

Presentation: “It Takes A Whole Town to Raise a Pedestrian”  
Presentation: Professor Spenser W. Havlick, University of Colorado  
and Boulder Councilmember  
Location: Ibis Hotel, 334 Murray Street, Perth, WA, 09:00 – 10:30AM, October 23,  
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### Topical Outline

The commitment to embrace a pedestrian ethic must come from citizens, business leaders, elected officials, school authorities and planning staff members.

Pedestrian facilities do not happen by accident; they are the result of a well designed, carefully orchestrated, and sufficiently financed pedestrian plan of action. It needs to be part of, but independent of the community’s transportation master plan.

Pedestrianism includes all members of the human settlement. A pedestrian-friendly town takes care of its walkers at the three most critical periods in the human life cycle: in the dawn of life (the young), in the darkness of life (the poor, disabled, and homeless) and in the twilight of life (the frail and elderly). A car-based society cripples all three categories of people.

Often auto transportation budgets need to be re-prioritized. If a town wants a modal split of 20% made up of cyclists and pedestrians, etc. then 20% of the highway, car-related budget should be directed to alternate modes.

Examples of pedestrian-friendly designs, facilities and programs are widely available. Each must be modified for the town that is hoping to do a better job of raising and protecting its pedestrians.

Here is a brief list of pedestrian-friendly ideas:

- In pavement flashing lights at pedestrian crossings
- Safe and attractive underpasses and overpasses
- User-friendly benches, rest areas and transit shelters
- Footpaths and sidewalks smooth and free of obstructions
- Priority footpath detours at street construction sites
- Covered or shaded walkways
- A community pedestrian/cyclist coordinator
- The walking school bus
- Digital display of seconds remaining at crosswalk
- Map of historic and/or efficient walking, biking routes in town
- Footpaths separated from bikeway in high use areas
- Emergency phone boxes for increased security
- Walk to school, walk to work days with prizes
- Pedestrian connections between residence, schools, shopping, etc.
- Mid-block pedestrian crosswalk
- A town-generated Pedestrian Bill of Rights

In order for these and other facilities to be created and used, the town must educate itself about the health risks of not raising and protecting and motivating citizens, especially young people.

For example, in the United States sprawling suburbs make it harder for people to get around without a car. This helps fuel obesity. Americans who live in the most sprawling counties tend to weigh at least six more pounds than their counterparts in the most compact areas. Dr. Richard Jackson of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states “How you build things influences health in a much more pervasive way than I think most health professionals realize (Associated Press, Friday, August 29, 2003). Adults tested from compact counties had much lower rates of high blood pressure and obesity.

In Europe, people make 33 percent of their trips by foot or bicycle, compared with 9.4 percent of American trips. Only 20 percent of Americans get 30 minutes of exercise each day. Another study by Susan Vincent of Brigham Young University used pedometers to

calculate the number of steps children took during a series of typical days. Swedish boys, for example, took 18, 346 steps per day, Australians 15, 023 and Americans took 13, 872.

The time may come when health educators will be motivated to take more aggressive action in the battle against obesity. The medical evidence is accumulating to levels not unlike the risk of cancer from tobacco use. Overweight individuals have increased risk of diabetes, cardio-vascular disease, and in later life, structural (skeletal) problems with back, legs and feet.

Tobacco product packages must carry risk warnings. Are we prepared to battle with the multi-billion dollar fast food industries and advocate for health risk warnings on foods and food products that have unhealthy levels of fat? Have we arrived at a point where the knowledge of excess fat in fish and chips, milk, frozen dinners, creamy ice cream, and greasy hamburgers must be on the package in order to save lives – or at least to emphasize a more healthy diet?

Only in recent years have epidemiological data been gathered in Canada, the Netherlands, the U.K. and the United States to document this deficient care and planning for children. The work of Mueller, Rivarra, Shyh-Mine, and Weiss (1990), Rivarra (1990), Preston (1995), Sandels (1995), Agran, Castillo and Winn (1996), Kraus et al (1996), Wazana, et al (1997), and many others have focused on the risk and prevention of child-auto injuries and fatalities. What is missing in this body of research is a concerted effort at the regional planning level to develop policies and action guidelines to protect young people who as pedestrians have a very high degree of vulnerability in automobile-dominated metropolitan areas. What may be needed is a "Bill of Rights for Children Pedestrians." At the very least, there appears an urgent need for design guidelines, pedestrian education, and auto driver sensitivity to be incorporated into the regional planning schemes which until now have left *the child as pedestrian* in the shadows.

The emphasis for increased regional mobility in the United States and elsewhere has been directed to the most affluent, most privileged segment of the population. Furthermore,

the regional transportation systems which favor the car-- usually the single-occupant vehicle-- are targeted for a rather small percentage of society. In many cases, it is less than half of the total population that receives the direct benefits of widened roadways, expanded turning radii, new acceleration or deceleration lanes, HOV lanes, and most recently, high occupancy toll lanes (HOT lanes). In a democratic society it is surprising how a powerful minority can direct huge public investments into highway infrastructure with almost total disregard for the mobility of young people. Consider that 25% (65,319,000) of the U.S. population is 0 - 16 years and legally prohibited from driving. (However, in Hawaii the legal age for issuance of a motor vehicle license is eighteen.) Then there is approximately 5% (13 million) of the driving age that has a mental or physical disability which precludes operation of a motor vehicle. Fourteen per cent (36,425,000) of Americans are at poverty level which probably precludes a car purchase, lease, or rental. The number of people that would be considered frail, elderly and not able to drive is about 5% (14,000,000). One additional figure (5% or nine million) needs to be added-- that representing those in the driving age category who are afraid to drive at all in the metropolitan traffic congestion because of road rage, those who choose not to drive for environmental reasons or reasons of national security or personal health. Therefore, probably more but at least 52% (137,947,680) of the U.S. society\* is not provided the opportunity to operate their own auto.

Regional transportation planning in the United States has focused primarily on the automobile. Bus, bikeway, passenger rail and other mechanized modes are in distant second, third and fourth rankings. The means of travel that has had almost no attention at the regional level of planning is the pedestrian. There is essentially a total absence of regional planning for the mobility of children or pedestrians.

What makes this lack of safe mobility for children at a regional scale somewhat peculiar is the fact that for more than fifty years we have seen regional planning commissions and regional councils of governments established to manage and to protect soils (TVA, Appalachian Regional Commission), fisheries (Great Lakes Basin Commission), recreation potential (Detroit's Clinton-Huron Metropolitan Park Authority is one of

hundreds of metro-regional bodies), waste water collection (Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission or other metro treatment entities), and electrical generation and distribution (Bonneville Regional Power Authority). Thus the often fatal omission in regional planning is the safety of the child as a pedestrian.

\* Population data and numbers in each of the categories described above were obtained from the 1996 Statistical Abstracts.

Motor vehicles are responsible for one of every five deaths of 1 - 14 year olds, according to work reported by Agran, Winn and Anderson (1998). Of those deaths, more than one-third are pedestrian fatalities.

The traffic calming and anti-automobile literature has very few references about the importance of the child pedestrian. But Jane Holtz Kay in Asphalt Nation (1997) has two pages out of 417 which tell how children are paralyzed. She writes:

*"Given our far flung, single family, single use suburban environment that purges pedestrians, given our urban environment drained of life by flight, given landscape lacking sidewalks and multilane roads that terrorize parents and children alike, impaired mobility is more than inevitable. It is a social tragedy... Across America, children and young people are the victims of declining transit services, suffering not only from debasement of walking and bicycling by the car but also from its depletion of public transportation... We fear for our children of all ages. From the toddler wobbling off the curb at his or her peril, to the teenager on a bicycle forced to vie for space with the speeding internal combustion machine, our children's road-warped lives fill us with dread."*

A good society, a great region, a caring nation takes care of its people at the three most critical times in the human cycle: in the dawn of life (the young), in the darkness of life (the poor, disabled, and homeless), and in the twilight of life (the frail and elderly). A car-based society or region cripples all three.

One of the most common governmental subunits of a regional or metropolitan area is the school district. Neighborhood schools, especially for the elementary grades were cherished and integral parts of a community. However, it is with increased competition for colleges and jobs that parents believe they must shop for the most specialized curriculum in order that their child has the best available learning opportunity even if that grade school is ten miles away or in the next town. The child no longer walks to the neighborhood school with neighborhood friends. Instead, the young student is chauffeured across the town or across the school district to a "focus school" or a "charter" school for an enriched curriculum that may not be available at the neighborhood school. It is a new freedom of choice for the parents but it imprisons the child who becomes carbound, unable to walk or bicycle to school with neighborhood friends.

The additional trips and miles per trip are expanded-- just what no regional form of government wants. Still worse is the loss of exercise for the elementary and middle school population. The cross-city and cross- region car trips caused by open selection of curriculum is a dilemma faced by regional transportation planners, usually after the damage has been done. Thus, the traditional neighborhood school loses its necessary student enrollment; the classroom numbers shrink below a threshold without the school principal empowered to reverse the trend. The school may shrink to a size the school district cannot afford to operate, and it closes. Then, because of unconnected sidewalks and dangerous streets, the students in the closed school boundary must be driven instead of being able to bike or walk to the nearest schools. A pattern of car use and car dependency is learned in the most formative of years. By the licensing age of sixteen automobile dominance is irreversible. Furthermore, the roads and expressways of the region are saturated with the new, most hazardous drivers.

The remedies to protect the child as pedestrian are being implemented in selected areas of the world. Woonerfs of Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands are accepted neighborhood street treatments instead of the experiments of thirty years ago. Mid-block raised crosswalks, photo radar, sleeping policemen, neckdowns, school traffic guards and a host of other physical and educational measures are in place in neighborhoods that were dehumanized by speeders, traffic noise, and reckless driving. Sidewalk connectivity and safety, child-friendly walk signals at lower sight levels, off-road bicycle paths, and Toronto's "walking school bus" are some of the recent innovations to protect the child pedestrian from harm.

**Potential solutions to help more children from inactivity to increased physical life styles.**

The "walking school bus" is championed in many places including Toronto and Boulder, Colorado as an easy-to-implement corrective measure for reclaiming neighborhoods and cities as safe walkable places for children. The idea involves volunteer parents who acts as "walking school bus drivers" by picking up and delivering children to school and home again. Footprints can be painted on the Walking School Bus routes, identifying to the community that this is children's territory. According to Toronto's Greenest City report in 1971, 80% of British and Canadian children aged 7 and 8 were allowed to walk to school unaccompanied by an adult. By 1990 this figure had dropped to only 9%. Increased travel distance, busy highway crossings, and child molestation are given as some of the reasons why so few elementary age children walk or bicycle to school in the 1990's.

Perhaps the time has come for a "Bill of Rights for Children Pedestrians." The U.S. Constitution, adopted in 1789, contained few personal guarantees. It was not until 1791 that James Madison proposed ten amendments which came to be known as the "Bill of Rights," most of which were actual guarantees for specific rights and freedoms. The Canadian Bill of Rights was adopted as recently as 1960. It may be appropriate for metropolitan regions, through research and guidance from regional planning authorities

to establish a unified set of guarantees to protect our children's pedestrian right to a safe, healthy, economically efficient, agreeable alternative forms of transportation. Here, then, is a draft of fifteen articles or amendments which might constitute a "Bill of Rights for Pedestrian Children":

- I. The right of children as pedestrians to be safe from ice, snow and broken surfaces as they use city sidewalks.
- II. The right of children as pedestrians to be able to cross at walk signals in the appropriate span of time.
- III. The right of young pedestrians and bicyclists to use major city pathways or pedestrian ways at night thanks to adequate lighting and police presence.
- IV. The right of children to have pedestrian overpasses or underpasses when the vehicular roadway reaches a specified capacity or poses a serious threat to people who must cross the street or highway.
- V. The right of the children (and other pedestrians, of course) to have the right-of-way at all CBD pedestrian crossings, designated school and neighborhood crosswalks and that this be strictly enforced.
- VI. The right of the child pedestrian to not be impeded by vegetation or structural barriers on the sidewalks and to be protected from harmful traffic noise.
- VII. The right of the automobile user transporting children to park at outlying lots and enjoy alternative modes of transit to a region's major shopping complexes, sports events or educational facilities.

- VIII. The right of the child pedestrian to a pleasant walking experience due to increased number of benches, use of public art', fountains and other aesthetics including creative, protective landscaping.
- IX. The right of the child pedestrian to walk conveniently and well-protected from rain, snow or excessive summer sun in retail commercial areas with the assistance of canopies, archways, or covered walkways.
- X. The right of children pedestrians to be safe and well-separated from roadways by protective splash rails, adequate frontage buffers or vegetative barriers.
- XI. The right of children pedestrians to know through adequate signage where retail outlets exist, where public rights-of-way are available to park and open space land, to recreation facilities, and to schools, and how to reach other basic needs via pedestrian access.
- XII. The right of children pedestrians to a reasonable "peace of mind" (the right of "pursuit of happiness" for pedestrians of all ages and abilities) through increased enforcement where red and yellow lights will not be run by autos and where school and neighborhood speed zones will be enforced.
- XIII. The right of the children pedestrians to use selected downtown alleyways and traffic-calmed streets which have become pedestrianized due to lighting, surface treatment, new retail incentives, etc.
- XIV. The right of children pedestrians to be able to activate mid-block crosswalk signals, especially along urban collector and other streets of high density and high traffic volume.
- XV. The right of children pedestrians in Australian cities to participate in reciprocal respect and courtesy for those who must use an automobile. At the same time, if it

could be determined that those who prefer to use alternate modes of transportation do contribute to an improved quality of life in metropolitan regions and built-up areas, then a long-term program should be launched to encourage greater participation in alternative modes of transport.

I would like to propose the establishment of small pedestrian priority zones throughout cities in progressive towns where localized business, school, neighborhood or other interests may wish to stress the importance of pedestrians more than we do at present.

If a community want a “Bill of Rights” for pedestrians, bicyclists, or people with disabilities it is useful to include this element in the town’s transportation master plan (TMP). The TMP outlines capital improvements, sets a budget over time to implement objectives and provides opportunity for future revisions and updates (Toor and Havlick, 2004). Programs that prove effective for the health and safety of children must be expanded and extended to youth in secondary education and university settings.

**The challenge can be met.**

The challenge is daunting to bring about a change from national obesity, from addiction to fast foods and fast cars, and to seek future health and longevity by active living.” Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”(Corinthians 13:2) So we must have compassion and charity in order to move the community toward more active living.

I contend it is easier to move mountains that it is to move people in a free and democratic society. With charity and hope and a resolute spirit we must try. And I believe we shall persevere.

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