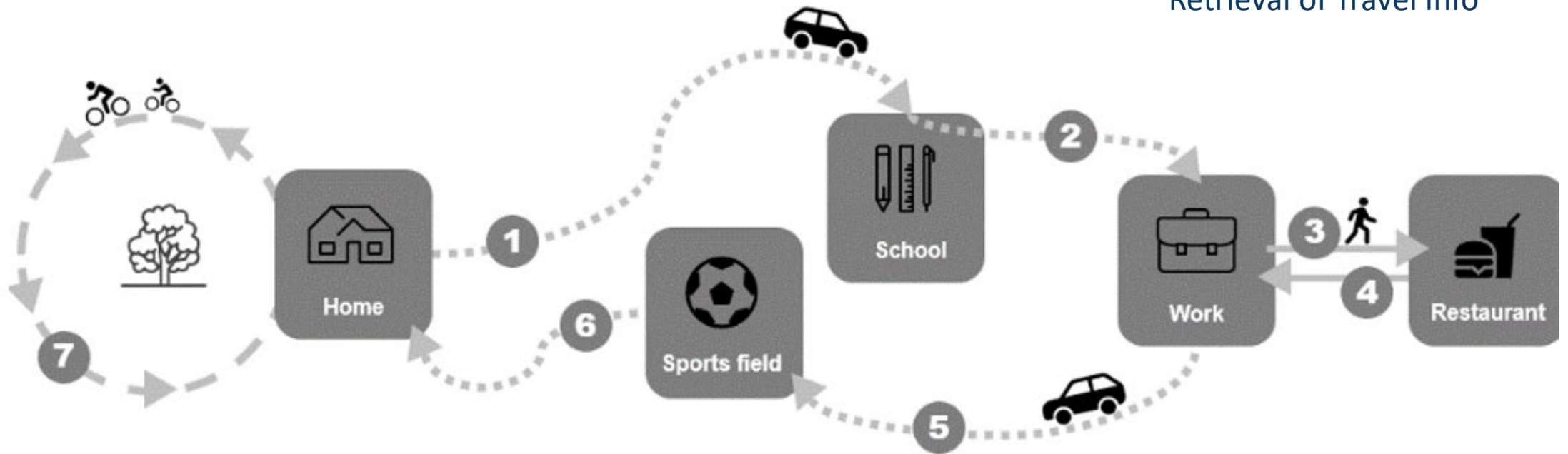
# The National Household Travel Survey: Applications and Opportunities

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# Household Travel Surveys are Really, Really Hard

Recruitment & HH Demographics  
Assign Travel Day  
Retrieval of Travel Info

## Example Travel Day:



**Trip 1:**  
8:00 am – 8:25 am  
Left home to drop off child at school

**Trip 2:**  
8:30 am – 8:45 am  
Drove from school to work

**Trip 3:**  
11:45 am – 11:55 am  
Walked from work to pick up lunch

**Trip 4:**  
12:10 pm – 12:20 pm  
Returned to work

**Trip 5:**  
5:05 pm – 5:30 pm  
Drove to sports field to pick up child

**Trip 6:**  
5:55 pm – 6:15 pm  
Drove back home with child

**Trip 7:**  
7:00 pm – 7:30 pm  
Rode bikes around the neighborhood

# Fit for Purpose



- OMB considers ABS to be the gold standard
  - ABS replaced RDD
  - RDD replaced in-person interviews
- Are panels the next evolution of surveys\*?
  - When are they appropriate?
  - How does the survey industry demand more clarity of methods?
- How does change happen?
  - Transparency
  - Education of federal entities conducting federal surveys to keep up with best practices

\*This discussion only covers probability-based panels as opposed to opt-in panels

# General Questions about Panels

- How are people who opt in to panels same/different from those who decline the invitation?
  - How long do people stay with a panel – do they become savvy survey takers?
- How do the methodologies of panel recruitment change over time and what happens to the documentation of a panel if that panel is sold to a new vendor?
- Given that similar bias is seen between the ABS and PFS, which survey problems are panels solving?

- Both surveys saw low response from areas with the same characteristics
  - Lower SES
  - Non-white populations
  - Lower educational attainment
  - Less likely to have filled out Census 2020 online
- Consistent with challenges seen from regional HTS efforts across the country over the last 20 years
- Travel behavior differs by lifecycle and residential location, so response rates are critical
  - White-picket fence HHs
  - Young, urban, mobile HHs

# What is truth?

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- Data users are always looking for the “truth”
  - Geographical Levels
  - Detailed Data Items
  - Data Collection Methodological Challenges
- ABS vs PFS?
  - Pandemic brought a lot uncertainty to 2022 NHTS vs 2017 NHTS
  - Ideal circumstances would have seen fewer changes in behavior between 2017 & 2022

- Huge issue for all national surveys, particularly important for survey data used for congressional reporting & related high profile uses
- Basic characteristics are known of panel enrollees, allowing sample draw to be targeted for PFS, but not ABS
- Ties back to the need to continuously update methodologies
  - Transparency
  - Communication of statistical issues to non-technical stakeholders
  - Balance of program needs and resources with intended uses while considering desired uses of the data

# Challenges: Not New, but Increasingly Complex

## Federal Survey Programs

- How do feds evaluate methods and options for surveys when working with contractors?

## Survey Methodology Contractors

- How to preserve proprietary business information while convincing customers of the value in proposed survey methodology?

The need is to balance knowing all the warts in the methodologies and the data collected while allowing private companies to maintain a competitive edge





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