

Livable Places Update

Emerging Trends in Community Planning and Design

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GRASS ROOTS MOVEMENT RECLAIMS LAND FROM THE CAR:

It is frequently noted that about half of the land area in our communities is devoted to the automobile. However, changing priorities have stimulated a grass roots movement to reclaim space that has been solely devoted to the car and redesign it for other uses. Much of the energy is coming from the millennials, whose love affair with the car is definitely fading. In the last ten years, the number of licensed drivers 19 years old and under has dropped by almost 20%.

PARK(ing) Day is a key example of this change in priorities. It is an effort to take back the streets one day a year and demonstrate alternate ways to use the space. This experiment has taken less than a decade to coalesce into an annual event involving people in cities from around the globe. This month, PARK(ing) Day projects appeared on six continents, in cities from Manchester England to Jakarta, Indonesia, Leipzig, Germany and Toronto, Ontario, and many cities in between.

PARK(ing)Day is always held on the third Friday in September, and the original concept — to fill a parking space with a temporary park — has been embraced and modified to address a variety of social issues. Participants have built uses that include free health clinics, urban farming and ecology demonstrations, political seminars, art installations, and free bike repair shops. Visit www.parkingday.org.

To learn more about this strikingly successful experiment in grass roots urban planning, join us at the *New Partners for Smart Growth Conference*, February 7 – 9, 2013. Participants will meet Matt Passmore and hear how he and his young colleagues at Rebar (an urban planning firm in San Francisco) initiated this concept in 2005 and made it go viral. City officials from San Francisco and Philadelphia will also join us at the conference to describe how these one-day demonstrations have been embraced by city officials and turned into permanent, licensed amenities in the form of parklets. Visit www.NewPartners.org.

COMPLETE STREETS ON A ROLL: Streets have not always been the sole territory of the car. Movies of the streets of San Francisco in the earlier part of the last century demonstrate a pandemonium of pedestrians, cars, horses, and bikes — to safely and cleanly maneuver through all this was tricky, at best! However, over the century, cars won the contest — receiving priority over all other uses. One notable exception is in the State of Oregon where as early as 1971, legislation was adopted requiring that new or rebuilt roads accommodate bicycles and pedestrians. This measure also required state and local governments to

fund bike and pedestrian facilities in the public right of way. For more information, type in "Oregon Bicycle Bill" on Wikipedia.

It took the rest of the country almost 30 years to catch on to this idea. However, in 2005, a coalition of advocacy and trade groups representing the elderly, planners, landscape architects, and health officials formed the Complete Streets Coalition, a broad-based campaign promoting the concept of streets for pedestrians and cyclists as well as cars. Their success since then has been impressive.

Today, the U.S. Department of Transportation, under the leadership of Ray LaHood, supports the inclusion of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles in federal-aid transportation projects. According to LaHood, "Bicycling is an important part of the 21st century transportation mix."

Over 23 states, including California, have followed suit. Importantly, local governments — the place where the shoes and the rubber meet the road — have been adopting complete streets policies in large numbers. Last year the count of local and regional jurisdictions with complete streets policies or written commitments to do so was at 379. This year, even more communities are adopting these policies.

Stimulated by safer and more appealing routes, a growing number of U.S. residents are choosing the bicycle as their daily transportation option. Between 2000 and 2010, their numbers grew 40% nationally, with some cities seeing an increase of 77%. Biking and walking reportedly now account for 12% of all trips. A national poll released by Princeton Survey Research Associates International last March revealed that "more than 80% of Americans support maintaining or increasing federal for biking and walking."

What is driving this rapid change? In part, it may be the changing attitudes of millennials, many of whom are now far more intrigued by the newest iteration of the I-phone than the latest model car. The support of the public health community has been important, particularly in providing grant funding for inspiring policy changes that focus on "active transportation." But economic issues are also driving the movement.

Economic Drivers: It costs about \$308 a year to maintain a bicycle. This compares to \$8,220 to maintain the average car. It is estimated that if every American driver made one four-mile trip by bike instead of car, once a week for a year, it would save more than two billion gallons of gas and keep \$3.7 billion dollars in our local economies.

Another driver of this change has to be the rising cost of gasoline. Gas prices have risen up to six times the rate of inflation since 1998. Today, the average American household spends 16% of its budget on transportation, more than on food or healthcare. Low-income families can spend more than half of their income driving to work and other essential destinations. Check out the new Sierra Club factsheet, "Pedaling for Prosperity" at: <http://sierraclub.typepad.com/compass/2012/05/national-bike-to-work-day-factsheet-bicycle.html>.

And then there is the wish to attract and retain successful businesses to a city by appealing to the tastes of younger, entrepreneurial workers. Motivated by his need to accommodate Chicago's new economy businesses, Mayor Rahm Emanuel has announced plans for a network of protected bicycle lanes that he hopes will appeal to those local tech company workers who favor cycling over driving and have been fleeing the city for more bicycle-friendly areas.

The Importance of Local Government Action: It is at the local level where changes to accommodate cycling as a transportation option must be made — and cities are innovating as never before.



Bollards separate cars from bikes and pedestrians.

As part of his plan to keep millennials in town, Mayor Emanuel plans to add 100 miles of protected bike paths. His idea is a simple step beyond simply striping for a bicycle lane on the street. It involves putting in movable posts or bollards that make it difficult or impossible for autos to drift into a bike lane.

Another innovation, being picked up by local governments across the country, is the bike share program. The City of Washington, DC has demonstrated just how popular such a program can be when streets are designed properly.

One hundred and seventy-five bike share stations can be found in Washington, DC, Arlington, VA, and Alexandria VA. The user can pick up or return a bike at any of these. Last year, the service was so popular, there were problems with some stations running out of bikes and others with no parking space for returned bikes. Today trucks roam the city to keep every station equipped to meet the need. The result — More than 1,670 bike share bicycles are on the streets today in the DC region.

This system has high-tech appeal. The docking stations are solar powered and equipped

with credit card readers. Users can check a station's status in terms of available bikes on a free GPS-enabled application or app, or they can visit a website. For more information, type in 'Capital Bikeshare' on Wikipedia.

Realizing that growth in the use of a bike as a transportation option requires a safe place to ride, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, representing the nation's capitol and 22 counties in Maryland and Virginia, voted to approve a complete streets policy. The policy pushes local governments to, "create or adapt transportation facilities that safely and appropriately accommodate motorized and non-motorized users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, freight vehicles, emergency vehicles, and transit riders of all ages and abilities."

When starting a complete streets program, cities no longer have to start from scratch. There are so many programs now functioning throughout the country, it's possible to take advantage of learning from the mistakes and successes of others. A document titled, *The Complete Streets Policy Analysis 2011* has been published by Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition. Released last year, the document grades existing policies and identifies 21 of the best.

The majority of the existing programs are from suburbs, small towns and rural areas, and mid-sized cities. Large cities represent less than 10% of the examples. Of the 12 most highly rated local government policies, two are from California — Congratulations to Azusa and Baldwin Park for serving as national models and to LGC's Certified Complete Streets facilitator, Paul Zykofsky, for the assistance he provided to these forward-thinking communities!

A companion document, *The Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook*, provides an overview of the various types of Complete Streets policies, the elements of those policies, and guidelines for creating a community vision. It also offers a guide for getting completed policies from paper to practice. To download both documents, go to Smart Growth America.

Coming August 13-15, 2013 to Sacramento: The Local Government Commission will be hosting the annual Safe Routes to School Conference in Sacramento next year. Safe Routes to School is a national and international movement to create safe, convenient and fun opportunities for children to bike and walk to school safely. The conference is sponsored by the National Center for Safe Routes to School — a recent recipient of the Harvard Bright Ideas in Government Award — and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. It brings together transportation professionals, advocates, elected officials, community members and more to discuss ideas, resources projects and noteworthy practices. For more information, go to www.saferoutesconference.org/