

How CNY Moves: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Wednesday, November 18, 2015, 12-2 p.m. at SUNY Oswego Metro Center

Co-chairs: Heidi Holtz and Mary Kate Intaglietta

OCL: Sandra Barrett, Eileen Jevis, Renée K. Gadoua

Note: Additional resource related to Nov. 3 session. How CNY Moves on Two Feet: Matt Tomasulo's founder of [WalkYourCity](#) and CityFabric shares his insights on city planning, pedestrian traffic, Ted Talk (see the highlights between 5:20 and 9:40):

https://youtu.be/XES_05qAjSw

- A. Session opened with screening of "Poynton Regenerated," a 15-minute video published on Jan 31, 2013. YouTube description: "A community in decline, divided by decades of anti-social traffic engineering, is reunited and revitalised by streetscape redesign"
- Main arterial route changed heart of city to: "traffic-signal controlled wasteland."
 - Challenge to accommodate flow of traffic w/o cutting village in half.
 - Green lights encourage speed; taking away lights encourages slower driving.
 - Changed busy intersection to "a place, a square, a plaza" by changing one circle to a double roundabout.
 - Gateways on approach to tell drivers ahead of time what to expect
 - "Shared space" reflects a shift in thinking – a way of "adding civility"
 - Shared space was common until about 60 years ago, when space was segregated for those driving and others.
 - Bringing speeds down creates different relationship between pedestrians and drivers.
 - Change doubled space for pedestrians. Reduced speed allows wider sidewalks.
 - Most ambitious streetscape design in UK to date
 - "The only way to retain the qualities of Poynton while keeping the traffic going."
 - "The guiding light (in planning) has to be what is best for Poynton in the long term."
 - Construction period destructive, but necessary for good end.
 - Resident after project: "There's so much more vitality about the village center."
 - Results: Faster travel, fewer accidents, more bicyclists, "kind gestures."
 - Speed limit vs. "designed speed" – effort to create a space that generates a certain speed.
 - Speed a good compromise for getting the traffic through and allowing pedestrian access.
 - Circle is a part of the space, not an appendage to the highway.
 - "If you're not comfortable, you're not going to dwell."
 - Unified both sides of the street and pedestrians can cross anywhere.
 - Moved forward our understanding of the interaction of people and traffic.
 - "It's brought the place into the 21st century."
 - "It has a very calming effect. We're all being kinder to each other."
 - "We've established a place people will want to be for years to come."
 - Project cost: £4M (~\$6M)

- More on this project: [Inspiring Infrastructure: Shared Space at Busy Intersection, Poynton](#)

B. **Dennis Connors**, curator of history at the Onondaga Historical Association, provided an overview, with historic pictures, of transportation in Central New York,

Some highlights from the presentation:

- Public transit routes in CNY date to 1805, with turnpikes connecting places like Manlius and Marcellus to Syracuse.
- By 1850, Syracuse was a city and coaches and omnibuses operated. Omnibuses often crowded by up to 20 people.
- 1860: First street railway line in city: People's Railroad.
- 1886: 16 stage lines ran from downtown to places including Manlius and Cicero. Line to Cicero ran until 1908.
- 1888: First electric cars began, providing local transit in Syracuse until early 1940s. Electricity for rails came from Tracy Street power house. 6 million passengers yearly when city population was 90K
- 1896: Rapid Transit Company extended tracks to less populated areas. This led to growth south of cities and suburbs.
- 1898: Inter-urban lines created.
- 1900: City's last horse-drawn lanes ended.
- In those days, there were no autos, but streets were open to everyone.
- 1900-1932: Golden age of electric rail. Rail lines removed by 1932.
- Growth of rail lines "expanded residential neighborhoods and enhanced the quality of life."
- Destinations and means to reach them led to creation of resort locations, like Iron Pier and White City Resort.
- Rails included high costs, labor challenges, accidents.
- 1890s: Bicycle fad. New York Telephone building had a bike room in the basement.
- 1890-1905: Syracuse known for manufacturing the Safety Bicycle.
- By 1920, personal autos more common, creating road congestion, conflicts with streetcars. (One company photographed a staged accident to appeal for safety.)
- Erie Canal ran east-west through the city. Any north-south street dead-ended into it. "It became the early I-81, dividing the city."
- 1920s: motor buses in use, with coal-fired stoves to warm passengers. (Syracuse Transit, private company)
- Pedestrians were warned to stay out of the way of vehicles.
- 1941: last run of city street car. Street paving began to cover rail lines.
- Increase in personal cars 1950-1960 led to 58 percent decrease in bus ridership.
- 1945: post-war planning report supported expressway
- Public transit needed funding to survive. State legislature created regional transportation council.

- OHA owns one of the country's largest collections of public transit information.
- Public transit companies did have some regulations to follow about safety.
- 1897: First traffic light in Syracuse at State and James streets – manually controlled by a police officer
- Automobile lobby promoted getting pedestrians out of the street.
- When Erie Canal (1825-1918) filled in in Syracuse, no effort to change angle of downtown streets.
- In 1920, some businesses were still using the canal to move products, but most people wanted the canal closed. NY wanted it closed because the NY State Barge Canal System was replacing it. The city had no incentive to keep it open.
- Clinton Square became a big parking lot after the canal closed.
- Riding streetcars was inexpensive. Factories were within walking distance of residential areas. As factories left the city, workers lost the ability to walk to work.
- Population 1848-1950 increased from immigration, creating consistent need for more housing.
- Development spread out from Clinton Square. Residential centers were farther away and people could not easily walk to downtown.
- Business owners would buy land and organized a rapid transit company, then sell housing with the pitch that area connected by transit. "That was an asset for those neighborhoods." Parallel to today: "For people without cars, the ability to live and work somewhere is very dependent on public transportation."

C. **Megan Costa**, assistant director for County Planning with the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA) discussed projected demographic changes for the county.

- Total county population 1940-2040: 295,108--→ projected to 469,880
- Little growth in county population in last 40 years.
- Increase in older population will mean new needs for housing and transportation.
- 1940-2012, average household size changed from 4 to 2.5
- 1940-2012, percentage of household of one person increased 13 to 30 percent.
- 1960-2012: dramatic increase in number of children living with mother only, increase in age of householder, median age at first marriage from 22 to 27-29.
- Study: Americans less and less attached to cars. See [U.S. News and World Report, January 21, 2014](#). Peak driving in 2007, now decreasing.
- [National Association of Realtors Community & Transportation Preferences Survey \(July 2015\)](#): "Millennials prefer walking over driving by a substantially wider margin than any other generation."
- ([The 2013 NAR study found](#): Americans prefer walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and shorter commutes.)
- 2015 NAR survey's results similar to SOCPA study
- Major finding of 2015 NAR survey: How millennials (18-34) differ from older generations on walkability and public transit.

- 83% like walking, but only 71% like driving. Gap is a wider margin than any other generation.
- 50% of millennials prefer living within an easy walk of other places.
- 52% of millennials prefer living in attached housing where they can walk to shops and have a shorter commute.
- Millennials walk more for transportation than Gen Xers and Baby Boomers.
- Millennials use public transportation more than any other generation.
- Millennials showed more preference than other generations for expanding public transportation, including trains and buses; providing convenient alternatives to driving such as walking, biking and public transportation; developing communities where more people do not have to drive long distance to work or shop; building more sidewalks.
- Why are millennials different? Generation rejecting sense of “too much” safety, isolation of suburbia. Fears over poor economy and increased concern about environment also likely contributors.

D. **Kim Armani**, executive director of [SUNY Oswego's Active Aging and Community Engagement Center \(AACE\)](#) (housed at SUNY Oswego Metro Center) discussed transportation in the aging community.

[Shaping an Age-Friendly CNY study](#) (with FOCUS Greater Syracuse) identified factors that influence people to leave CNY.

Study involved 2,000 survey respondents, stakeholder discussions and in-depth interviews.

54% said transportation important in deciding where to live as they age.

34% rated CNY good or very good place to live for aging people.

Boomers want transportation options. Majority use car for day to day activities and fear the day they must give up their car. (Auto tied to sense of autonomy and independence.)

20% over 65 do not drive. Growing sense that most people will outlive their driving ability.

Millennials choose not to drive; boomers forced not to drive.

From report's executive summary:

Boomers want to age-in-place

As Central New Yorkers age, they will prefer to age within their own homes or neighborhoods, surrounded by familiar faces and places. We define aging-in-place as having the choice in the decision of where you age. An age-friendly community supports and accommodates that choice through

offering the services necessary to aging in-place.

The ability to age-in-place requires several services and opportunities:

- Safe, accessible and efficient transportation
- Navigable and excellent quality health care services, which use technology to facilitate in-home care
- Recreational and cultural activities
- Challenging and stimulating learning opportunities
- Inter-generational social networks
- Accessible, affordable and desirable shopping and entertainment
- Accessible, year-round physical activity opportunities
- Meaningful opportunities to contribute to their community
- Affordable, innovative and accessible housing options
- Flexible work opportunities

Geriatric mental health survey of 10-county region found that transportation is a major barrier to receiving mental health services in Central New York.

Arranging and using available transportation options difficult for seniors, especially those with cognitive and mental challenges.

There's an assumption that seniors have time to take the buses. This ignores fact that buses can be difficult/disruptive for people with cognitive or mental impairments or health problems.

Like millennials, boomers shifting to preference for walkable communities and public transportation options.

Boomers want: better coordinated bus routes, trains, street cars, bicycle-friendly communities.

E. Survey discussion

1. **Heidi Holtz** created word clouds from scoping sessions and recent survey for comparison.

“Car” got bigger.

“Bike” not on first cloud.

“Easy” got bigger.

“weather” and “20-minute commute” appeared in scoping session but not on survey

2. Holtz and Mary Kate Intaglietta drafted themes, based on survey response, for discussion of topics from study. Discussion a starting point for structure or report and recommendations.

a. Continuous learning and sharing of transportation issues and possibilities

Possible strategies: social marketing, citizen understanding → advocacy, SMTC and community awareness,

- Information tables at events
- Identify who takes the lead
- Coalition of all cohorts
- Citizen engagement in planning process
- Community meetings with those affected
- Short surveys
- Technology – driverless cars
- Address needs of low-income and rural communities

b. Encouraging shared space principles and community-wide planning

Possible strategies: Walk & bike infrastructure, complete streets; village/town/county/city zoning and planning in sync

- Roundabouts
- Database of cities in similar size to Syracuse (Ann Arbor)
- City Repair in Portland, Oregon

c. Strengthening and expanding options for transit

Possible strategies: understanding diverse needs (age, culture, economic status); CENTRO awareness, pedestrian access, technology, BRT, funding systems, ride sharing

- Strength and expanding options for transit
- Re-look at Centro's organization and functions.
- Different bus sizes for different routes
- Common needs rather than diverse
- Open and real-time data
- Waiting time
- Houston, Texas, away from spoke/hub
- Dedicated bike lanes

d. Reinforcing the importance of transportation for community strength and well-being

Possible strategies: Employer/employment – employee links; social services, accessibility; health; collaborations and partnerships

- More employee buy-in

Transit-oriented development
Where could Consensus fit in? Consolidation efforts?
Mixed use
Incentives to discourage sprawl
Housing and jobs
Revisit land-use policies
Stimulate density
Fiscal perspective/financing

e. Other issues to consider

Laws & regulations
Changing attitudes
Accessibility
Cultural change
Snow removal

--Submitted by Renée K. Gadoua, study writer