

Transportation in the 21st Century Innovative Planning Efforts in Boston?

Presented at Rail~Volution

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by

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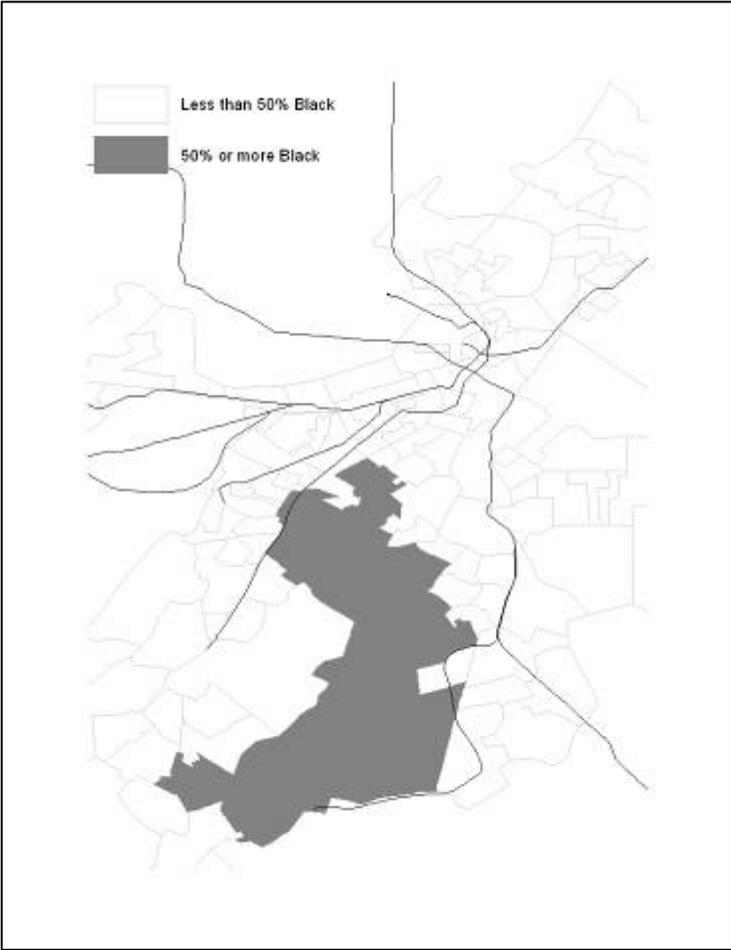
Alternatives for Community & Environment



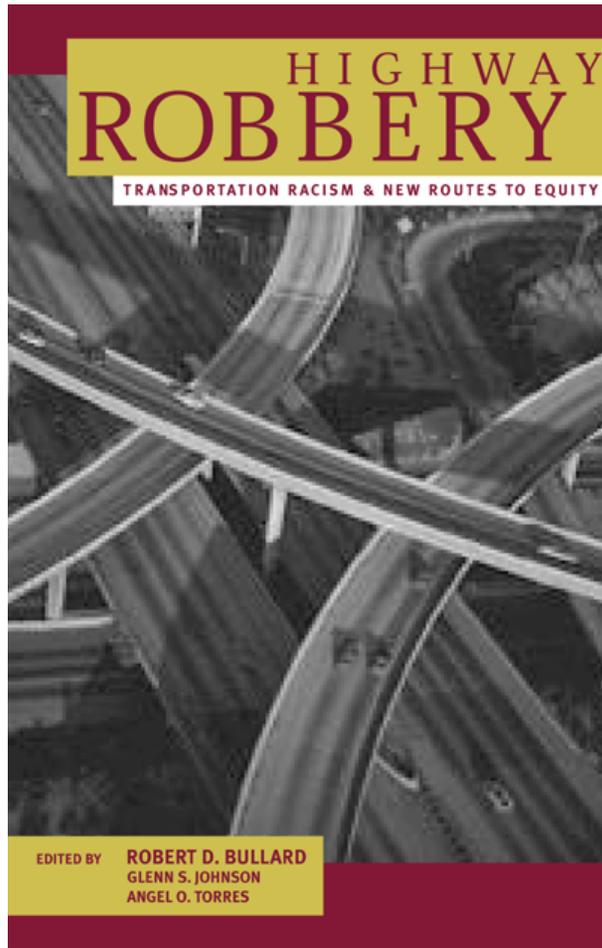
Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE)

- Founded in 1993. Located in Roxbury, MA.
- Mission
 - ACE builds the power of lower income communities and communities of color to eradicate environmental racism and classism and achieve environmental justice. We believe that everyone has the right to a healthy environment and to be decision makers in issues affecting their community.
- Transit Related Activities
 - T Riders Union (TRU) (staff)
 - *On the Move*: The Greater Boston Transportation Justice Coalition (on the steering committee)
 - ACTION for Regional Equity (on the leadership committee)
 - Transportation for America (on the Executive Committee)
 - Move Massachusetts (on the Board of Directors)
- Why transportation justice advocacy by ACE?
- Good and affordable transit is essential for our communities, yet there is a history of non-investment and disinvestment in those communities.

Boston's African American Community and Subway / Light Rail Network



Transit Inequities



- Demonstrates through case studies enduring inequality in public transportation.
- Access to healthy, reliable, and practical transportation eludes many lower-income people and people of color. Exclusion from transportation means compromised physical and social mobility and life choices.
- Transportation policy and urban planning have contributed to the establishment and enforcement of racial and economic inequality.
- The 1964 Civil Rights Act did not end government-sponsored discrimination.

U.S. DOT and EJ

environmental justice

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"Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations."

*Executive Order 12898,
Federal Actions to Address
Environmental Justice in Minority
Populations and Low - Income
Populations, 1994*

Welcome to the U.S. Department of Transportation Environmental Justice website.

An Overview of Transportation and Environmental Justice

A 1994 Presidential Order directed every Federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission. The DOT is committed to a comprehensive, inclusive approach. Get the basics here.



Boston MPO

EJ Committee members resign

- 2003 letter to Romney Administration from the MPO EJ Committee:
 - “...writing to express our frustration and concerns over the MPO’s failure to adequately address environmental justice and public participation. We believe the MPO has not met its own mandate to meaningfully “engage low income and minority communities in the MPO’s consideration of the equitable distribution of transportation benefits and burdens in its decision-making.””
 - “The Boston MPO is finalizing its next 25-year Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) *without meaningful review* of the input and recommendations of its own Environmental Justice Committee.”

Innovation

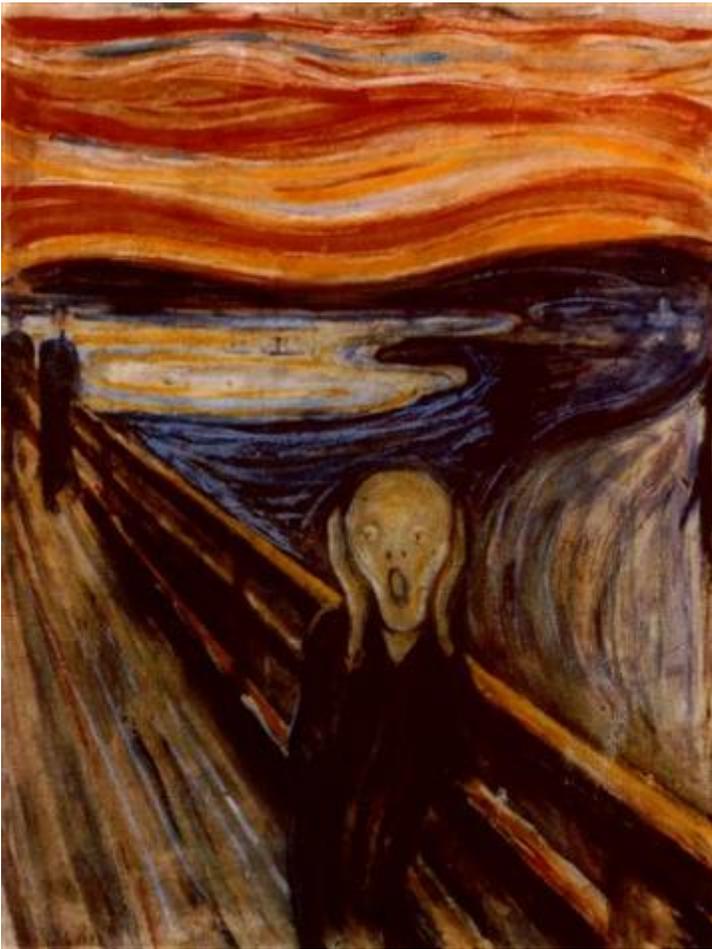
- A new way of doing something.
- A change in thinking, products, processes, or organizations.
- In many fields, something new must be substantially different to be innovative.
- The goal of innovation is positive change, to make something better.

My question to transit and land use planners and advocates



- What should I be talking about on the panel? I have some ideas ... but would really appreciate your input. What are the innovative transit planning efforts in Boston that you think are worthwhile? What are not? What is the big picture?

What did they say?



- The answers I received were rather startling in what they show about how transportation planning in Boston is seen.

Answer

- FS: What I find interesting, and a point of departure in any comments you may make as a panelist, is where Rail-volution got the idea that Boston is amongst the world's most progressive metropolitan areas in terms of transit—what are they thinking??

Answer

- FS (continued): We've just spent \$16 billion on a roadway system while the state has "nickel and dimed" us on urban transit projects, breaking promises to Roxbury and Jamaica Plain about rail service into the central subway. In constructing the new central artery, little or no provision was made to get freight rail service to the waterfront area, dooming us as a port to trucking goods from the port inland. In addition, many rail rights of way that could be used for freight and commuter service in eastern Massachusetts have been allowed to deteriorate from lack of use There has been no serious discussion, let alone action, on plans like London's congestion charging or Paris's public bicycle program or Amsterdam's traffic calming program or Portland's urban streetcar system, and on and on.

Answer

- KK: Boston has the legacy of extraordinary transit investment in the past that we still benefit from, the over reliance on recent investment in auto-centric highway construction, and financial systems that are quite unable to face up to contemporary realities. I see little innovation. We will need to figure out how to use the basic systems we already have much more effectively.

Answer

- ER: I wish that I could be more positive about innovative planning, but I really do not see it -- except from the advocacy community. I think you could mention that transit advocates view transit investment as a way to make a more coherent, comprehensive and efficient system while planning by the transportation agencies is fragmented and project based. This is not necessarily just a problem with the way planning is approached in the state, but it is also a function of how it is financed.

Answer

- JR: Here's the big picture as I see it: whether we build the projects in the RTP or not, the mode share doesn't change by 2030. Even if we don't build the projects in the RTP, transit use is projected to increase by 50% by 2030, which far exceeds the capacity of the current system. The plan does not address how the significant growth in transit ridership demand by 2030 will be accommodated.

Answer

- CH: This would be innovation, big picture. Within the MAPC region, Massachusetts will endeavor to plan, fund and operate a transportation system that focuses on mobility management and a goal of reducing auto mode share by 50% in 2030. To do that, the system must become accessible, affordable and convenient 24/7 for anyone who is transit dependent, low income or unable/unwilling to drive, regardless of where they live/work. Specific attention will be paid to connecting disconnected retail and housing clusters outside of the Boston/Cambridge/Somerville center via innovative flex routes and dial a ride services as well as multi-use paths that encourage biking and walking. Funding will be identified to achieve and maintain a state of good repair as well as fund the restoration of abandoned transit services and long needed transit projects such as Blue-Red Connector, Fairmont Rapid Transit, Urban Ring Rail PH.III and electrifying all of the commuter rail lines. Further the Commonwealth will protect ROW and move forward on transit expansion, in conjunction with the Federal commitment to transit and High Speed Rail, all the while forsaking additional highway and roadway capacity.

Answers

- JM: Perhaps the most innovative idea the T currently has is open-sourcing their data (so people can write iPhone applications and such) and other social media aspects. Obviously I think the T is lacking in innovative ideas. Sorry I can't think of more positive stuff right now.

Answers received

- CD: one transit project that is in the planning stages is in Allston-Brighton: (1) in the short term adding a commuter rail stop in Allston or Brighton, which historically had a few rail stations but now have none and (2) in the medium term add additional smaller stops which would be served by DMUs at 15-20 minute intervals. This would provide relatively "rapid" transit into and out of downtown along a corridor that is currently only served by buses.

Answers

- KW: I think we need more subways - way expensive but it is the only thing that will get transit out of traffic and not take much real estate. Probably need to put the Green Line (B and C) underground. Extend the Orange Line to Needham; extend the Blue Line to Lynn. The Urban Ring as is presently outlined needs a whole new rethink. BRT is too expensive for little benefit. Need to make traffic rules that favor buses. Steep, steep fines for parking in bus stops and for not yielding to buses as they get out of the stop. Signal priority for streetcars and buses.

Answers received

- SN: The big deal out here in Newton and Needham is the proposal for a light rail extension of the Green Line.
- LS: Some thoughts on projects that, if implemented, would steer people towards public transit in their daily lives:
 - Regional cooperation on bike-sharing
 - Regional cooperation on street parking, permitting, and meter pricing
 - Regional cooperation on promotional and other support for car-sharing
 - Statewide gasoline tax hike

Answer

- JK: Well, I'd definitely talk about Boston's failures, especially the "Silver Line" bus. We have the T and the state transportation planners chasing after whatever federal aid they can get the most easily: If bus rapid transit is the FTA's flavor of the month, then by golly that's what we'll build--never mind that what eventually is produced ... bears little resemblance to BRT.

Answer

- PS: I'm not ready to throw BRT as a concept under the bus. The fact that it isn't executed well is different from the question of whether it can be executed well. I think at a minimum we need to get better at extracting and applying the lessons from the projects that are successful across as many of these elements as possible rather than doing the same dumb things over and over.

Answer

- FS: I might disagree with PS's indulgence for BRT, but only because the kind of bus service that the T calls BRT is not, and cannot be without the kinds of massive investments that would indeed make it "rapid," i.e., subways, exclusive roadways, etc. And these are nowhere to be seen.

Answers

- GB: I do NOT think the 28X signifies a good process nor planning. On the positive side....I can't think of something.
- PG: I would mention the stupidity of spending \$1+ billion for the S Coast rail project which will suffer from low ridership and a dearth of TOD opportunities at most stations.

Answer

- EBB: 1) The Fairmount Line new stations with TOD/affordable housing would be an example but the T's insistence on using old rolling stock keeps it off the list; 2) The Green Line expansion to Somerville and Medford, if combined with good TOD/affordable housing; 3) MAPC's Metro Future if it can be implemented; 4) the health impact assessment required by the transportation reorganization law if the results drive change.

Why?

- No apparent commitment to innovation – not on the agenda
- Inadequate funding / financing systems
- No commitment to robust and meaningful community involvement
- Little connection between housing, land use, and transportation planning
- Diffuse authority and responsibility

On the Move's transportation justice agenda

- A public transit system that is reliable, affordable, and safe, works for all riders, is equitable across transit types, and recognizes the special importance of public transit to people who cannot afford automobiles. Transit dependent neighborhoods must receive first class rapid transit service that provides direct access to major employment, government, health care, shopping, culture, education, and recreation destinations.
- A transportation system in which clean air, environmental protection, environmental justice, and protection of the public health are top priorities and in which no community is overburdened with pollution or other adverse impacts of transportation.

On the Move's transportation justice agenda

- A transportation funding system that provides adequate funds for reliable, affordable, and safe urban transit and safe bicycle and pedestrian spaces on all of our streets.
- A transportation planning system in which transportation improvements further the creation of diverse livable communities with housing affordable to all income levels. Transit improvement and expansion projects must protect and build stable and diverse neighborhoods and not cause the displacement of lower income communities or communities of color.
- A transportation decision-making system that is democratic, open, transparent, and accountable to transit riders, and in which transit dependent riders have a seat at the table. The Boards of the MBTA and the MPO must be representative of the persons they serve and include public transit riders from transit dependent communities. The MBTA and MPO must prioritize meaningful public involvement by all segments of the community in their decision making processes.