

# Livability: A Review of Presentations and Conversations

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# First Thoughts

Livability, livability,  
They seek it here, they seek it there,  
Those planners seek it everywhere,  
Is it in heaven, is it in hell?  
That damned elusive livability.

(With apologies to Baroness Orczy and the Scarlet  
Pimpernell)

# Declining to Define

- What do we mean by livability?
- The charge : explore definitional issues related to the concept of livability as related to transportation
- Livability = walkability (Duncan)
- DOT definition = livability defined as what the local community defines it to be
- Many backed off or declined to state, but some were willing to engage in definitions -
- Livability is about addressing and responding to change (Nadeau).

# A Work in Progress

- US DOT Secretary Ray LaHood defined livability as "investing in a way that recognizes the unique character of each community. The era of one-size-fits-all transportation projects must give way to one where preserving and enhancing unique community characteristics, be they rural or urban, is a primary mission of our work rather than an afterthought."

# Reiterating Themes

- Contextual demography
- Co-operation and re-organisation
- Complexity
- Creating livability
- Contribution from TRB and stakeholders to the livability discussion

# Context of demography

- 1. Housing + jobs 50 percent plus of costs
- 2. Generational contexts (especially boomers and millennials) will define the new market
- 3. Activity changes are increasingly important – 1940 the doctor, 2010 doctor +
- Economies of scale- everything bigger
- The workforce.



# Co-operation

- Integrate agencies
- Encourage (require) transportation, housing, energy and environment to talk to each other
- Start at the top
- Small grants with big payoffs



# Complexity

- Livability is the epitome of applying holistic thinking to transportation planning (Polzin)
- One size does not fit all – Bubba and his gun rack/pick up = livability in Mississippi but not in NYC
- Land use and transportation are complex dynamic systems, which are highly influenced by context
- Transportation has been (too) inward looking and does not engage with the wider connected network.

# Creating Livability

- How to go about “livability” stimulus?
- Demonstration projects, small but demonstrate the possibilities
- Will the market do it -as Cervero suggests?
- Are the demographic projections reliable? ( Portland City grew 3 %, suburbs in the county 12%, outlying counties 17%)
- Where does crime and safety fit in?

# Implementing Livability

- Who does it appeal to?
- What is the time frame of the political constituency?
- What is the cost of government responses?
- What is the cost of equity affects? and
- What are the data constraints?

# Where does diversity fit in?



# Does livability have a middle class bias?

- Yes and No – Cervero yes, Foy not necessarily,
- Rosenbaum develop a more inclusive notion of livability – move away from keeping people out and consider the implications of an aging society so back to demography.
- No broad coalition because minority households are moving out to where they can afford housing and are not focused on inner city regeneration and aging households are moving to gated and “safe” communities.

# What might TRB and other stakeholders do about livability?

- Demonstration projects.
- Distinguish between individual and infra-structural approaches to livability.
- Examine how fiscal austerity constrains (any/all) approaches to transportation /livability incorporation.
- How to make policy when data is limited.

# Questions for Discussion

- Does livability matter , is it truly a local matter or does it have national legs?
- How does livability matter for the 40+ million new residents in the United States?
- What do we know about livability outside of the ivory tower?
- Is it elitist and can it be made less (un) elitist?
- Space and time (can we have both?)