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Coupling mode-destination accessibility with seismic risk assessment to identify at-risk communities

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we develop a framework for coupling mode-destination accessibility with quantitative seismic risk assessment to identify communities at high risk for travel disruptions after an earthquake. Mode-destination accessibility measures the ability of people to reach destinations they desire. We use a probabilistic seismic risk assessment procedure, including a stochastic set of earthquake events, ground-motion intensity maps, damage maps, and realizations of traffic and accessibility impacts. For a case study of the San Francisco Bay Area, we couple our seismic risk framework with a practical activity-based traffic model. As a result, we quantify accessibility risk probabilistically by community and household type. We find that accessibility varies more strongly as a function of travelers' geographic location than as a function of their income class, and we identify particularly at-risk communities. We also observe that communities more conducive to local trips by foot or bike are predicted to be less impacted by losses in accessibility. This work shows the potential to link quantitative risk assessment methodologies with high-resolution travel models used by transportation planners. Quantitative risk metrics of this type should have great utility for planners working to reduce risk to a region's infrastructure systems.

1. Introduction

Seismic risk assessment in earthquake engineering tends to focus on buildings, bridges, and the performance of infrastructure systems. For measuring the performance of transportation systems, researchers typically use engineering-based metrics such as the post-earthquake connectivity loss, which quantifies the decrease in the number of origins or generators connected to a destination node [e.g., [1]], or the post-earthquake travel distance between two locations of interest [e.g., [2]]. These frameworks have provided insight into seismic vulnerability and possible risk mitigation, but do not directly quantify ramifications for people.

In the field of vulnerability sciences, researchers have long stressed the importance of the impact on human welfare from earthquakes. For example, Bolin and Stanford write that, "'Natural' disasters have more to do with the social, political, and economic aspects than they do with the environmental hazards that trigger them. Disasters occur at the interface of vulnerable people and hazardous environments" [3]. A recent World Bank and United Nations report echoed this idea that the effects on human welfare turn natural hazards into disasters [4]. Historical events demonstrate the complex social effects of earthquakes. For example, on one hand the 1994 Northridge earthquake caused major damage to nine bridges, which, while significant, represented only 0.5% of the bridges estimated by Caltrans to have experienced significant shaking [5]. On the other hand, over half of businesses reported closing after the earthquake, with 56% citing the "inability of employees to get to work" as a reason [6]. Furthermore, the total economic cost of transport-related interruptions ("commuting, inhibited customer access, and shipping and supply disruptions") from this earthquake is estimated at 2.16 billion USD (2014) [7], using the consumer price index to account for inflation.

Some researchers have measured the impact of earthquakes on transportation infrastructure using the cumulative extra time needed for travel due to damage, sometimes called travel time delay [e.g., [8,9]]. This performance measure captures basic re-routing due to road closures and identifies roads more likely to be congested. Travel time approximately measures impact on people, but does not capture the fact that some destinations and trips have higher value than others. It also focuses on aggregate regional effects rather than individual communities and demographic groups. Others have considered the qualitative criteria-based metric "disruption index" [10], but this does not provide a quantitative link between physical damage to infrastructure and

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resulting human ramifications. Other work has looked at resiliency, but defined it in pure engineering terms, such as percentage of a road network that is functional [11]. Outside of transportation systems, some researchers have investigated the interplay between earthquake damage to the electric power and wastewater networks, and the usability of houses and other buildings [12].

In contrast to the work on transportation-related seismic risk, urban planning has a long tradition of studying the impact on people of events and policy [13]. Accessibility is one popular metric to measure the impact of different transportation network scenarios, and it measures how easily people can get to desirable destinations, which is one measure of social impact [14]. Within urban planning, accessibility has been measured in many ways, including individual accessibility, economic benefits of accessibility, and mode-destination accessibility [15]. The mode-destination accessibility is computed by taking the log value of the sum of a function of the utilities of each destination over all possible destinations and travel modes, where the utility decreases if getting to that destination is more costly or time-intensive [16]. This choice of accessibility definition is particularly useful for quantifying the impacts of disasters such as earthquakes, because certain destinations might be more critical for people in certain locations or from certain socio-economic groups. However, this accessibility measure has not previously been linked to risk assessment. In addition, the majority of work to date assumes that travel demand and mode choice will remain unchanged after a future earthquake, which historical data suggests is not the case [7]. A first step towards considering variable demand is work in the literature that varies demand by applying a constant multiplicative factor on all pre-earthquake travel demand [8], but again this approach lacks any resolution at the geographic or socio-economic level.

In this paper, we develop a framework for coupling mode-destination accessibility with a quantitative seismic-risk assessment to identify at-risk populations and measure the accompanying impacts on human welfare. We illustrate our approach with a case study of the San Francisco Bay Area transportation network, including highways, local roads, and public transportation lines. This study analyzes a set of forty hazard-consistent

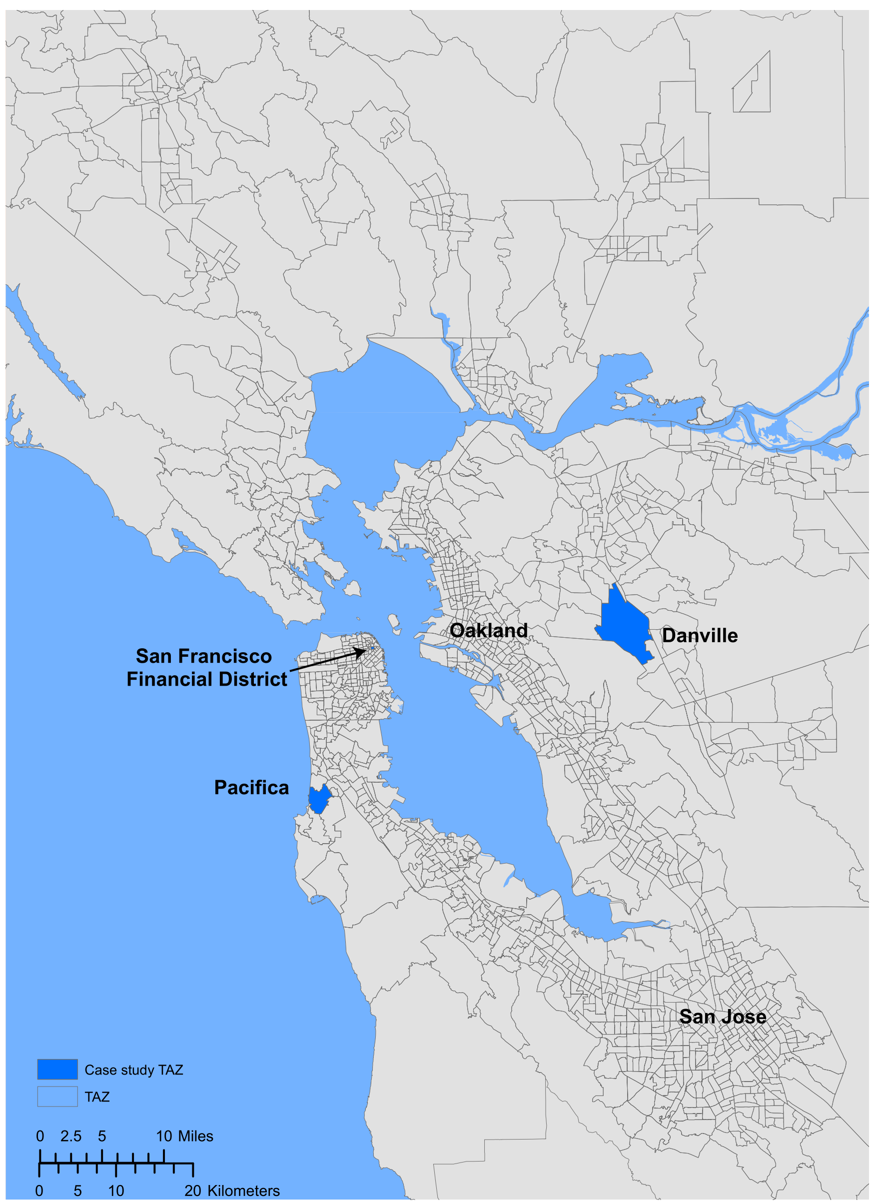

Fig. 1. Travel analysis zones (TAZs) in the San Francisco Bay Area. Shading indicates the Danville, Pacifica and San Francisco Financial District TAZs that are considered in more detail.