



Demographics and Cultural Changes

The New Trends

By Richard Skillings

This 3-part article is the last in our series debunking IDOT's claims about the Gateway Connector, and in many ways, it is the most important. Social trends and the resultant trends in travel are forever changing the way we use the automobile and highways. Seventy million millenials are maturing introducing new priorities, while boomers are aging and taking their priorities, including their fascination with the car and suburban living, out of the mainstream. As a consequence, most transportation experts say it's time to alter the approach to highway planning.

At least four social trends are pertinent—how we shop, work, perceive our environment; and live. Each suggests that highway travel will decrease.

How we shop. One used to be able to find one or two empty strip malls in nearly every town. Now, many large malls that were built in the last decades of the 20th century are also having trouble staying in business. Locally, Crestwood Plaza closed a couple of years ago; sales volume at St. Clair Square is down as retail relocated; and the new outlet malls in Chesterfield aren't doing the business expected.

Green Street Advisors forecasts 15% of existing malls will close in the next 10 years. Forbes magazine also discussed "The Coming Death of the American Shopping Mall." Both have solid and logical reasons why this will happen.

- 1. Mall anchor stores, like Sears and JC Penny, are having financial troubles and are closing stores as a result.
2. Online shopping has replaced a substantial portion of mall shopping; it has been steadily rising, and by 2013, online shopping was almost 8% of all retail sales.
3. Retail, and mall shopping in particular, will suffer not just because of the languishing economy, but because the "new normal" predicted by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics is for a greater emphasis on buying (fewer and more expensive) American products, retail dollars will not go as far. And, with work hours falling people have less to spend.

How we work. One of the employment trends that has caused a reduction in the number of miles traveled in America is the increased number of people telecommuting. It is

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Environmental Justice and Transportation Planning

By Vincent Giammaria

I have a lot of happy memories in the car. I remember looking out the window on long family vacation road trips and being amazed by the changing landscape as we zoomed from one state to another. I remember my first car in high-school: my grandfather's grey Buick Century that he passed on to me and my brothers. I had so many great times with friends in that car that it was hard for me to part with. In many ways, the car represented freedom, individuality, and self-reliance. I am not alone in this thinking--the automobile is iconic in this way. My views on the automobile, however, have changed since then.

An essay by one of my favorite authors, Ivan Illich, is what changed my mind about the automobile. In his essay, titled Energy and Equity (1974), he states, "The need for political research on socially optimal energy quanta can be clearly and concisely illustrated by an examination of modern traffic. The United States puts 45 percent of its total energy into vehicles: to make them, run them and clear a right of way for them when they roll, when they fly and when they park". The author goes on to say that the energy a place, country, municipality, or government spends on mobility (i.e. moving people and products from one place to another) requires a certain energy quanta, which if exceeded, will degrade the social structure and increase poverty and inequality. Inequality is realized when the demand to deliver products and people faster and across greater distances exceeds the energy availability.

We are just beginning to see the effects of this today, as the benefits of the motor vehicle has overshadowed the consequences of providing the infrastructure and energy to maintain high mobility. Between 1990-2009, vehicle-miles traveled in the U.S. increased by 39 percent and fuel consumption by 27 percent. The U.S. boasts 4 million miles of roads and highways, and the roadway network supports 3 trillion vehicle miles of travel every year (Center for Disease Control, 2011). The extensive use of the automobile is more than just a public health issue; it is an energy, environmental, and social justice problem as well.

An individuals' ability to utilize the transportation network efficiently is dependent on a person's evaluation of various transport modes, and may be limited by environmental or social factors such as age, disability, income, activity level, or physical environment. A justice-theoretic approach has been proposed to assess the distribution of transportation benefits in urban environments by means of social mobility and accessibility. Mobility defines the ease with which a person can move through space, and access describes the amenities or services

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estimated that 4.3% of the work force telecommutes to work today, the largest percentage in our history. Specifically, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 24% of all workers report working some hours from home each week, and *The NY Times* recently reported that number could reach 30%.

A number of factors have contributed to a reduction of miles driven to work. One has been the effort to fit a 40-hour work week into four 10-hour days. Others are the advancement of technology, management of the labor force, and new labor laws. For example, the Affordable Care Act not only redefined full time from 40 hours to 30 hours, but one unintended consequence was to cause many employers to further reduce workers' hours.

***How we perceive our environment.*** It's fair to say that most people have accepted the need to control atmospheric pollution, and auto emissions, in particular. That has led to the manufacture of smaller cars, more complex pollution control devices, cleaner burning fuels (biodiesel, ethanol, etc.), and increased use of public transit. Each of these has contributed to lowering the number of miles driven.

Despite the creative ways we develop new sources of fossil fuel, there remains the concern that the supply is not endless. This also contributes to the reduction of automobile usage, seen since 2004.

***How our lifestyles are changing.*** The automobile and cheap gasoline, steadily rising incomes, broadly distributed wealth, and cheap credit all combined to facilitate the rapid sprawl in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The conditions that enabled sprawl are disappearing; as that occurs, so does the demand for continued sprawl. Indeed, sprawl has been rapidly slowing for the last decade and many planners expect it to reverse. Why? Because the boomer generation has begun the process of downsizing, the millenials are only able to obtain starter homes, and home-buying credit has changed to prevent another melt-down. Demand for single-family homes, with large lots in the suburbs will drop from 79% of buyers in 2000 to 15% by 2030, while demand for smaller, denser living accommodations will take its place.

Professor A. C. Nelson, of the University of Utah, reported that four national studies found that people are willing to pay more for walkable communities. That trend is now part of Belleville's Comprehensive Plan. The city already changed its downtown to be a more walkable area with outside seating for eating, more parking away from Main Street, and lofts for more and younger residents. The plan explicitly calls for inward expansion and denser development. Each metro station has been suggested as a place to build a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), a similar community plan which takes advantage of public transit.

It has become common for city planners to shape new development, as well as redevelopment, around the ideas of preserving land, enhancing rather than destroying the natural and cultural resources already in place, and providing multiple means of transportation. As elected officials and developers push for more such neighborhoods, the need for added highways will necessarily diminish, not increase. And, if money is diverted to needless highways, there will be less for truly beneficial development.

Part II will explore demographics and Part III will investigate trends in transportation planning. ●

available within a region. Environmental Justice, with its historical roots in social justice, has grown in the science and policy literature over the past several decades to support community actions to address the health and environmental hazards of the built environment—this includes transportation networks.

Numerous Smart Growth and sustainability activists have stressed public transportation systems as a necessary element to reducing vehicle miles travelled every year. The addition of highways, though, tends to promote automobile use over public transit. My graduate research focuses on this issue, and looks at environmental justice in transportation planning in the St. Louis metropolitan region. My study highlights clusters of populations with low mobility (i.e. no vehicle), and attempts to define the transportation corridor. What I have discovered is not surprising; the transportation disadvantaged (low mobility) tend to locate within or near the corridor. The corridor extends from Scott Air force base in St. Clair County, through Belleville, East St. Louis, and northwest to St. Peters in St. Charles County, Missouri. The case of the Gateway Connector Corridor therefore begs the question of *who* will benefit from the project, when the St. Clair county region as a whole shows high population clusters of low mobility and public transportation use.



Public transportation corridors provide access throughout a region and urban development should promote the growth of the corridor, rather than growth in areas that only the automobile enabled can take advantage of using. This means attracting a population from outside the corridor to invest or settle in the region. This can only be achieved if the benefits of public transit and living within the transportation corridor are known to the general public (e.g. reduced transportation and housing costs) and supported by regional governments. In other words, do our urban areas invite people to take advantage of the transit corridor, or are we inadvertently pressuring people to own a car because of the way our cities are built and managed? From a personal perspective, I have to wonder whether the future will only be available to those who can economically support themselves by private vehicle and what this means for the transportation disadvantaged. ●

*Mr. Giammaria is completing his Master's degree in Political Science at SIUE; his thesis is on social justice in the St. Louis region.*

**Make your voice heard! Contact your state and federal Congress men and women, your local county councilman, and your mayor and tell them you oppose the Gateway Connector and want it removed from all short and long term plans. Visit [www.STOP158.org](http://www.STOP158.org) to learn more.**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### STOP 158 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Place: 866 Old Enterprise Farms, Lebanon, IL 62254  
Regular meetings generally occur on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month, from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Meetings are open to all interested parties. Please call to confirm meeting time and reserve your seat: 618-632-3158.

### SIGN PAINTING

STOP158 actively posts roadside signs. Volunteer opportunities: 1) help with the painting and 2) post a sign in your yard. Visibility significantly helps our efforts. Can you post a sign on your property? What size do you like? Your choice of wording can be used.

### EWGCOG

For the calendar of the **East-West Gateway Council of Governments** visit [www.ewgateway.org](http://www.ewgateway.org).

**Contributions to support  
and this newsletter can be mailed to:**

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**Or visit our web site [www.stop158.org](http://www.stop158.org) and  
contribute securely online. This all-volunteer  
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### Upcoming meetings for STOP158 *Citizens for Smart Growth*

- ❖ **June 19** STOP158 Citizens for Smart Growth will meet with IDOT Region 8 Executive Director Jeff Keirn to discuss removing the Gateway Connector from IDOT plans and budget in addition to other timely topics.
- ❖ **June 24** STOP158 Citizens for Smart Growth will meet with Congressman Enyart's staff to discuss smart growth in the tri-county area.

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## Belleville's Comprehensive Plan

Last month, Belleville released a second version of its draft Comprehensive Plan. We are encouraged that it focuses on smart growth principles. Projects like complete streets, infill and redevelopment instead of sprawl, and construction of transit oriented developments at Metro stations are cited in the plan. Their approach to controlling traffic is based on road improvements more than on adding new facilities. Those improvements include widening arterials, such as Greenmount Road, to increase system capacity and mobility.



Despite an overly optimistic expectation to add 10,000 more people and grow to a city of 55,000 within 25 years, their plan is to modestly expand the city to the south and east. New residential development has already begun along IL15 toward Freeburg and IL159 toward Smithton, so its continuation should be expected. However, after adding only 2800 people in the last 40 years, it seems unlikely that a growth rate five times that rate is possible.

The plan does contain an express support of the Gateway Connector—a regional project—but the support is tepid at best and the mobility projects do not appear to rely on such a bypass. Perhaps the city realizes the effect that bypasses have on the communities they bypass.

A report published by the California Department of Transportation in 2006 noted that bypasses have little long-term economic effect. Specifically, smaller communities are the most likely to be adversely impacted, and cities that have governmental/public sector employment as a major economic base are neither adversely affected nor beneficiary of a bypass. Six of the top 10 employers in Belleville are public sector; three more are health care; Walmart wraps up the top 10.

The Belleville plan reflects the modern approach to growth that has been formally adopted by a number of states--multimodal transportation planning, mixed-use development, and denser communities. ●

**“In my many years, I have come to a  
conclusion that one useless man is shame, two  
is a law firm, and more is a congress.”**

*Thomas Jefferson*

## If You Build It, They Will Ride - Even in Car Crazy Los Angeles

A new study finds that within six months of opening, L.A.'s newest light rail line dramatically altered the travel behavior of those living within a half-mile of a station. Among those residents, rail ridership tripled and driving declined 40%.

The findings of "the first experimental study of the effects of a new rail line in Los Angeles" makes a persuasive case for the positive impacts of new rail options on Angelenos' travel habits.

"In fall 2011, researchers asked more than 200 households in the Exposition Corridor, the Crenshaw Corridor and Harvard Park to track their travel habits and odometer readings for seven days. The same households repeated the exercise in 2012, when the Expo Line had been open for about six months," explains Laura J. Nelson. "Households within a half-mile of an Expo Line station reduced their driving by 10 to 12 miles a day, compared with those who lived farther away, according to the data."

Other positive outcomes generated by the new line include a 30% reduction carbon emissions and an increase in exercise among residents.

Read the full story at <http://goo.gl/Bxo4Ku>. Source: *Planetizen Newswire*, December 19, 2013

(The research is posted as a working paper, *The Exposition Light Rail Study: Before-After Opening Travel Impacts and New Resident Sample Preliminary Analysis* posted online at <http://goo.gl/D2g8PO>.)

**Our Mission: Stop158 and the Gateway Connector corridor, encouraging instead alternative transportation options which strengthen existing communities where residents in all stages of life may safely live, work, shop, learn, and play, while preserving open space, farm land, and environmentally sensitive areas. ●**

Stop158: ***Citizens for Smart Growth***

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