Abundant Access: Public Transport as an Instrument of Freedom

Jarrett Walker, PhD
JarrettWalker.com
@HumanTransit
HumanTransit.org
What’s the problem?
What's the problem?
We had three choices

1. Economic stagnation.

2. Growth through sprawl.

3. Growth through urban redevelopment. → transit.
STOP DEMOLISHING PORTLAND

GET YOUR SIGN:
STOPDEMOLISHINGPORTLAND.ORG
HOUSING FOR ALL
We’d love to give you some of our prosperity.

But for urban redevelopment, you’ll need more transit.
Is “Innovation” replacing transit?
**Problem**

Emissions
Efficient Use of Energy

Efficient use of Human Labor
Safety

Efficient Use of Space
(in dense cities)

**Solution**

Electric Vehicles

Autonomous Vehicles

Big Vehicles (Transit)
It’s about Space

- Technology never changes geometry!

Much worse, really! Induced demand!
Transit is a Win-Win

The more people use cars, the worse cars work. (and the worse everything else works)

The more people use transit, the better transit (and everything else) works.
THE WALL AROUND YOUR LIFE
The limits of your freedom.

Blue = 15 min
Green = 30 min
Pink = 45 min

Where can I be, soon?
Blue = 15 min
Green = 30 min
Pink = 45 min
… and personal responsibility

Blue = 15 min
Green = 30 min
Pink = 45 min
What if we were trying to “grow these blobs” … ?

Blue = 15 min
Green = 30 min
Pink = 45 min

How much of the city, in all its richness, is available to me? →

How free am I?
Abundant Access means ...

as many people as possible ...

able to reach as many destinations as possible ...

as quickly as possible ...

so that they have as many real choices and opportunities as possible ...

and are therefore ... free.
What is *transit* access made of?

**Walking** (and sometimes cycling) plus ...

A *network* of routes/lines designed to optimize:

1. Frequency
2. Span
3. Connections
4. Speed
5. Reliability
6. Capacity
THE RIDERSHIP (AND LIBERTY) RECIPE
The Ridership (and Liberty) Recipe

High all-day frequency …

Forming a connected network …

following patterns of …

• Density
• Walkability
• Linearity
Density

How many people are going to and from the area around each stop?

High ridership

Lower ridership
Walkability

Can the people around the stop walk to the stop?

High ridership

Lower ridership
Linearity

Can transit run in straight lines that are useful to through-riders?

Higher ridership, lower cost

Lower ridership, higher cost
Your voters know this!

Maps of almost all transit referendum votes are maps of density and walkability....
Transit will never be perceived as fair.
Transit will never be perceived as fair.

Density (+walkability +linearity)
WHAT CREATE VALUE
Do we need special kinds of transit to drive ridership or prosperity?

Ask a Canadian
INVESTMENT: Service Hours / Capita

How intensively does each urban area invest in transit?
“RELEVANCE”: Ridership / Capita

How widely used is transit?

- Edmonton
- Calgary
- Ottawa
- Vancouver
- Winnipeg
- Columbus
- Denver
- Des Moines
- Salt Lake City
- Portland
- Sacramento
What generates real estate value?

• Short term: The **appearance** of useful and liberating transit.

• Long term: Useful and liberating transit.
CHALLENGING BINARY THINKING
Challenge binary thinking:

“Choice Rider”
• “Make him leave the car in the driveway.”

“Dependent or Captive Rider”
• “Has to use transit no matter how bad it is.”
Challenge binary thinking:

“Choice Rider”

It’s a spectrum!

“Dependent or Captive Rider”

People are all in different situations, with different options, so incremental improvements can change their choice.
Segregation and specialization are the death of transit …

- Elites planning only for themselves.
- Interest groups demanding their own separate services.
- Planning for development outcomes without regard to usefulness → symbolic transit.
- → all these things make everyone’s liberty smaller!
We planned. It worked.

- You need a robust strategic transit plan.
  - Integrated with land use, roads, etc.

- Convene people in the presence of the geometric facts.

- Destroy the illusion of the status quo.

- Tell a story about:
  - prosperity
  - inclusion
  - liberty
Thank you.

Jarrett Walker, PhD
www.jarrettwalker.com
@humantransit
HumanTransit.org
Analyzing Project Love

Expected Liberty outcomes

Pure love of technology

Expected redevelopments

The Project

Causal links

Symbolic link

Better access to the city for a redevelopment's customers.

Attraction of development customers.

"Symbolic transit"