The Urban Planner Looks at Values

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Some of you may remember this excerpt from a current fable: "When the urbanites saw the sparkling new towns and the beauty of the restored cities, they could hardly believe their eyes. Now they saw it was possible to be urbanized and civilized as well as motorized and mechanized. For they had learned four basic principles for solving the problems of urbanization:

1. The principal problem of cities is not how to move, but how to live.
2. Improving the conditions of living can do more than anything else to reduce the need for moving.
3. But providing transportation is not just a matter of getting things moved. It is also a major means of improving the urban environment.
4. Looked at in this way, transportation has ceased to be a problem because technology and systems techniques have made it a solution."

Wilfred Owen (1) in his fable, "How the Cities Solved Their Transportation Problems," identified for us the principal value—how to live.

How do we understand or accept that value in transportation planning?

PERSPECTIVE

In September of 1957, a national symposium was sponsored by the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company in Hartford, at its new suburban headquarters. The conference theme was "The New Highways: A Challenge to the Metropolitan Region—How can we increase the efficiency and livability of our cities through the national highway program?"

The array of speakers and participants for that program was impressive. One speaker, in commenting on the unprecedented anticipated national highway program, remarked that he had a real fear that this highway program could do as much damage as it could good. He noted that a participant from the federal establishment implied that there was not much time left for planning. He observed that there had well better be time left for planning; there must be time found for planning; that maybe we should not initiate the program until we knew where we were going—until we had more fully and critically identified the goals we were seeking to achieve, the values we expected to gain or stabilize.

John T. Howard, Head of the Department of City and Regional Planning at M.I.T., remarked a couple of months later at the annual meeting of the National Municipal League, in November 1957, "...the design of the interregional highway system was an act of national planning of great influence on future national patterns of urban growth. As far as I know, it was a completely unconscious act."

I remember that Connecticut General Conference, which I was attending with one of the most dynamic public officials I have known and worked with, Mayor Ben West of Nashville, among other reasons because midway in the conference and about 3:00 a.m., we were scrambling around getting him air transportation back to Nashville because an elementary school had been dynamited. (This was during the hectic days following the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision.)

The speaker at that conference who suggested that the Interstate Highway System, as we have come to know it, wait until we knew where we were going—well, his suggestion "bombed out". Dare we ask—after a dozen years of planning, programming, and effort—whether we have "bombed out"?

DIALOGUE ON VALUES

We now talk freely, without embarrassment, about urban highways as instruments of urban policy as well as arteries of transportation.

"Urban Highways in Perspective" (2) recalls for us the 1958 Sagamore Conference, which "sought closer coordination of highway and community development"; the 1962 Hershey Conference, which, in recognition of the impact of urban highways upon people, land use, economic activity, beauty and amenities, recommended that "freeway planning be integrated with city planning and that teamwork among agencies and professionals begin at the earliest stages of design"; and the 1965 Williamsburg Conference, which had as its purpose the identification of "values, goals and objectives of city development and the determination of how transportation could enhance them."

The literature since 1965 includes "Techniques for Determining Community Values," a paper presented by Alan M. Voorhees at the 1965 Annual Meeting of the Highway Research Board (3). He recognized that techniques for determining community values, particularly at the location and design level, were just beginning to emerge. In summarizing, he noted: "The evaluation of community values is a very complicated issue. It is quite clear that it is fundamental to the whole planning process. It is the one factor that makes planning quite different from many other professional tasks. Until better techniques are developed to measure these values and to resolve them, it will be difficult to develop plans which will have public acceptance and understanding. Although this task is a difficult one, it is nevertheless essential if we are to prepare plans which may be successfully implemented in a democratic society."

Voorhees' review of focus groups, rating panels, and attitude surveys as methods for establishing overall community values are augmented by several articles on "Team Concepts for Urban Highways and Urban Design" published by the Highway Research Board (4). In that publication, Lowell K. Bridwell, then Federal Highway Administrator, recognized the as-yet unbridged gap between cost-effectiveness and value-effectiveness in the public dissent and opposition conveyed with such phrase imagery as "Chinese wall," "concrete monster," "big ditch," and "biological barrier" (because it would disturb the ecological balance of the area it crossed). Rather than arguing the truth or fiction of these complaints, he suggests that they be accepted for what they really are—expressions of relative degrees of dissatisfaction, expressions of challenge to do better, and expressions of public belief that the development of highway transportation and its facilities must be much more closely related to a whole range of other public and private policies being developed simultaneously.

"Highway planning," he argues, "notwithstanding all of its highly diverse and complicated engineering detail, is not and cannot be a completely quantifiable process in which all elements can be measured and tested, and assigned numbers representing cost, capacity, and other criteria going into the decision process. To do that we almost certainly would be ignoring, or at least not giving adequate weight and value to, the unqualifiable elements that are equally important. How do you measure the social viability of a neighborhood? How do you assign a number value to the social maturity and stability of a residential area? How do you test and assign a cost to the convenience of children going to an established school district, or parishioners to their church?"

An advocate of the multi-discipline team to plan and conceptually design the city's limited access highway system, Mr. Bridwell indicated that "there has been some grumbling, of course, from those who believe that the system has been needlessly and expensively delayed by the planning process. One cannot deny there have been delays. But do not overlook the alternatives to this kind of delay—alternatives that include a poorly designed and disruptive highway through the city; a loss of irreplaceable community values; a missed opportunity to substantially improve the quality of living in the city; possibly, placards and court suits; possibly, no highway at all."

"Transportation and Conservation," a total environment approach, is discussed by Herbert S. Levinson in the January 1969 Traffic Quarterly (5). In recognizing that the consideration of community values in transportation planning is increasing, particularly in view of present concerns over economic and social problems in our central urban cores, he notes, "the difficulties of defining and systematically quantifying social,

community, and environmental values have often led to their exclusion from conventional benefit-cost analysis and related transportation decision-making. There is still no overall framework for evaluating the trade-offs between a minute of travel time saved and a tree lost, or for answering the simple yet difficult question: how does the value of a minute of time saved compare with the value of a home displaced, or a family dislocated?"

In the 830 square-mile Springfield, Massachusetts, Transportation Study Area, he reports that transportation and land-use planning were coordinated through all study phases. Special studies were made of community attitudes and profiles, neighborhood identifications, environmental visual qualities, and historic buildings and landmarks. A generalized historic preservation plan was prepared and used as a guide in locating new highways. The comprehensive highway plan was further complemented with regional park and open-space planning.

In the same issue of Traffic Quarterly, Martin Wachs and Joseph L. Schofer (6) hope that the current emphasis on the systems approach and PPB in the planning of urban transportation networks will lead to more effective investment and operations decisions.

We come to the point of judging whether the glass is half full or half empty in applying transportation as a positive device for elevating the quality of the urban environment. Are we losing our chance to reconstruct our cities partly because of a narrow unimaginative view of the potentialities of planning systems of movement? It is something of an obvious truth that so long as our chief justification for having transportation is the measurement of benefits for those who will directly use it; so long as we play systems to be internally efficient and operable, yet disregard other urban systems and values; so long as our local leadership, both technical and political, chooses to avoid the responsibilities for establishing the community's values and goals—then we will continue to dissect the physical and human community, to create dissension and hostility, and to waste public resources (7).

PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

Additions to the literature on community values are becoming more frequent and range from highly subjective expressions to more sophisticated methodological excursions. And we could talk about the literature with great interest, maybe with considerable intellectual titillation, but relevance?

A great deal could be gained by aggressively applying the principles of planning and design enunciated in "The Freeway in the City" (8; see also Appendix), but I suspect we might miss the whole mood of our times, which has made the already elusive issue of community values even more volatile.

Bayard Rustin put it this way a few weeks ago when he said: "Every Negro could be provided with a good job, good housing and an education and we would still have a revolt, because Negroes want to share in the decision-making."

The "in" thing is participative democracy.

Ambrose Bierce, author of "The Devil's Dictionary," defined participatory democracy as a practice whereby a community (usually black Northern) controls its own affairs in politics, economics, and education without interference from the government; to be distinguished from "state's rights"—a practice whereby a community (usually white Southern) controls its own affairs in politics, economics, and education without interference from the government.

There is no question that our status quo has been knocked head over heels by the revolutions in science and technology, in communication and the processing of information, in industry, agriculture, and education, in demography and bio-medical affairs.

We are creating new problems as fast as we think we are solving old ones, and are beginning to get a little more than nervous that if a successful society is a good problem-solving mechanism, ours is not so today.

In his search for continuous renewal as the best route to orderly social change, John W. Gardner (9) seeks new solutions that preserve old values. In doing so, he characterizes the essential qualities of a society capable of fostering creative individuals, capable of renewing itself. These include:

Pluralism—the creative society will be characterized by variety, alternatives, choices, and multiple foci of power and initiative.

Individual Potential—the society capable of continuous renewal will be one that develops to the fullest its human resources, that removes obstacles to individual fulfillment, that emphasizes education, life-long learning, and self-discovery.

Dissent—the creative society must provide for dissent, for the emergence of alternatives to official doctrine or widely accepted assumptions; it must provide for honest appraisal of the disparity between existing conditions and widely expressed ideals.

Participation—in order to have a vital society we must have as high a degree of participation by the individual as we can manage. Gardner notes in this respect that:

> The urge to participate actively in the shaping of one's social institutions is not a powerful human motive. On the contrary, it appears to be notably weak and undependable; all the more reason we must fan that uncertain flame.
>
> This is a moment when men, here and around the world, have in some measure withdrawn faith in their institutions. They are questioning, reexamining. At such a time, there can be nothing more healthy, nothing more healing, than for men to participate directly in reshaping the institutions that no longer enjoy their confidence. It is the only way that confidence will be established. And there is today a healthy impulse toward such participation. People do want to have their say. They want to feel that they count, that they're "connected."

Values—a society capable of renewal must have deply rooted values. If it believes in nothing, there is no possibility that it can generate the high level of motivation that renewal demands. The values must not only be compatible with the process of renewal, they must be worthy of a great civilization:

> We are fortunate in that respect. Freedom, justice, equality of opportunity, the worth and diginity of the individual—these are values that are supremely compatible with social renewal. Our problem is not to find better values but to be faithful to those we profess.

WHY THE PROBLEM

Assuming that there may be fairly general agreement among us on the substance of my remarks to this point, why do we have problems in relating community values to transportation planning?

We do not want a proposed highway location to tear up a neighborhood. We do not want a transportation decision to rip the intricate fabric of a community. We do not want a transportation improvement to be a destroyer of man's environment.

We seem to be able to accept general principles but something gets lost in their specific—or particular—application.

Several months ago, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission conducted a one-day seminar on "issues in a region of contrasts." This was preparatory to its effort in formulating a region-wide (multi-county) plan. The document (10) prepared to facilitate discussion at that seminar stated:

> The construction of programmed freeways in this region will continue to disperse the population and create a new form of development oriented toward the high-speed highway. At the same time, unless policies are developed to arrest the trend of population decentralization, the older communities...will continue to decline.
>
> What is needed is a coordinated transportation development policy that seeks to establish the role that both highways and transit will play in the region's future. To formulate a policy that considers only automobiles and systems of transit hardware would be tragic. Transportation as a total system

of highways and mass transit must not be narrowly conceived because of its
potential to restructure and revitalize the development pattern of the region.

In a letter from Bill Froehlich, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission's Executive Director, he reminded me of a couple of points brought out at the Policy Forum that he felt were relevant to a consideration of planning and community values. "Our surveys," he stated, "showed rather clearly that the disadvantaged, both racially and economically, are not being served well by urban transportation." (One might ask: Whose community and whose values were considered?)

"In the Pittsburgh metropolitan area these people are located in the valley communities, and much of the present plan for the future (both highways and rapid transit) appears to be oriented more toward those segments of the metropolitan area which can more readily afford better transportation. This is one of the policy questions toward which we must direct our attention. Also, our travel surveys showed that the low income groups are not using regional recreation facilities to the same extent as the higher income groups. Again, availability of transportation could be the problem. Either we should locate more recreation facilities nearer the low income groups, or we should provide better transportation facilities to recreation areas, or both."

In commenting on people, jobs and transportation, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission noted in the proceedings of its 1965 public hearings on alternative plans for northeastern Illinois:

> ...we have two issues on job locations. The first is whether we should continue the trend toward a wider spreading and scattering of jobs, or whether some attempt should be made to group jobs in large or small centers near major transportation arteries. The second issue is whether or not arrangements should be made to provide housing for workers near their jobs. The choices here really boil down to how much people care about a relatively easy trip to work, a wide range of job choices, and better public transportation. If people are concerned, are they concerned enough to do something about it?... like job clustering and a broader range of housing opportunities in the suburbs?... like modifying local zoning ordinances to permit this to happen?... like a system of government subsidies to compensate the private bus operators and railroads for losses sustained in expanding their service?"

Arthur F. Loeben, Montgomery County Planning Director (eastern Pennsylvania), can wax eloquent on value identification and clashes noted as the King of Prussia area was impacted by the extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in 1950 and again in 1954 and the opening of the Schuylkill Expressway to downtown Philadelphia in 1957. He reminds me that the telescoping of change into a short period of time dramatizes the issues all the more.

As we reflect on the complexity and difficulty of making value judgments and gaining a consensus, the issue of time contributes an extra measure of sensitivity.

The I-40 segment of the Interstate Highway System in Nashville, Tennessee, is a colorful reference these days. The Saturday Evening Post featured it a few weeks before that magazine's demise. Over a ten-year period, presumed agreement by the community and its leadership changed as the community, its leadership, and their priorities changes.

During the time that I-40 initially was being located and agreed upon, Nashville and Davidson County were going through the process of consolidating their respective city and county governments into a single metropolitan government. The emotional issue of the 1962 Charter, which was approved in public referendum, was whether the members of the school board should be elected or appointed. The tensions associated with race and poverty that are so apparent today were treated in statesmanlike fashion by a Negro leadership who prevailed in the judgment that a vital, thriving community would be good for all people—that power, white power or black power, over a community that was going noplace was empty and a lie.

Metropolitan government has been a great thing for Nashville. Notwithstanding that evidence and with an awareness of the mood of our time—and six years in today's chronology is a long time—and given the feelings about I-40, I wonder what would happen if metropolitan government were being sought there in 1969.

UNDERSTANDING

Leland Hazard, Chairman of the Governor's Committee for Transportation in Pennsylvania, addressed himself to the question of values in a statement summarizing the work of that Committee and Pennsylvania's transportation planning and development position.

> What values—and why—do people put on the fruits of science, artistry, invention, technology, spirituality, aesthetics? There is no trouble about the cost side. It is easy always to determine what a new facility or element or factor in man's well-being will cost. [We are] good about figuring costs. How to figure the benefit side—the benefits which are to be balanced against the costs—this is more difficult. [We are] not so good about that. The poets, philosophers, artists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and theologians are very good about words; but they are not as good about figures. Therefore, and for the most part, we have always looked only at the costs of developing the facilities and amenities by which men in society live. These costs are always stated in numbers, but we have great difficulty in developing numbers on the benefits side. We have been happy in retrospect when we put in, as the Chinese proverb has it, a stone and took out a jade.

When we talk about man and community values, we are talking about people, individuals, and how they relate to one another and the totality of their existence. We are talking about the conditions and circumstances that affect them in our highly complicated society, and how far removed they feel from influencing those considerations that can intimately impact their lives. It is small wonder that we find resentment and resistance. At issue is an individualism and its expression honored as a great American tradition.

Today, the issues that are real are the social issues; the values that are of first priority are the social values. If we do not recognize that fact, our deliberations can have been very much like the planning conference I attended about a month ago that sought to look ahead 50 years. The future is a projection of the past, we were told in elaborate prose; and they could have said the same thing 20 years ago.

We are in the eternal business of building a nation—a people. Our heritage is not the pyramid or the sphinx. It is the spirit of a people—a people who can make a city work because, with all of the stresses and strains, we have faith in each other, we have a use for each other, we have a common trust and a commitment to try to understand and share man's desire for a decent home, in a decent neighborhood, in a decent city.

We need to respond with a candor equal to the President's, when he was asked at a press conference: "Mr. President, do you agree with those who say you and your administration have a serious problem with distrust among the blacks, and whether you agree that it is one of your more serious problems, or not?...what are you doing to deal with what some consider to be this distrust among the blacks?"

The President said:

> I am concerned about this problem; and...those who have raised the question are not simply those who are political opponents.
> My task force on education pointed up that I was not considered—I think the words they used—a friend by many of our black citizens in America.
> I can only say that by my actions as President I hope to rectify that. I hope that by what we do in terms of dealing with the problems of all Americans it will be made clear that the President of the United States, as an elected official, has no state constituency.

> He has no congressional constituency. He does not represent any special
> group. He represents all the people ....
> Putting it another way, ...the President is the counsel for the people of this
> country and I hope I can gain the respect and, I hope, eventually the friend-
> ship of black citizens and other Americans.

Those of us concerned with transportation planning and development must strive to gain the renewed trust of all the people.

Those of us concerned with transportation planning and development must project an earnest expression for understanding individual uneasiness in the location and design of facilities and make this effort fully operational.

Those of us concerned with transportation planning and development must gain the involvement of people, the community, the region in the decisions to be made.

Those of us concerned with transportation planning and development must achieve an awareness and appreciation of community values that matches—and changes—the present feeling of apprehension when issues are joined between local and superior jurisdictions.

This is the truth of the task we face if our work is to have purpose and be useful.

How do we do this? Well, we may make a small beginning, in terms of some of the discussions here:

1. As Paul Ylvisaker says, by bleeding a little more for the Mattie Humphreys; Milano and Schloss have a few options left she does not have.

2. By using the Watts-Century Freeway as a prototype.

3. By reaching out for the kind of participation and involvement of people that Prof. Altshuler touched on.

4. By striving for the metropolitan awareness—the metropolitan morality—that has been referred to in bringing issues and people together.

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Appendix

THE FREEWAY IN THE CITY

A report to the Secretary, Department of Transportation, by the Urban Advisors to the Federal Highway Administrator, 1968, Washington, D.C.

Major Recommendations

1. Expand the application of the techniques of systems analysis and operations research as the most rational approach to the problems of planning, locating, and designing urban freeways.
2. Adopt the systems concept of an interdisciplinary team approach to urban freeway planning on every level—Federal, state, regional, and local.
3. Appoint an independent review board composed of qualified professionals to serve the Federal Highway Administrator, the Director of Public Roads, the state highway engineer, or the city public works chief in an advisory capacity.
4. Encourage and aid formal education in urban transportation and highway planning and design.
5. Establish a system of regional urban design institutes.
6. Encourage the formulation with each state of a total environmental planning commission.
7. Coordinate freeway considerations with the comprehensive planning of every affected community, city, and region.
8. Promote the integration of freeways with all other elements of the urban transportation system.
9. Stimulate more research on better ways of moving people and goods.
10. Investigate the possibilities of giving highway departments the authority to condemn and purchase lands adjacent to a proposed freeway or interchange.
11. Provide a more equitable basis of compensation for lands acquired for highway purposes.
12. Stimulate increased emphasis on the exploration and use of new modes of urban transit.
13. Encourage the multiple utilization of urban freeway rights-of-way.
14. Encourage state highway departments and local agencies to purchase and develop freeway-recreation corridors jointly.
15. Develop and promote the passage by states and the Federal government of advanced highway-related enabling legislation.
16. Encourage a high level of visual quality in every proposed freeway.