

Our Transportation System is in Crisis – 333

A more sustainable transport system should foster commerce, reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, increase safety, provide equal access to destinations for all groups of society, and enhance the quality of life. (Making Transportation Sustainable: Insights from Germany, by Ralph Buehler, John Pucher, and Uwe Kunert, Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, April 2009).

They stated that the German experience offers five lessons for improving transport sustainability through changes in travel behaviour:

1. Get the Price Right in order to encourage the use of less polluting cars, driving at non-peak hours and more use of public transportation
2. Integrate Transit, Cycling, and Walking as Viable Alternatives to the Car, as a necessary measure to make any sort of car-restrictive measures publicly and politically feasible
3. Fully Coordinate and Integrate Planning for Land Use and Transportation to discourage car-dependent sprawl and promote transit-oriented development
4. Public Information and Education to Make Changes Feasible are essential in conveying the benefits of more sustainable policies and enforcing their results over the long term
5. Implement Policies in Stages with a Long Term Perspective because it takes considerable time to gather the necessary public and political support and to develop appropriate measures.

These authors suggested that it is politically difficult and potentially inequitable to restrict car use unless there are feasible and convenient alternatives to car use. Thus, car-restrictive policies must be accompanied by the provision of high quality transit services as well as safe and convenient pedestrian facilities. Also, providing safe,

convenient, and cheaper alternatives to the car is necessary to make any sort of car-restrictive measures publicly and politically feasible.

A cheap, integrated and extensive public transportation system provides a real alternative to the car. Pricing should be coordinated between all public transportation services in order to make it more convenient for the traveller.

What are the true social, economic, and environmental costs of driving? Are TnT motorists required to pay anything close to this? What are the public transport costs relative to the actual costs of auto driving?

According to the authors, in Germany, the increase in the gas tax by 75 U.S. cents per gallon between 1999 and 2003 became politically acceptable only when the government promised to use the resulting revenue to lower social security taxes for all employees.

What policies are required to effect sustainable transit development? They suggest inclusion of the following:

- Full coordination of operation and financing of public transportation. In the US, over 60 percent of the largest transit providers offer guaranteed-ride-home programs;
- Subsidized discounts for the elderly, school children, and other groups;
- Users can access information about regional, state-wide, and even national transit routes, connections and fares online. In Germany, there is real time information at most rail and light rail stops and on board of most trains and buses.
- Special bus lanes and traffic signal priority for buses

What specific policies should we consider for TnT? First of all, I would like to see a policy of “*Ensuring everyone gets home*”.

This would require a strategy to provide for good transit access to return home regardless of the trip, from work, school, recreation, etc. There are also times when even auto users need alternative transport provision, such as, their auto is not working, or some other family member is using it.

Other critical transportation policy issues include:

- The development of a national land-based mass transit transportation policy.
- Need to assess everything related to the current legislation in matters of public transportation.
- Need to improve the attractiveness of transit through judicious investment, primarily in urban centres; and, improvement in administration, rationalization and control of the industry.
- Need to encourage the development of the tourism industry through investment in strategic tourism / transportation linkages.
- Reliance on public and private partnership for providing new transit infrastructure and services.
- Flexible to accommodate ongoing changes in transit preferences or needs;
- Affordable in terms of capital and, operating maintenance costs.
- The Ministry of Transport should be selective in its investments and not spread resources too thinly by commencing several projects simultaneously. Some form of balance should be established which reflects national transportation priorities, as well as project need and justification.

Most persons will not give up their autos, but they could reduce the number of private trips they make. Less driving is possible if transportation policies provide safe, convenient, and practical alternatives. The German authors suggested that, even without reduced car ownership, the

reduction in driving would enhance the sustainability of transportation. A more sustainable transportation system means not only greater choice of transportation services and lower household transportation expenditure, but a higher quality of life in the longer term.

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