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Dialogue

Ann Dale

Welcome, e-panelists and e-audience members to this second on-line conversation in our sustainable infrastructure series, today on transportation. Unfortunately, M. Tardif was called to an emergency meeting and won't be joining us. A technical note to remind you to use the refresh button to receive the most recent messages but only every two minutes or so, in order not to slow down the server.

May I ask you to introduce yourselves and explain your passion about transportation and why it is important to sustainable development?

Lenore Newman

Hello Ann. This is from Lenore Newman, and I am an assistant professor at Royal Roads. I am interested in transportation as it makes a major contribution to emissions and to resource use, but also because it has a huge effect on space and place- the transportation infrastructure we choose "locks in" a lot of other choices, including the geography of our built environment

Emmanuel Le Colletter

I am a project manager at AMT, the regional transit authority in Montreal, QC. As you know, mass transit is essential for the well-being of a large metropolitan area like Montreal. Transit is essential for economic efficiency, quality of life issues in the central areas, equity, and so on. Since roadway transportation is a major contribution to air pollution/high resource, transit is a key component of any sustainability plan in a city.

Ann Dale

Welcome Emmanuel and Lenore.

Marty Collier

Hi Ann. Nice to be here with you today. I am most interested in sustainable transportation as it relates to reducing road/highway building for single occupancy automobiles and trucks. From my experience working on municipal and provincial road construction issues (Toronto Cycling Committee, the Better Transportation Coalition, the Community Bicycle Network, Transportation Options, Moving the Economy, Detour's UrbanSource Bookstore, Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation and as a concerned citizen and cyclist who has toured around the world), I have observed that far too much time and tax payer's money is invested in discussing and accommodating the movement of vehicles rather than the movement of people. After 100 years of environmental, economic, and social impacts due to the automobile (e.g. congestion, death, sprawl, road kill, road rage, habitat destruction, obesity, oil spills, smog, climate change impacts), it seems absurd to me that governments have not changed their auto-centric transportation policies for more sustainable ones. No doubt, governments everywhere love to build road infrastructure for what I see as flawed political and economic reasons.

But things are slowly changing because the status quo is not working and certainly not sustainable. Transportation demand management is starting to be seriously considered in the form of road pricing and congestion charging. As well, context sensitive design, road diets and complete streets are starting to be implemented. Although this is happening much more outside of Canada than within, there are a few examples are emerging here as well. Hopefully there will be opportunities during this e-dialogue to discuss these innovative ideas.

Briana Illingworth

Hello!

I am a project manager with Moving the Economy, a non-profit partnership in Toronto. My personal passion for sustainable transportation comes from my love for cycling. In my work, it is just one part of a puzzle in supporting and encouraging multi-modal travel in Toronto.

Marilyn Hamilton

Hi Ann

I am moderating the e-audience. I am very interested in Transportation as part of the equation of sustainable community because it seems to me that it is both a function of and a determinant of optimal community size. It relates to communication, action and relationships -- not to mention energy and land use.

Ann Dale

Welcome, Marty, thank you for joining us, and I certainly hope we are here to discuss innovative ideas. Lenore has raised the issue, as have you, of our decision, past and current, appearing to lock us in to future pathways of behaviour that are hard to change. Welcome Marilyn, yes, energy, transportation and land-use are inextricably linked. Welcome, Brianna, can we move to our first question?

Briana Illingworth

A project in Toronto that Moving the Economy is currently leading is the New Mobility HUB Network project. In it, we are linking together transportation options, creating a convenient network for people getting across the city. I think it is innovative in its focus on the end-user, and on increasing the opportunity for people to choose sustainable transportation by increasing its convenience to them. As well, there are opportunities for the New Mobility HUBs to be part of upcoming developments, such as regional transit fare card.

My second choice would be car sharing, which is really picking up in cities across Canada - in some cities there are multiple car-sharing providers. I find that people frequently think about sustainable transportation in terms of mass transit (commuter trains, subways, buses) as opposed to driving. There is a wide gulf

between those two extremes, but at the same time, initiatives are available to fill this gap, making it easier for people to move to more sustainable transportation modes in smaller steps. Car sharing programs, for example, easily fill in for a second car for some families, or could be used as a shared primary vehicle for several families in a transit-oriented development. Their innovation lies in their ability to fulfill a number of roles for different people.

Lenore Newman

One example that comes to mind for me is a project that met with a lot of conflict- extension of the Vancouver Skytrain to the airport. Though it might be true that other projects might have moved more people per dollar, I think there is something symbolic in having a fast, door to door service from an airport to the downtown core. The airport is one of those few places that we don't really want to take our car, and taxi fares to and from airports tend to be high. A rapid alternative helps to "brand" an area as transit friendly for visitors. I think such projects are worth it- busses might be more cost effective, but many people will simply never ride a bus, but will consider a fast train.

Marty Collier

My first innovative example is called a Road Diet. Road diets provide planners and engineers with a chance to decrease road lane capacity in order to facilitate improved vehicular movement for all modes, reduced congestion and more safety. Around the world, different scales of road diets have been undertaken, including:

- 1) "classic" road diets - aim to provide balanced street space for all transportation modes;
- 2) car free roads – involves "opening" streets for transit, cyclists and/or pedestrians and "closing" them to cars;
- 3) road building moratoriums – this is a diet because new roads that have often been on the planning books for years are removed forever; moratoriums could possibly be used to stop roads currently being built;
- 4) road dismantling - expressways built through established neighbourhoods and downtown areas in the 1950s and 1960s are being removed to free up space for development and people. Dismantled roads are sometimes downgraded to arterial status, put underground or, better still, not replaced at all.

The City of Toronto has successfully implemented "classic" road diets in several locations, although they are often called traffic calming or bike plan projects. Methods have relied mainly on medians, road or lane narrowing and bicycle

lanes to achieve a reduction in the number (or width) of traffic lanes available for vehicles. The City of Whitehorse also has a UTSP program implementing road diets on their main streets.

Why is this innovative? Besides thinking outside the usual “road widening to accommodate vehicular capacity” box, preliminary results here and elsewhere show that classic road diets help achieve vehicle to vehicle road safety objectives – it makes the street a place to be rather than just rush through and improves safety. One study found that crashes decreased substantially due to a reduction of the number of conflict points along road segments as well as a virtual elimination of lane weaving on the part of drivers. It was also discovered that road diets had no significant effect on intersection delays and, in fact, improved traffic flow. Road diets also resolve residential driveway and business parking lot egress safety problems.

My other innovative example (amongst many) I'd like to put forward today occurs outside Canada. The Congestion Charging program in London has been so successful at reducing congestion and increasing quality of life in London's city center that they are expanding the area where it applies, increasing the rate to 12 pounds/vehicle (unless you're driving an SUV where it will be 25 pounds!) Again, thinking outside the box and provides a price signal to drivers that there are many costs related to their need for road space (and clean air).

Briana Illingworth

There was an article in the National Post today, Marty, that might interest you. It is on the idea of installing bike lanes on existing roads in Mississauga, and opposition from the current mayor there.

On the other hand, it is great to see Whitehorse being lauded through UTSP for their efforts. It's curious how some cities take to new ideas like this, while others aren't interested.

Author: Marty Collier

Briana, I didn't see the article in NP but doesn't surprise me. Mississauga wants to become the "Posterchild for Smart Growth" but won't consider even a small amount of space for active/human powered modes. There is evidence that people in the suburbs are so familiar with the street only being a place for mobility, that accessibility is never considered. (Check the new Making Toronto's Streets study by Paul Hess and Beth Milroy).

Ann Dale

To me, this is a critical question Briana has raised, any answers?

Emmanuel Le Colletter

- New commuter train lines and TOD development (like in the case study - Mont-Saint-Hilaire). The new lines were reinstated at relatively low costs on existing freight lines
- Deux-Montagnes train, which is the only commuter train line in Canada that is electrified. In Quebec, about 90% of the electric power is from hydro power, so electric transportation is very sustainable.
- Montreal subway and the underground city, even though it's 40-yr old now is still a model for sustainable urban development. It provides very efficient accessibility without any fossil fuel being used.

Ann Dale

Emmanuel, is this a province wide program or specific to certain communities, and if specific, can you name the communities?

Emmanuel Le Colletter

The example I remember was in Matane, a small town in Gaspésie (eastern Québec). They won an AQTR prize two or 3 yrs ago for their rural transportation integration efforts. I think two or three small communities are trying to do the same thing.

Now, the very good GHG reduction plan that the Quebec Government produced this summer includes provincial operating subsidies (50%) - the city has to match the other 50% - to fund rural transportation projects. The good thing is that the money comes from a special tax on oil and gas companies, which somehow translate into a carbon-tax. It makes gas more expensive without raising direct government taxes at the pump. The oil companies will be the ones blamed for higher gas prices, or they will have to accept a short reduction in their huge profits (200 M\$ annual tax, as compared to a 1.5 G\$ profit). It was a creative way

to finance transit.

Ann Dale

Thank you, Emmanuel, didn't know about these, and we will try and contact the communities and at least capture the leaders behind the project. Government leadership keeps recurring as a theme consistently through all my dialogues over the past seven years. What is making the Quebec government so enlightened?

Emmanuel Le Colletter

The Government committed to the Kyoto Protocol and came up with a plan that even BC's David Suzuki acknowledged was the best provincial plan in Canada. I think we will be meeting about 72% of the 2010 Kyoto target only with the Quebec efforts. If the federal gov. were to act (which seems unlikely nowadays), we could entirely meet the Kyoto target. The plan has 24 measures in energy (wind and hydro power), housing, transportation, waste disposal and so on. I think there is a wide consensus in Quebec (general population and both political parties) that global warming is a very serious threat to our future. GHG reduction generally pays off in the long run because it translates into energy consumption reduction. The Government understands that.

Briana Illingworth

Ann, to get back to your question, getting sustainable transportation to rural areas and small communities is definitely tricky. From mass transit providers, there is always the argument that there is not the necessary critical mass of people to warrant the frequent service that customers would expect.

I think these are prime places to be innovative. Car sharing, as Marilyn mentioned, is great for such communities. There are a couple places around the world that employ a sort of "dial a bus" system, which is almost a hybrid between taxi and bus service... something like an airport shuttle, but with greater flexibility in its destination.

Ann Dale

Brianna, you have raised another critical point, choice and meeting needs. I have often wondered about why we expect people to move from the privacy, comfort and ease of use of their car to get on crowded buses with no amenities. Why not make the buses more comfortable, maybe smaller, offering newspapers and coffee. How about a distributed small bus system, for example, or light rail (I think Montreal is very innovative in this) that connects smaller communities, lets' think integration, integration, as all of you have raised.

Lenore Newman

I agree with Marty on the congestion charges. Currently road infrastructure enjoys such a huge advantage that economic levers cannot operate. Shifting the cost of roads to users could help to move freight from roadways such as the 401 onto railway lines, which can carry more freight with fewer environmental impacts. The roads and bridges would last longer too, as trucks account for a large share of the wear and tear.

Ann Dale

Lenore, what about the truckers who earn their living hauling freight?

Lenore Newman

A good point, Ann, but one could have just as easily said twenty or thirty years ago "what about the lead miners providing lead for inclusion in our fuel?" Should we subsidize environmentally destructive jobs? The simple answer is that some of those people would be hired by railroads, but the more complex answer is that Ann has hit upon a key lock-in point- the truckers would be a strong lobbying group against change. (As was the lead industry)

Marty Collier

Lenore and Ann, one idea that is getting attention in Europe is dedicated truck lanes - on EXISTING roads. If getting goods to market is the most important

function of roads, giving trucks their own space is the way to go. Again, a controversial move but it is working to a certain degree in Holland. Unfortunately, they've only provided this outside city centres and not across the entire country.

Ann Dale

Marty, interesting, besides diversity of choice, combine it with specialization, Ottawa has similar lanes for cabs and drivers who have more than one passenger. Vancouver has buses that have bicycle racks attached to the front. What about connecting internet infrastructure to work, why does everyone have to travel to work, why is it still so place dependent?

Marty Collier

Tele-working is in place and almost all businesses are now wired. Tele-working can save time and money, reduce stress and can decrease travel-related carbon dioxide emissions by 5-20 percent -- depending on the number of days per week that commuting is avoided. As more companies climb on board this trend and self-employed individuals work from home (as previous generations did in the late 1800s), there will be even less need for roads to be built for the morning and afternoon rush hour.

I just finished a contract where I didn't see my clients for 7 months. If I had had to go into the office, it would have taken me more than an hour each way. Instead, I walked to my basement. I think this is where companies have to realize that their employees are professional enough to be able to get results without being in the workplace at all times.

Ann Dale

Marty, the Federal Government and a lot of universities are fighting tele-working (paradox, n'est-ce pas?). Another question, is anyone tracking the reductions in GHG emissions and their subsequent contribution to reducing climate change, this should be reported upon in their annual reports. Last week's dialogue talked about the lack of measurement in this critical public policy area?

Marilyn Hamilton

I live in a gated community and I've thought they would be perfect candidates for vehicle sharing and electric vehicle options. Are any developers or activists taking this sort of initiative?

Ann Dale

Isn't Dockside Green in Victoria a green development that has car pooling built in?

Emmanuel Le Colletter

Regarding car sharing, Montreal's CommunAuto company, of which I am a frequent user, is becoming one of the largest car sharing company in North America. It does not get any public subsidies. I do not understand why governments do not favour car-sharing more. It makes so much sense. Cars are spending much more time being parked that being used. All surveys show that car-sharing lead to higher usage of alternative transportation modes than owning a car. Car-sharing could work well in small cities as well.

Marty Collier

Part of the problem is city parking by-laws. In most cities across Ontario, the city ensures that every new house and condo unit gets a parking space. Where condos are concerned, this could cost the developer up to \$30,000/stall. They must hire their own traffic consultant to assess whether they can reduce the number of parking spaces and therefore the costs. A condo near me got it down from 160 spaces for 160 units to 151 spaces for 160 units even when there are 3 street car lines within 3 minute walk and a subway within 10 minute walk. This bylaw must be deleted so that developers can save money. They do this in Bremen by providing auto-share type services.

Ann Dale

Marty, the London initiative is interesting, but it only occurred after the city became so congested, people could see the effects of traffic congestion. Briana, you bring up mobility hubs, Lenore connectivity of critical uses, and Emmanuel, electric trains. These are all innovations that seem to apply to large urban centres, they speak to diversity of infrastructure choices, can they equally apply to small and rural communities, and how do we connect them?

Marty Collier

In terms of when London charging was implemented, I say better late than never. The Mayor ran on this and was elected two times straight! Obviously, "congestion is our friend" as Larry Beasley has said. It gets people thinking outside of the box or at least to take another mode. Building/expanding more roads does the opposite.

Emmanuel Le Colletter

To answer the questions regarding small and rural communities, one thing that is being done in Quebec (and probably in other places as well) is to integrate transit, para transit, school buses and specialized transportation (to hospitals or care centers) into a single pool of vehicles that can be made available (dial-a-ride) to any users needing a trip. It provides for efficient transportation at relatively low cost in areas with low densities.

Marilyn Hamilton

The e-audience has noted that politics and mindset can have a lot to do with whether communities act on certain options. I wonder if smaller communities influenced by fewer spheres of influence whose politics and mindset affect the kind of elegant option you describe here?

Emmanuel Le Colletter

I'm not sure whether I understand the question well, but in some rural communities in Quebec, population is declining and aging and really needs new mobility options. So people do not have the choice to work together to create

innovative options. These kind of collective efforts of bringing all resources together generally works better in a close-knit small community where local leaders realize they have to put the extra efforts to avoid having their population fleeing to the large urban centers.

Another thing that is very popular in small areas is the taxibus, or "dial-a-ride" taxi services where users are charged the price of a bus ticket. Rimouski and Sorel are the best examples in Quebec if you want more details.

Lenore Newman

Regarding the rural conundrum, in truly rural areas, such as your own area, Ann, it might be that the focus should be on fuel efficient vehicles rather than alternative means of transit. However mass transit lines with "park and ride" lots located in regional hub villages could be very useful, and would certainly encourage commuting to nearby large centres by rail rather than by car. It would also allow city folk like me to spend a day in a rural village without having to drive!

Ann Dale

That's assuming we want you city folks bothering we rural folks:) Can we move on to our next question and we have been touching on it.

Are there any lessons to be learned from the case studies the research team has prepared and how can we diffuse this experience to other communities?

Briana Illingworth

The case studies on transportation appear, to me, to be very user-focused, designing transportation services and networks that are more convenient for the end-user. I think this bodes well for how we are approaching the problem of how to get more people to choose sustainable transportation.

The message to the general public seems to be moving away from the environmental impacts, and moving towards the personal benefits, both in terms of personal convenience and cost.

Lenore Newman

I think one lesson from the case studies is that a lot can be done working with existing infrastructure, such as using freight lines to run commuter trains or integrating existing transit systems to form HUBs. In other words there are ways to use existing resources to make transit better without investing in megaprojects.

Briana Illingworth

Lenore, I like this point of view on the projects. This has always struck me as a smart move for communities and transit service providers that are developing Bus Rapid Transit lines - it makes use of existing equipment and infrastructure but creates tangible improvements for users.

Marty Collier

I agree (and am happy to see) that service is becoming more customer focused and that we can use existing infrastructure. But the costs for anything transit oriented is still very high. How do we pay for it when health and education is taking all the money and drivers continue to have free access to highways when dollars from tolls could be allocated to sustainable transportation infrastructure?

Or do we just need political will to be cost effective and get better mobility. When Toronto was doing their OP a few years ago, they looked at all the changes that had to be made to reduce car dependency. They found that the cheapest thing to do was to change policies (e.g. priority signalling for transit, no left turns for cars). Yet, because that took political will to create a more multi-modal transportation environment, politicians have opted for big spending. The example of Mississauga referred to earlier is a case in point.

Marilyn Hamilton

I am going to sneak in a question related to financing here since you raised it. Nancy Averill in Ottawa asks. I would like the panel to comment on infrastructure financing. What are creative ways to finance infrastructure renewal?

Marty Collier

Nancy, I think the only way we can finance sustainable transportation infrastructure is a combination of grants in the beginning and, ultimately, user fees. A 1997 Transportation Association of Canada briefing paper outlines several fee systems that would:

- send economic signals to drivers (e.g. that road space is a scarce resource);
- “internalize” the environmental and social costs of driving to users;
- provide new infrastructure maintenance funds while reducing the need for road expansion;
- increase efficiency of transportation network.

The options that have the most direct impact on user behaviour outlined in the report included road and bridge tolls as well as congestion charging. Options that would raise revenue but only indirectly impact use behaviour included additional gasoline taxes and vehicle license fees, property development charges, commuter levies, right of way fees and revenue based parking fees (TAC, 1997).

As a TAC survey from 1993 showed, a majority of car drivers are willing to pay fees as long as it is shown that they are put into transportation infrastructure and not just general revenue. I would go further to say that it must only go to sustainable infrastructure on existing ROWs (e.g. customer friendly transit, complete streets and other sustainable transportation projects).

Briana Illingworth

Financing infrastructure renewal is, in my opinion, the biggest challenge. I know that some projects I've come across have seen big success in marketing and branding, but even that starts to get difficult to negotiate.

As an example, Chicago has recently built a large facility for cyclists - the Millennium Park Bicycle Station. Capital costs were \$3.1 million, from the Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program. Since its opening, it has received an endowment of \$5 million to fund operations for the next 50 years.

If there is little political will to fund projects, looking to private investment like this makes sense... but I certainly worry about ad creep and turning great projects into large billboards, and it becomes hard to decide where the investment should come from.

Ann Dale

Our IT support just emailed me to say that it is snowing again in Victoria and the university may close again for the rest of the week. We were closed Sunday, Monday and Tuesday and only opened again today. It seems to me that this is another argument for telecommuting, that people should simply not be expected to travel in inclement weather, and with internet infrastructure in place, it simply is not necessary, both ecologically, socially and I would argue economically. Thought you Easterners would enjoy this reversal in weather.

Marty Collier

Ann, my only guess is that the government and universities don't trust their employees -- but I've never worked for either institution! Could it be a cultural thing? As for tracking GHG emissions, I'm sure that they could track if they wanted to. I noticed that a new individual tracking tool was just released by Transport Canada. (See <http://www.tc.gc.ca/programs/environment/UTECH/default.aspx>). I guess we should be asking them if they are using it themselves... !

Lenore Newman

Ann has a good point. In a giant country such as ours limiting needless trips would have to be one of the better transportation options. It might be that ensuring each suburban development has a corner store turns out to be a transportation issue!

Ann Dale

What a rich discussion, difficult for me to pick up the threads and Marty's last comment leads nicely to our next question. What are the major barriers in your opinion, to implementing and diffusing these innovations across the country? Some have touched on government policies, at all levels, is innovation easier in large urban centres? From our conversation, I now know there is even more going on out there than I think anyone knows, but how do we speed the learning between communities? And Nancy's question, are there any creative financing

mechanisms?

Lenore Newman

In my opinion one of the biggest barriers is infrastructure lock-in. Once giant billion dollar roadways or subways or rail lines are in place it is very hard to change them even if transit needs change. Up front cost is of course another barrier. If one looks at transit development in Spain, where the central government has invested giant amounts into transportation projects, one can see exactly how much of a barrier funding can be.

Marty Collier

I've been told that Madrid has built all these subway stations in an incredibly short period of time because the government had the private sector build the stations in return for revenue from developing the sites above the stations. I don't think that would work here because we are generally mistrustful of the private sector building public infrastructure. Since we have over 17,000 lane kilometres of limited access highways in Ontario, we can toll our own public infrastructure to get the money to build the transit -- preferably LRT since you get approx. 8km for the same cost as 1 km. of subway. And people taking sustainable modes are above ground rather than under it.

Briana Illingworth

As I mentioned in my response to Nancy's question, I agree with Lenore that funding is a major challenge in developing initiatives. There seem to be fewer granting sources available, at least to non-profits, and it's creating a major crunch for a number of groups.

Ann Dale

Are there any examples of private/public financing partnerships that you know about? And we are going to have to move on to our last question, as during the last half hour, we will take more questions from the audience if there are any?
Last question.

We identified a lot of barriers, money, infrastructure lock-in, resistance to change,

ecologically damaging and economically inefficient government regulations, to name a few. What are the solutions?

Emmanuel Le Colletter

In Quebec, the two large PPP projects being developed are two major highway projects in the Montreal metropolitan area (A-25 and A-30, in collaboration with the federal government). It seems like the only way to finance new roadway infrastructure because so much money is required to rehabilitate the existing roadway network (heard about that bridge that fell down on A-19)?

Marilyn Hamilton

In BC several cities along the Hwy 1 route have actually co-funded overpasses with the Province, Feds and I believe several private development partners (eg. Mt. Lehman Exchange in Abbotsford and 200th widening in Surrey).

Emmanuel Le Colletter

Telecommuting looks indeed very promising, indeed. Isn't there a risk, however, that it would entice more people to move out to exurban/rural locations since they have to commute less to the city. What is the net impact of this. In California, some untouched mountain areas are being developed into large homes for telecommuters. Anybody aware of studies regarding to this. Any effect like this in BC?

Marty Collier

This is where urban planning enters the picture. We must have permanent urban boundaries and intensify so that people cannot simply move further away. One way of doing this (in southern Ontario, lower BC mainland and around Montreal), is to increase the cost of our best farmland. I believe that if we say all farmland is important, sprawl will not occur and people won't be moving out of the city.

Lenore Newman

Emmanuel's exurbanites are certainly appearing in my home town, which is about an hour and a half from Vancouver by ferry and car/bus. They telecommute one or two days a week, and then commute the other days. The downside is that the "locals" can't afford to buy land there anymore. Houses worth \$100,000 are suddenly worth \$500,000. One can now get a good latte in town now though thanks to the exurbanites.

Ann Dale

Emmanuel you raise an excellent point that argues for the larger need for integrated land-use planning, a dialogue to be held in two weeks. One question I believe we have to ask ourselves, is what do we need to make our communities more sustainable, our cities more liveable. For example, Vancouver's decision in the 1970s not to build large overpasses, has allowed them to evolve to one of the most walkable cities in Canada, which then leads to more people getting to know one another, contributing to a "density of acquaintanceship", which I think leads to better communities. Marty, I also believe that cities have a limit to their growth, there is a relationship between density, space and crime? And transportation is directly related to health, if a community is developed where you have no access or need to walk to any services, we drive more, get less exercise, weigh more, with associated health costs.

Marilyn Hamilton

This relates to an observation made by Levi Waldron in the e-audience: My concern is that the type of expensive commuter train development they're talking about are very often built to benefit well-off commuters, while lower-income bus riders continue to suffer from overcrowded and infrequent service. It also says that transit improvements should target non-transit users (drivers) rather than existing transit users forced to use sub-par services. In some cases this approach has even been accused of being "transit racism" in parts of the U.S. where it is predominantly people of colour using under-funded buses and white people using the expensive commuter trains. Is it possible to focus on train building without existing users of crowded buses being neglected.

Marty Collier

Levi, I think, like urban boundaries, we must look at the "commuter shed". I know that Vancouver has already identified an area that says that, if you live further than a certain distance from the core, you should not be travelling to the core. By implementing a commuter shed, more money is available to the captive transit users than the choice transit users. I don't want to sound like a broken record, but this is where road pricing enters the picture again. The choice users will consider transit and living closer to the CBD if there is a price to pay.

Marilyn Hamilton

Of course in BC we have the Agricultural Land Reserve which did exactly this. However that creates another systemic dilemma because we put a lot of economic burden on the farmers who are limited to the valued use of their land. Some cities in Montana have issued urban debentures to keep land in natural or agricultural states. So here we are marrying land use to transportation challenges.

Ann Dale

Marilyn, can you explain in greater detail what an urban debenture is? Thanks.

Marilyn Hamilton

I learned about this from a group called YtoY (I think Yellowstone to Yukon??) who protect corridors for animal migration (eg. elk). The town in Montana valued the natural use of the land for these corridors and agricultural use so much that they issued city debentures (long term investment vehicles) that citizens bought and which were invested in keeping the land to those uses in perpetuity.

Briana Illingworth

I'm afraid I have to excuse myself from the conversation at this point - I have another meeting to get to, for which telecommuting is not an option!

Ann, I want to thank you for the invitation to participate, and I'd like to thank the

other panellists for a very interesting dialogue. I've really enjoyed this!

Ann Dale

Thank you, Briana, for your participation.

Ann Dale

Marty, you have raised the critical point of simply "getting the prices right". I am going to raise a difficult question, how do we shift taxes from taxing the good to taxing the bad when there are so many vested interests at play?

Lenore Newman

Perhaps it is impossible to discuss transportation without land use planning. Currently in many places we are allowing and encouraging development with minimum lot sizes and curving streets that cannot be served by any form of transit other than the car. Perhaps land use planners need to at least consider that we might want to move to other transit modes- with a little planning a lot of flexibility can be created. My favourite example is Toronto's Bloor viaduct- a roadway built with a "useless" rail bridge built in under the roadway for future use. Much later when the subway was extended to the East side of Toronto, the bridge was there, ready and waiting. The planner of the day knew that eventually the population would warrant rapid transit!

Marty Collier

Lenore, there is a traffic engineer here in Toronto by the name of Ed Levy. He says that "land use planning and transportation planning are two sides of the same coin". Luckily, most planners now realize this but there is a disconnect somewhere. For example, in Waterloo, Ontario, they are implementing a smart growth based growth management plan. All the policies are in place but then they decide to expand a 3 lane road to 5 which induces more travel and gets people thinking that there is a quick way to get to the CBC from further out in the suburbs. Of course, in the matter of a few years, the road becomes clogged and the cycle begins again.

Emmanuel Le Colletter

This relates to an observation made by Levi Waldron in the e-audience:
“My concern is that the type of expensive commuter train development they're talking about are very often built to benefit well-off commuters, while lower-income bus riders continue to suffer from overcrowded and infrequent service. It also says that transit improvements should target non-transit users (drivers) rather than existing transit users forced to use sub-par services. In some cases this approach has even been accused of being "transit racism" in parts of the U.S. where it is predominantly people of colour using underfunded buses and white people using the expensive commuter trains. Is it possible to focus on train building without existing users of crowded buses being neglected.”

This is a good question. I guess a regional balance must be reached regarding where the resources are allocated. In Montreal, we saw somehow the same problem with a lot of commuter rail expansion while STM (City of Montreal) buses were reducing service. Now the situation should improve with the new provincial operating subsidies for bus services (see my other comment on Quebec's GHG plan). However, it is still better and cheaper to serve suburban expansion with commuter rail rather than freeway widening. So it depends how you look at the problem. Serving the suburbs is expensive, whether by highway or transit solutions, but people are willing to pay more to have a higher quality of living in the suburbs.

Marilyn Hamilton

“We cannot talk about urban transport until we know what kind of a city we want, and to talk about the kind of city we want, we have to know how we want to live.”

A quiet and awed AMEN!

Marty Collier

Lots of great points. But maybe we have to look at things from a different angle. Some of you may have heard about Enrique Penalosa, Mayor of Bogota, Columbia in the late 90s. As mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, Enrique Peñalosa accomplished remarkable changes of monumental proportions for the people of his country in just three years.

He decided to create a planning vision where the plan was for children and happiness. He believed that if you plan for children and happiness, you're planning for everyone. Bogota had a major congestion problem and was provided with \$5 billion to build a new multi-level highway system. After a referendum, the money was diverted to install an incredible BRT system (now carries a 1/2 million residents daily), build many kilometers of 100 miles of bikeways/greenways/ped infrastructure, have monthly car-free days and build schools and hospitals. In the end, they received a Stockholm Partnership award and Enrique is asked how he did it by cities around the world. A quote of his that I love is: "We cannot talk about urban transport until we know what kind of a city we want, and to talk about the kind of city we want, we have to know how we want to live."

Ann Dale

Thank you panellists and audience for this most informative discussion. In less than two hours, we covered a lot of ground (pardon the pun), and raised some critical issues for the policy development community. Pricing again emerged as a key issue, infrastructure lock-in, diversity and flexibility in transportation choices, integrated transportation systems, eliminate perverse policies and too much to do summarize adequately on your behalf.

Any concluding statements before we adjourn for the night. Let me say that we had expertise from across this country, meaningful and rich intellectual discussion, and we forgot to track our savings in GHG emissions by having this virtual conversation. Your time and contributions are deeply appreciated.

Marty Collier

I think we must have very explicit conversations, e-dialogues and conferences about some of our assumptions about transport. I say this because there isn't one silver bullet that is going to answer our trans challenges. As Robert Liberty, former Executive Director, 1000 Friends of Oregon has said: "The one thing we need to do to solve our transportation problems is to stop thinking that there is one thing we can do to solve our transportation problems." I'd go further and say it is not only the transit and road building flavours of the day.

As Levi pointed out, much of what we do comes down to accommodating car drivers over alternative transportation users. I'd like to paraphrase Gordon Price, former Vancouver councillor, regarding the assumptions of drivers when it comes to road infrastructure. The first assumption is that as people buy more cars,

government will build more roads to accommodate them. Governments issue press releases stating that billions of dollars are being invested in roads when, in fact, they cannot keep up with the demand. This misinformation leads to two more driver assumptions: that the current number of roads, even if they are not expanded, can always accommodate another vehicle and, with the help of unrealistic auto advertisements, that “the car should never be constrained by other cars”. If they are constrained, car owners believe that governments are not using tax dollars effectively (which leads back to the assumption that more roads will be built). Because roads are built primarily with public money, individuals assume that, once they have purchased a new car, the trips made are virtually free. This makes road space a billion dollar commodity which is “disposed of as though it had no price. The real cost, of course, is measured in time – in congestion – but that is seen as a problem, not as the inevitable consequence of market failure and flawed assumptions. For more detail about the market distortions, see Todd Litman’s work at www.vtpi.org

Lenore Newman

Thank you Ann

In closing I agree that we need to think of what sort of place we want to live in, and we should certainly be thinking about the transportation we will need in the future, when our needs and the cost of fuel might be very different

Marty Collier

Thanks to all for organizing and allowing me the opportunity to participate. Please get in touch with me through the www.urbansource.org website. Cheers, MC

Emmanuel Le Colletter

Any concluding statements before we adjourn for the night. Let me say that we had expertise from across this country, meaningful and rich intellectual discussion, and we forgot to track our savings in GHG emissions by having this virtual conversation. Your time and contributions are deeply appreciated

Ann Dale

Thank you, une mille fois merci.