Railvolution
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Chair, Congress for the New Urbanism
The unintended consequences of suburbanization:

climate instability & dependence on foreign oil
Urban dwellers have approx 1/3 the carbon footprint of urban dwellers. VMT and land urbanization have outpaced population growth 5 times.

disinvestment in downtowns

poverty and social segregation
Since 2005 more Americans in poverty live in suburbs than cities

public health concerns
Dramatic increases in obesity linked to sedentary lifestyles in suburbia

affordability?
The savings of “drive ‘til you qualify” are wiped out by rising transportation costs
Low density increases municipal service delivery costs 40% on average
drivers of retrofitting:

demographic shifts
2/3 of suburban hh’s don’t have kids, 85% of new hh’s won’t through 2025

the new centers
as metros have expanded, first ring suburbs now have a central location. Competition or complement?

underperforming asphalt
building on the parking lots with existing infrastructure

public sector leadership
the recession has enabled planning depts and federal agencies to be proactive

public private partnerships
1100 shopping malls: 1/3 are dead or dying
50,000+ strip malls, 11% vacancy rate

350,000+ big box stores, 300 mil vacant sf
22% of homes are “underwater” (29% in ‘11)
3 Retrofitting Strategies

**Reinhabitation**
Cheap space for community-serving uses
“Third Spaces”
Tactical Urbanism

**Redevelopment**
Urbanize, densify, and connect
Reduce auto-dependency and wasted energy
Accommodate demographic changes

**Regreening**
Ecological repair
Parks and green infrastructure
Food and energy production
I have a dream...

- Retrofit aging commercial strip corridors into beautiful *transit-served boulevards* with mixed-use nodes
- Line them with proud housing that replaces “drive ‘til you qualify affordability”
- Improve connections to existing neighborhoods
Intersection retrofit and public placemaking as catalyst

From strip corridor to multi-way boulevard and new downtown

Palm Canyon Drive, Cathedral City, CA; Freedman, Tung & Bottomley  
source: Dunham-Jones, Williamson, 2009
From strip corridor to multi-way boulevard gateway and mixed-use Boundary Street, Beaufort, SC: Josh Martin, Dover Kohl & Partners

SC H.3604: The Commercial Center Revitalization Act

- Enable the retrofitting of shopping malls and shopping centers into dense, walkable, mixed-use town centers.”
Retrofitting the strip corridor with transit-served nodes
Columbia Pike, Arlington County, VA, Ferrell Madden Associates, Dover Kohl & Partners
Comprehensive corridor planning using BRT and streetcars to drive retrofitting

Plan El Paso: City of El Paso, TX, Dover, Kohl & Partners
retrofitting land use, transportation and energy on a commercial corridor

Cambie Corridor, Vancouver, BC, Vancouver City Planning Department
Are we simply replacing overzoning for retail with overzoning for mixed-use on many of our corridors?

Has Transfer of Development Rights worked along corridors to concentrate growth at nodes and “rightzone” inbetween?

Are corridor retrofts the low-hanging fruit or lipstick on a pig?

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