Transportation Trends for 2020 (and what cities can do about them)

By William Riggs, Planetizen, February 10, 2020

“Over the past 10 years, the world has experienced a revolution in transportation. 2012 saw the emergence of Uber, Lyft, and a number of other competitors who changed the way we purchased rides. ... Given all these developments, ... I offer the following five potential market trends for 2020, as well as advice for what cities can do about those trends.

“VMT from TNCs and E-Commerce will continue to increase, despite pricing efforts

“A growing body of work points to continued increases in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) due to Transportation Network Company (TNC) services like Uber and Lyft, which induce auto travel and pull people from transit. ... The economic viability of these TNCs will remain nebulous even as providers integrate autonomous vehicles into certain routes.

“What can cities do:

• “Embrace parking removal, lane thinning, and shared streets, as suggested by 2018 Urbanism Next: Rethinking Streets in an Era of Driverless Cars.
• “Explore more aggressive roadway pricing and cordon zones.

“Consolidation in the Logistics Economy based on the high cost of Last Mile deliveries

“E-commerce and delivery services account for a large amount of traffic, have high costs, and generate low revenue, particularly for the last mile. Inherent economic inefficiencies plague the last-leg of most deliveries — what’s referred to as the ‘last-mile’ to describe the final transport link that many sharing-economy technologies attempt to solve.

“Due to the inefficiency of last-mile home deliveries, ... expect mergers and platform changes, not just with robotic delivery, but also potentially with new sharing-economy services for package delivery.

“What cities can do:

• “Encourage local drop-off facilities with major logistics providers that allow for consumers to pick up their own packages. UPS and Amazon have already been exploring this model in many suburban locations, where service does not make financial sense.
• “Require a certain percentage of deliveries be made via bicycle and pedestrian trips, particularly high-density locations.
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“Continued underestimation of the transition to electric vehicles

“Government and the market have continued to underestimate consumer demand for electric vehicles. [However, Tesla exceeded expected productions and became the most valuable car company after delivering the Model 3.]

“What cities can do:

- “Make sure to provide EV-ready parking spaces in new buildings and allow for flexibility in parking standards to accommodate EV chargers and meet required Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Many cities in California, for example Palo Alto, are grappling with tension between parking minimums and new requirements for EV and ADA spaces, which require a larger footprint than traditional parking.
- “Explore the conversion of on-street parking meters to charging stalls.

“Continued resistance to Transit Platform innovation

“Transit systems have been outcompeted by more reliable, more convenient, door-to-door rides that can be accessed from the palm of your hand.

“A handful of large and small transit operators have found that they can use large mass transit platforms in parallel with smaller door-to-door services to make the system more efficient, convenient, and reliable.

“What can cities do:

- “Explore partnerships with providers who can help with system efficiency and service reliability on central lines.
- “Establish a comprehensive and creative Transportation Demand Management and travel nudge program that experiments with both financial and social incentives — the latter can be equally as powerful, if not more powerful, as monetary norms.

“Continued de-prioritization of Active Modes of transport

“Despite the sustainability, livability, and equity benefits, many cities continue to prioritize automobiles in street design efforts.

“What cities can do:

- “Practice aggressive multi-modal street design, including the aforementioned car-free zones.
- “Make sure your community has a bicycle and pedestrian plan with associated funding
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commitments for infrastructure.

Read the full article here.

William Riggs is also the co-author of the APA Planning Advisory Service Report, Planning for Autonomous Mobility.