

## **The New Mobility Agenda: A Factory of Ideas for Sustainable Transportation**

Virtually all of the necessary preconditions are now in place for far-reaching, rapid, low cost improvements in the ways that people get around in our cities. The needs are there, they are increasingly understood -- and we now know what to do and how to get the job done. The challenge is to find the vision, political will, and leadership to get the job done, step by deliberate step:

But you have to have a coherent, ethical, publicly announced, checkable, overarching strategy. Without it you are destined to play at the edges of the problems, and while you may be able to announce a success or improvement here or there, the overall impact that your city needs to break the old patterns will not be there. You really need that clear, consistent, omni-present strategy.

The Agenda provides a free public platform for new thinking and open collaborative group problem solving, bringing together several hundred of the leading thinkers and actors in the field from more than fifty countries world-wide, sharing information and considering together the full range of problems and eventual solution paths that constitute the global challenge of sustainable transport in cities.

## **What's wrong with "Old Mobility"?**

We make a distinction between what we call "old mobility" and "new mobility". The difference between the two is quite simple. And important.

Old mobility was the form of transportation policy and practice that grew up in the past when we all lived in a universe that was, or at least seemed to be, free of constraints. It served us well, albeit with expectations, though we were blind to most of them most of the time. It was a very different world. But it's over.

The planet was enormous, the spaces great and open, energy abundant and cheap, resources endless, the "environment" was not a consideration, "climate" was the weather, technology was able to come up with a constant stream of solutions, builders able to solve the problems that arose from bottlenecks by endlessly expanding capacity at the trouble points, and fast growth and the thrill of continuing innovations masked much of what was not all that good.

But this is not the problematique of transport in the 21st century, and above all in our cities which are increasingly poorly served by not only our present mobility arrangements, but also the thinking and values that underlie them. We now live in an entirely different kind of universe, and the constraints which were never felt before, or ignored, now are emerging as the fundamental building blocks for transportation policy and practice in this new century.

It's time for a change

But the shift from old to new mobility is not one that turns its back on the importance of high quality mobility for the economy and for quality of life. It's just that given the technologies that we now have at our fingertips, and in the labs, it is possible for us to redraw our transportation systems so that is less inefficient movement (the idea of one person sitting in traffic in a big car is one example, an empty bus another) and more high efficiency high quality transportation that offers many more mobility choices than in the past, including the one that environmentalist and many others find most appealing: getting what you want without having to venture out into traffic. This is the basic nexus of new mobility.

### The role of the car in the city

**Fact:** Our cities today have plenty of cars and very very large numbers of people and institutions who depend on them. They are not going to disappear from the street overnight, and we must never lose sight of their high importance to both the individuals concerned and the economic, and yes, the transport viability of our cities.

**Precondition:** Thus the challenge before policy makers and transportation professionals now at a time when change is so badly needed is that of redefining the role of the car so that it has a more appropriate fit with the overall texture and priorities of our 21st century cities. The indisputable fact is that if our cities are to be sustainable, one of the necessary conditions of their sustainability will be that they are home to many fewer cars. How to manage the transition when our dependence on private cars is still so very strong? We can be sure that it will not be the result of brutal confrontation. That would be a battle lost, at least in the short term which is the field on which these issues now need to be engaged.

**Bottom line:** Yes, we need to reduce significantly the number of cars in and moving around in and through our cities. Yes, in order to achieve this we are going to have to provide a broad range of attractive mobility alternatives which are seen by those who use them as better than the old arrangements. And finally yes, we are going to have to provide a "soft path" for car owner/drivers to move over to these alternative transportation arrangements. The soft path in a pluralistic democracy requires that the decisions are made by individuals in what they consider to be their own interest. As part of this we also have to build into our strategy in understanding that a certain amount of time is required for us human beings, change-averse as we are, to alter our daily mobility choices. (But this time, depending on the individual case, is a matter in most cases of months or at most a couple of years, not decades as often is said to be the case.)

That is the underlying strategy of the New Mobility Agenda, now let us go on to look at the broader strategic frame.

## Piecing it all together: The 15 Point New Mobility Strategy

Here in fifteen points is the basic strategic policy frame that we have pieced together over the years of observation and close contact with projects and programs in leading cities around the world under the New Mobility Agenda. and if you click [here](#) you can see in a short video (4 minute draft) a synopsis of the basic five-point core strategy that the city of Paris has announced and adhered to over the last seven years. With significant results.

1. **Climate-driven:** The on-going climate emergency sets the base timetable for action in our sector, which accounts for some 20% of GHGs. At the same time GHG reduction works as a strong surrogate for just about everything else to which we need to be giving priority attention in our cities, chief among them the need to cut traffic.
2. **Vision and leadership:** Break with the past, get outside the box, and take on the real problems of mobility, well-being and economic health in our cities. Then make the case for change.
3. **Tighten time frame for action:** Select and gear all actions to achieve visible results within 2-5 year time frame. Set firm targets for all to see and judge the results. No-excuse transport policy.
4. **Pick winners:** New approaches demand success. There is no margin of error. So chose policies and services with track records of success and build on their experience.
5. **Extend the range and quality of new mobility services:** A whole range of exciting and practical new service modes are needed if we are to keep our cities viable. And they need to COMBINE to offer better, faster and cheaper transportation than the old car-intensive arrangements or debt-financed traditional public transit.
6. **Reduce traffic radically.** The critical, incontrovertible policy core of the Agenda. If we don't achieve this, we will have a situation where all the key indicators will continue to move in the wrong direction. But we can cut traffic and at the same time improve mobility. That's our strategy.
7. **The shifting role of the car:** State-of-the-art technology can be put to work hand-in-hand with the changing role of the private car in the city in order to create situations in which car use is integrated into the overall mobility strategy with a far softer edge for their owners and users. These advantages need to be widely broadcast so as to increase acceptance of the new pattern of mobility.
8. **Full speed ahead with new technology:** : New mobility is at its core heavily driven by the aggressive application of state of the art logistics, communications and information technology across the full spectrum of

service types. These are the seven leagues boots of new mobility

9. **Frugal economics:** We are not going to need another round of high cost, low impact investments to make it work. We simply take over 50% of the transport related budgets and use it to address to projects and reforms that are going to make those big differences in the next several years.
10. **Play the "infrastructure joker":** The transport infrastructures of our cities have been vastly overbuilt. And they are unable to deliver the goods. That's just great, since it means that we can now take over substantial portions of the street network for far more efficient modes.
11. **Broaden ownership:** Make each New Mobility program a broad-based collaborative enterprise that listens to and engages the whole city, including those who are not yet ready to join in.
12. **The female metric:** If we design transportation systems that work well for women of all ages and conditions, they will work well for society as a whole. Women are the metric of new mobility.
13. **Erase space:** Leading-edge projects need leading-edge counsel and inputs. And this is not always directly at hand. But we have the means today to erase these barriers. Let's use them.
14. **Partnerships:** This approach, because it is new and unfamiliar to most people, is unlike to be understood the first times around. Hence a major education, consultation and outreach effort is needed in each place to make it work. Old mobility was the terrain in which decisions were made by transport experts working within their assigned zones of competence. New mobility is based on wide-based collaborative problem solving, outreach and harnessing the great strengths of the informed and educated populations of our cities. Public/private/citizen partnerships.
15. **Use time wisely:** Cities and people have their own rhythms -- if we are to alter their way of doing things we need to be highly strategic and subtle in our use of time for the necessary conversions.

To move ahead in time to save the planet and improve life quality of the majority of the people who live in our cities (no, they are not all happy car owner-drivers: get out there and count them. You'll see.), we need to have a fair, unified, coherent, and memorable strategy. The work of the New Mobility Agenda is given over to trying to encourage and assist this vital process and the necessary public debate behind it.

## Why the 2009-2012 time horizon?

This is the central key to the whole effort. Because we now know that a waiting game *will* have deadly consequences. Hence we need to concentrate our minds and efforts on actions that are going to have early pay-offs.

And while the ideal is certainly anything that will lead to big visible paybacks in less than two years - a target that is in fact obtainable by at least some of the measures that are getting attention here - the fact is that a couple of years of operational experience is often needed to fine tune, debug and start to get the most out of your new mobility measure. So let's give it time to get the job done.

In addition, within this frame you are going to have time to . . .

- At the very least to replace your present vehicle with something more appropriate for responsible 21st century city travel.
- Alternatively and better yet (if possible where you live and work) shed your car altogether as new affordable alternatives start to come on line in your community (affordable carsharing among them of course)
- To seek a better, more environmentally coherent place to live and work
- And if you are an industrial or service group, enough time to design and bring on line a new range of products and services.

And finally if you are a mayor or elected official, this gives you time to achieve your announced objectives within your electoral term. Four years: Put up or shut up. Seems fair. That's why we have elections.

## The Year Ahead - January 2008

The keys to the year ahead are two: First, to face the music and recognize the full dimensions and urgency of the crushing problems before our cities and our planet. And in parallel with this, to find more effective ways to solve these challenges, through more seamless international networking and collaborative problem solving. There is a great deal of knowledge and good accumulated experience out there, but it needs to be better harnessed and put to work for your city. Many of these wheels have already been invented; so here is no reason to start from zero every time. But how to spot, chose and adapt the best for your unique case? That is the challenge before each city and project team.

[The Annual State of The Commons Message as announced in Jan. 2008, offering a quick recap of 2007, a look ahead to 2008, and an introspection about the nature of problem-solving in our main areas of competence.](#) [More >>>](#)

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