Transportation Design for Communities
Hosted by the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development at the Georgia Institute of Technology

Module 1: Transportation Projects Can Do Great Things
May 11, 2006   Atlanta, GA
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Module 1 will present how transportation projects contribute to community form and development. This module will illustrate numerous community building principles and the transportation system's role in urban settlement patterns. A wide inventory of livable transportation solutions and their real life application will be presented and discussed in this module.

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The answer is, “Network & build to the street”

Now what was the question?
1980s

Shallowford Road

Igou Gap

East Brainerd Road

Gunbarrel Road

Lee Highway

Jenkins Road

Interstate 75
In the Near Term
Longer Term
The "Oasis"
The "Connection"
The "Breakdown"
On a Tear
By Lisa Schreiber

Looking for land?
Try tearing down a highway

That's what San Francisco did.
And what Milwaukee is doing.

Milwaukee: Three decades to repair
The Park East Freeway is part of a never-completed 1960s ring road in Milwaukee. In 1978, four state assembly members, including John Norquist, halted the highway’s construction. By then, crews had already cut through a mile of city streets between I-94 and the central business district and cleared land to the east for the next segment. For 30 years, the elevated Park East crossed such a barrier between downtown and neighborhoods to the north that, according to Peter Park, Milwaukee’s director of planning, “is like a forest beam [for the highway]” that has never recovered.”

Then, in 1991, the Mandel Group, a Milwaukee-based developer, opened a luxury rental apartment and condominium complex and supermarket on the land prepared for the ring road. Their success—the supermarket has the highest sales of any in Milwaukee and the condominiums sell for $500,000—signaled the potential for upscale development. However, the central business district lacked large lots, and the Park East Freeway prevented expansion to the north where land was available.

At around this time, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation estimated that reopening the Park East Freeway would cost $80 million. Mayor Norquist felt that the Park East “had become so inefficient it didn’t make sense to rebuild.”

The key to convincing people and businesses that Milwaukee would not be crippled by the Park East’s demolitions was a traffic study conducted in 1995 by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC). Milwaukee’s metropolitan planning organization. SWRPC found that “the central business district can accommodate removal of the highway” without a significant increase in traffic congestion.” The Park East Freeway was demolished in 1996, and the downtown has enjoyed a renaissance ever since.

San Francisco dismantled the Embarcadero freeway (opposite, bottom) and may dismantle the Central freeway (opposite, top). New urban streets are following in.

Now other cities are following suit. One of them is Milwaukee (this page), which expects to replace its Park East Freeway with housing, shops, and offices.

Milwaukee officials in Akron, New York City, and Washington, D.C., are looking to dismantle highways there as well.

Advocates of the idea say tearing out a highway is a sure way to encourage development. The most obvious reason is that a freeway’s infrastructure occupies valuable space. In downtowns across the country, where developers find it increasingly difficult to assemble full-block sites, freeing up 15 or more contiguous acres is a real estate dream. Second, freeways—especially elevated ones—act as physical barriers to the development of surrounding land. Jane Jacobs commented on this connection in her 1961 book, Death and Life of Great American Cities. “Borders tend to form vacuums of use adjoining them,” she noted.

Finally, highways affect business and residential circulation patterns. According to Milwaukee’s Mayor John Norquist, “the Park East Freeway creates congestion by encouraging people to travel further and further between increasingly insignificant places.” He expects the freeway’s removal to help revitalize the population and business flight that accompanied its development.

Although these themes are echoed in all the cities that are ripping up highways, the proposals for what will replace the structures vary. Milwaukee is encouraging the private sector to develop mixed-use buildings, whereas Toronto will build a publicly financed boulevard.

I fall apart according to schedule, Milwaukee will demolish its Park East Freeway this year and replace it with housing, shops, and offices.

Although unusual, Milwaukee’s approach to creating valuable downtown real estate is not unique. San Francisco and Toronto are also bulldozing urban freeways. Way back in 1974 Portland, Oregon, tore up Harbor Drive to build a 64-acre waterfront park. Now officials in Akron, New York City, and Washington, D.C., are looking to dismantle highways there as well.

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That’s what San Francisco did. And what Milwaukee is doing.
Guidebook for Assessing the Social and Economic Effects of Transportation Projects
HIGH L.O.S.

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SUCCESSFUL CITY
NOT THE CAR BUT THE SUBURBAN HOME IS THE DEADLY WEAPON

DAILY SUBURBAN MORTARFIRE AGAINST URBAN CENTERS
How Nature says, "Do not touch"
Go for the banana!
Go for the banana!