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LINGNAN UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

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Crowding

2 November 2026 (Mon)
11:00–12:30

WYL314, 3/F, Dorothy Y. L. Wong Building, Lingnan University



Prof. TANG Qu

Associate Professor
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BIOGRAPHY

Prof. Qu TANG is an Associate Professor of Economics at the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Jinan University. She received her PhD in Agriculture and Resource Economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

Prof. Qu TANG works on environmental and resource economics, with a particular interest in empirical research on understanding the effects of and adaptation to climate change and air pollution, as well as the environmental consequences of local economic policies. She also conducts research in urban economics, focusing on how fare structures affect user behavior and determine the efficiency, externality, and welfare impacts of the public transit system. Her work has been published in leading journals such as *Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Environmental Economics and Management, and American Journal of Agricultural Economics.*

ABSTRACT

Crowding is a common disamenity, yet little is known about its monetary cost. We estimate the willingness to pay (WTP) to avoid crowding in public transit with a revealed-preference approach. Beijing Subway passengers choose departure times, trading off fare, in-train crowding, and schedule deviation, with price variation from an early-bird discount. Leveraging the subway's network structure, we impute real-time in-train crowding, infer each passenger's optimal arrival time, and construct a novel instrumental variable for crowding. The marginal WTP to reduce crowding by one passenger per square meter is about 0.05 RMB per minute, implying a crowding externality exceeding the fare. High-income passengers have higher crowding WTP but are less price-sensitive. An optimal crowding tax improves welfare but is regressive; a two-class configuration elicits self-selection and benefits both high and low income commuters.

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