

e² transport — Portland: A Sense of Place

In the 1950s and 1960s, the city of Portland, Oregon looked similar to many American cities. After the popularization of the automobile, many in the middle class moved out of the city to the suburbs. Much of the economic activity went with them, leaving city centers largely abandoned. Before long, the downsides of life in the suburbs became apparent. With residences, retail outlets and commercial centers separated from each other, people found themselves spending a lot of time in their cars on congested roads.

In the 1970s, as a result of the vision of the governor of Oregon at the time, Tom McCall, and a few civic leaders, the city of Portland began its transformation into the sustainable city that it is today. One of the most significant policies instituted by the governor was the first statewide land-use planning system in the country. While its original purpose was to preserve the rural landscape of the state, the introduction of the urban growth boundary is considered by some to be the most important contribution of the law. Within a boundary line that was created around each city in the state, urban development was permitted; the land outside the line was preserved for farm and forest uses.

Knowing that expansion was not unlimited, the leaders in Portland's city hall decided to focus on accessibility rather than mobility. They scrapped a planned highway project and instead opted for a light rail, which was the first step towards decades of transit-oriented development in Portland. They encouraged business owners to set up shop near transit stops, believing that people would choose public transportation over their cars if they were given a good option. Since that time, the city's development has been focused on pedestrians.

As recently as 1998, the Pearl District, now one of the most vibrant neighborhoods in Portland, was nothing more than an abandoned rail yard. In 2001, bolstered by the success of the light rail, the city built the first modern streetcar line in the country in order to foster development. With leaders like Charlie Hales, a Portland City Commissioner at the time and community members like Michael Powell, the owner of Powell's Books, developers were convinced that the permanent nature of a streetcar would guarantee the success of the new neighborhood. Knowing that mixed-use development would benefit the community, the city required new buildings to have ground floor retail space, but not parking. The streetcar has been even more popular than expected. While it was projected to serve 2,800 passengers per day, it now carries 10,000 passengers daily.

In the video, residents praise the convenience of the transportation and store-owners remark on the increased business from foot traffic, but perhaps more impressive are the environmental benefits that have resulted from this new pedestrian-friendly Portland.



Since 1990, Portland has reduced greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation by 14% and per capita vehicle miles traveled by 17%. In the same time period, public transit rider-ship has increased by 90% and bicycling has increased by 257%. Portland has not achieved these environmental benefits by forcing people out of their cars. Instead, they have provided good public transportation options, made the city pedestrian-friendly and provided bike lanes. The citizens have proven that given the choice, they want to walk, bike, or ride to their destination. The quality of life of Portland's citizens has improved, as have the local economy and environment.

To find out more about land-use planning in Portland, Oregon, visit www.portlandonline.com/planning

To find out more about the 1000 Friends of Oregon, visit www.friends.org

To find out more about the history of Portland, Oregon, visit www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?c=27408



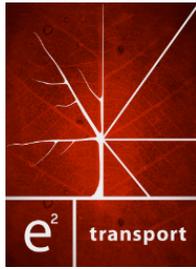
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PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

- 1) Is there a public transportation system in your community? List all that exist. How often, if ever, do you use it? Explain the reasons you do or do not use public transportation.
- 2) If you could have ten establishments within walking distance of your home, which ten places would you choose? (i.e. school, grocery store, park, etc.) Mark each item on your list with the following letters based on how you can get to each place now.
 - a. W – Walk
 - b. B – Bike
 - c. D – Drive
 - d. P – Public transportation (this includes a school bus)
- 3) Who decides what type of transportation exists in your town? Who decides what kinds of buildings can be built in your community? What types of rules exist about the types of buildings that can be built? You might want to do some research.

POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS

- 1) What is transit-oriented development? Was it successful in Portland, Oregon? Do you think it could be a model for other cities in the world? Why or why not? List some potential benefits and drawbacks to transit-oriented development.
- 2) How did policy-makers affect the way that Portland developed from the 1970s until today? Use specific examples from the video to support your answer.
- 3) What role did community members play in shaping the development in Portland from the 1970s until today? Use specific examples from the video to support your answer.
- 4) Why did Charlie Hales think that the streetcar would be more appealing to developers than another form of public transportation? What are some factors that



developers must consider before building in a neighborhood? What risks and rewards exist for developers who invest in a new neighborhood?



NATIONAL STANDARDS FROM MCREL STANDARD

Civics

Standard 2.2 - Understands how civil society allows for individuals or groups to influence government in ways other than voting and elections.

Standard 19.5 - Understands the influence that public opinion has on public policy and the behavior of public officials

Standard 21.2 - Understands the processes by which public policy concerning a local, state, or national issue is formed and carried out

Standard 21.3 - Knows the points at which citizens can monitor or influence the process of public policy formation

Engineering Education

Standard 14.4: Understands how societal interests, economics, ergonomics, and environmental considerations influence a solution.

Standard 17.6: Understands tradeoffs among characteristics such as safety, function, cost, ease of operation, quality of post-purchase support, and environmental impact when selecting systems for specific purposes

Life Skills/Life Work

Standard 6.2 - Uses public transportation effectively (e.g., identifies transportation alternatives, determines transportation needs).



Technology

Standard 3.2 - Knows ways in which social and economic forces influence which technologies will be developed and used (e.g., cultural and personal values, consumer acceptance, patent laws, availability of risk capital, the federal budget, local and national regulations, media attention, economic competition, tax incentives).

Standard 4.5 - Knows that since there is no such thing as a perfect design, trade-offs of one criterion for another must occur to find an optimized solution.

Standard 4.6 - Knows that a design involves different design factors (e.g., ergonomics, maintenance and repair, environmental concerns) and design principles (e.g., flexibility, proportion, function).

Standard 6.6 - Knows that modern transportation systems are diverse (allowing humans to combine types of transportation for the most direct and convenient route), intelligent (requiring coordinated subsystems, such as a traffic light system), and are necessary in the functioning of most other technologies.