

Crazy About Cars: The Automobile and City Planning

By Joseph Ferrucci

In one of the opening scenes of the movie *Goldeneye*, James Bond races down the windy hillside roads of Monaco in a BMW roadster, chasing a black sports car, much to the dismay of his prim and proper psychiatrist sitting in the passenger seat. When he brings the car to a screeching halt at her insistence, Bond (in his typical Bond way) pops open a secret compartment, revealing a chilled bottle of champagne, and attempts to seduce her. The camera then pans out from the roadster to the vista of Monte Carlo...

Everyone loves a good car chase, particularly one that ends with a romp in the roadster. More than that, we love our cars. This planner, after years of biking and busing, finally surrendered to instinct and bought his first car—and has loved every moment of it. Cars are not just a means of transportation; they have the capacity to liberate and exhilarate.

Their beauty and speed and agility almost seem to empower us. And if push came to shove, most of us would sooner give up our retirement accounts than our cars.

Almost as much as we love our cars, we hate them. We hate sitting in traffic, circling the block for parking, paying off years of debt. On a particularly bad day, the car we love seems more like a necessary evil, a worthless hunk-a-junk, a material possession that somehow ends up owning us. Frustrated, yet committed to the endeavor, we often feel more like Wiley Coyote than James Bond. And the only things we hate more than our own cars are other people's cars. If it weren't for *them*, after all, we wouldn't have all this traffic and air pollution.

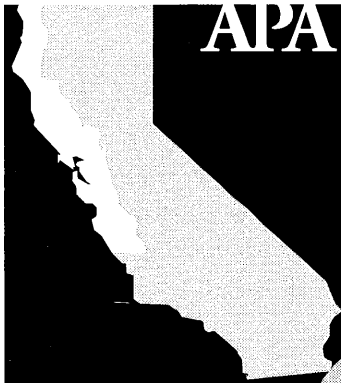
Our love-hate relationship with the car is the saga at the center of city planning history in

the 20th century. Arguably, no other technological innovation has impacted planning and development as much as the automobile. Between 1900 and 1999, the car radically transformed how our cities look and feel, how we do development, and how we think about and conduct city planning. While some of us may wish that (other people's) cars would take a long drive off a short pier, the rest of us know that the car is here to stay, and we will continue to wrestle with its impacts in the future. As planners, how do we address the problems associated with the car? This article takes a look at where we have been and where we are going.

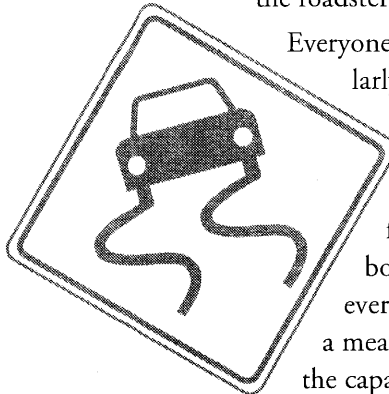
Congestion

Congestion is the problem we love to hate, and we've had it since Ford mass-produced the Model T. The early solution to congestion was to build more roads, a strategy as reasonable as it was short-sighted. If volume is approaching capacity, the theory goes, simply increase capacity and create new linkages. Road-building was also fueled by fantastical visions of the future city. In France in 1925, the architect Le Corbusier envisioned demolishing large areas of central Paris to make way for towers, parks, and high-speed expressways. If old city streets were congested and built to suit "antiquated" modes of travel, then a new urban form was needed to serve the automobile. While the Corbusier ideal did not materialize in America, the automobile did foster new ways of doing development. We moved out of central cities and built tract homes, strip malls, and business parks, where different land uses were kept separate. We built miles of roads and highways to connect everything together.

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position open

Newsletter Designer

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EDITORS NOTE

The close of the 20th century and the advent of the next millenium provide us with a unique opportunity to reflect on our past achievements and contemplate our future challenges and opportunities. This issue of the *Northern News* is both a retrospective and an outlook. The lead article takes a look at the history and the future of the automobile, the technological innovation that has single-handedly transformed our cities and the nature of urban development—all within the last 100 years.

Looking back on this past year, we congratulate the 1999 winners of the Cal APA Awards (see www.calapa.org) and the Ahwahnee Awards (see www.lgc.org/clc). These outstanding projects and professionals demonstrate that California remains at the forefront of progressive, innovative city planning. Also, we thank John Banks for his dedicated work as *Northern News* Editor and Chuck Lerable, who is stepping down from his position as Advertising Coordinator. We wish them well in their future endeavors!

In the first part of 2000, look for several significant changes to the *Northern News*. Design changes are being planned. In conjunction with the Northern Section web site (currently being developed), the *Northern News* will go online. We hope that these improvements will help keep the newsletter informative, easy to read, and accessible to APA members.

Best wishes for 2000!

Joseph Ferrucci

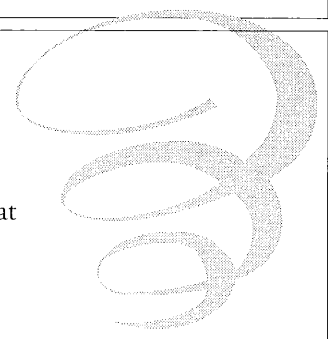
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Let Us Know What You're Doing WRITE IN TO PROFESSIONAL NOTES

Professional Notes is a new section of the *Northern News* that will highlight what professional planners in the Northern Section are doing. Have you recently finished a project? published an article? changed jobs? been promoted? Let us know.

You can send your *Professional Note* to Joseph Ferrucci, *Northern News* Editor at josephferrucci@earthlink.net or 90 Chenery Street, #1, San Francisco, CA 94131.

Please limit your note to 40 words.



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EDITORIAL

Joseph Ferrucci
(acting editor)
Tel: 415/643-8175

e-mail: josephferrucci@earthlink.net
90 Chenery Street, #1
San Francisco, CA 94131

ADVERTISING/JOB

Mark Rhoades
(acting co-ordinator)
Tel: 510/705-8111
Fax: 510/883-6543

e-mail: mar2@ci.berkeley.ca.us
2120 Milvia Street, 1st floor
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The deadline for submitting materials for inclusion in the *Northern News* is the 16th day of the month prior to publication.





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LONG BEACH HILTON HOTEL — SEPTEMBER 16–19, 2000

Call For Sessions, Topic, Speakers, And Moderators

The APA 2000 Region VI (California/Nevada) Conference invites session and topic proposals. The conference theme—Reaching Out, Building Bridges—focuses on the relationship between planning and other disciplines, including law, architecture, landscape architecture, the arts, engineering, behavioral sciences, public administration, real estate development, and non-profit associations. We are interested in proposals that would highlight these relationships, that address the conference sub-theme of leadership, or that further explore new urbanism, sustainable development, and smart growth. Please submit proposals, topic ideas, expressions of interest in moderating or speaking, or statements of expertise to the Programs Committee liaisons:

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Kimberly Christensen, AICP City of Glendale, Planning Division 633 East Broadway, Room 103 Glendale, CA 91206-4386, (818) 548-2140, kchristensen@ci.glendale.ca.us

Session proposals are due on *January 15, 2000*. Mailed submissions are preferred; please send hard copies of emailed submissions.

Questions? Contact the Program Committee liaisons.

Interested in Writing About Current Planning Issues?

WRITE FOR THE *NORTHERN NEWS*

We need 1200-word articles on planning issues of Section-wide interest. Article ideas include:

- Update on a current development or conservation project (Chrissy Field dunes and wetlands restoration, San Francisco airport runway expansion)
- Review of a recently published book or study (Peter Samuel's *How to Build Our Way Out of Congestion: Innovative Approaches to Expanding Highway Capacity*, Witold Rybczynski's *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmstead and America in the Nineteenth Century*)
- Case study of an innovative planning process or technique
- Summary and discussion of a ballot measure or pending bill in the State legislature
- Any other issue or topic you want to explore!

This is a great way to learn more and stay abreast of current issues, while improving your writing and editing skills. Interested? Contact Joseph Ferrucci, *Northern News* Editor, at (415) 643-8175 or josephferrucci@earthlink.net

The Bulletin Board section of the Northern News is intended to provide a forum for individuals to inform members about events or current topics. If you would like to submit an item for the Bulletin Board section, contact the Newsletter Editor at (415) 643-8175.

Crazy About Cars...

Suburbanization and road-building did not solve traffic congestion, as hoped, but they did make us more dependent on our cars. Today's households, which are smaller than those of past decades, have more cars than ever before, and on average, each of us drives more and more miles every year. As a result, over the course of the century, congestion only continued to worsen and reached epic proportions in the 1980s and 1990s. Two-hour commutes from far-away towns and highway bottlenecks have become the recurring themes of our daily lives.

Faced with increasing congestion, we started to rethink our approach to traffic congestion. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and its 1998 update de-emphasized road-building, declaring the Interstate Highway System complete, and called for a more comprehensive approach to transportation planning that takes all travel modes into account.

In the future, our success in promoting transit use, walking and biking depends upon our ability to reshape land use and urban form. Higher densities, mixed use, and compact development patterns help reduce auto-dependency, but such concepts all too often run up against Not-In-My-Backyard or NIMBY opposition. One challenge of the coming century is how to educate the public to make more sustainable development choices.

Technology also promises to help reduce congestion. Cars will soon be outfitted with sensors that help regulate speed relative to other cars, reducing accordion-like highway traffic. Real time traffic information, delivered via changeable highway message signs or onboard computers, could alert commuters to the most congested routes. Moreover, with the evolution of personal computing, telecommuting has become a realistic option.

Air Quality

Car emissions create localized air pollution pockets within neighborhoods and cities,

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while also affecting overall air basins. While the number of cars and vehicle miles traveled has increased over time, cars themselves have become more fuel efficient, reducing the degradation of air quality. In the next century, the advent of electric cars could largely eliminate auto emissions. In 2000, Honda is releasing its first hybrid gas and electric-powered vehicle, estimated to achieve more than 70 miles to the gallon, double the miles per gallon of today's most fuel-efficient cars. Will improved auto efficiency and electric cars eliminate our air problems? The answer depends on how quickly the technology advances, and whether an electric vehicle can deliver the same reliability and performance as a gas-powered vehicle.

Noise, Safety, and Livability

Automobiles have transformed the character of older cities. Imagine walking out onto Market Street in San Francisco in 1900, before cars became widely available. You would hear the bustle of pedestrians, carriages, wagons, vendors, and cable cars, but none of the sounds that we normally identify with city streets—revving engines, rushing traffic, honking horns. Rather than a paved asphalt roadway and concrete sidewalks, you would walk on packed dirt (or mud) and would walk down the middle of the street. Cars relegated pedestrians and vendors to the sides of the street. Cars also impacted surrounding buildings. As the result of traffic noise, rooms facing the street became more noisy and less livable.

Often, the solution to these problems was to divorce buildings from the street or to separate out different modes of travel. In suburban and rural areas, setbacks, berms, vegetation, and other techniques were used (and are still used) to keep noise away from sensitive uses. Moreover, areas of intense pedestrian activity are often separated from heavily trafficked streets, in the tradition established by Frederick Law Olmstead in New York's Central Park.

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The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments has the following two positions available.

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Performs a wide variety of administrative tasks, assignments, and special projects as required for AMBAG's transportation and air quality services. Responsibilities include: collecting and tabulating data; coordinating work activities; conducting surveys; maintaining professional relationships with local, regional, state, and federal agencies; providing information to the general public; monitoring and informing supervisors of local, regional, and state developments that may impact the agency; representing AMBAG at meetings with other agencies and the public; and performing other duties as required of transportation/air quality services. Planning experience required. Excellent benefits, including agency paid PERS.

Both positions are opened until filled. AMBAG is an equal opportunity employer. To apply for either position, mail resume to AMBAG, P.O. Box 809, Marina, CA 93933.

AICP EXAM 2000 PREPARATION WORKSHOPS, GUIDEBOOKS, AND STUDY MANUALS

AICP EXAM 2000 WORKSHOP DATES AND LOCATIONS

Central Section - Saturday, December 11, 1999 (Fresno or Modesto)
Central Coast Section - Saturday, January 8, 2000 (San Luis Obispo)
Los Angeles Metro - Saturday, January 15, 2000 (Glendale)
Sacramento Section - Saturday, January 29, 2000 (Folsom)
San Diego Section - Saturday, February 26, 2000 (San Diego)
Northern Section - Saturday, March 4, 2000 (S.F. East Bay Area)

Are you planning to take the AICP examination in the next few years? If so, attending an AICP preparation workshop will help you increase your odds of passing. This year Michael R. Waiczis, AICP, Vice President for Professional Development of the California Chapter of the APA, will again be leading a number of AICP workshops throughout the state. Mr. Waiczis has instructed many preparation workshops over the past five years in California and around the nation. These workshops have proven to be an invaluable part of the preparation process for hundreds of candidates. If you want to improve your chance of passing the exam, it is highly recommended that you attend one of Mr. Waiczis's sessions.

EXAM PREPARATION GUIDEBOOKS AND STUDY MANUALS NOW AVAILABLE

- AICP Examination Preparation Guidebook, 2000 Edition* by Michael R. Waiczis, AICP. This study manual is a comprehensive auditor's guide to the exam (Approximately 160 pages).
- Practice and Teaching Exams, 2000 Edition* by Michael R. Waiczis, AICP. This manual contains hundreds of practice questions presented in six 150-question mock exams. (Approximately 120 pages).
- Glossary of Planning Terms for AICP Candidates* by Michael R. Waiczis, AICP. A very good reference manual that outlines and summarizes many topics that appear on the exam. (Approximately 90 pages).
- Legal and Regulatory Study Guide for AICP Candidates* by Michael R. Waiczis, AICP. Concise, comprehensive manual that covers the universal legal and regulatory aspects of planning needed to answer exam questions. (Approximately 60 pages).
- Commentary to the List of Subject Matter for the AICP Exam* by Michael R. Waiczis, AICP. A discussion of the *List of Subject Matter* of the exam. This manual helps candidates know what to study, topic by topic. (Approximately 75 pages).
- A Study Manual for the Comprehensive Planning Examination of the AICP*. This manual contains a number of individual essays addressing various planning topics.

How to Obtain These Study Manuals: Contact Mike Waiczis at w. (559) 297-2347, h. (559) 298-9770, mrw36@csufresno.edu, 815 Fordham Avenue, Clovis, California, 93611.

PLEASE REGISTER FOR THE WORKSHOP YOU WILL ATTEND 5 DAYS IN ADVANCE OF THE SESSION. The cost of the workshop is \$75.00 (includes 2 study manuals and all other workshop materials). To register, just fill out the reservation form below. Return the form with check or money order made out to Mike Waiczis, AICP. Questions? Contact Mike at w. (559) 297-2347, h. (559) 298-9770, mrw36@csufresno.edu, 815 Fordham Avenue, Clovis, California, 93611. Details about the workshops (times/locations) will be forwarded with your confirmation letter.

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→ ENROLL ME IN THE _____ AICP EXAMINATION PREPARATION WORKSHOP. → PLEASE JUST SEND ME INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO OBTAIN THE EXAM STUDY MANUALS.

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Assistant Planner

CSW/Stuber-Stroeh Engineering Group

Salary: DOQ

Assistant Planner needed for an established and respected planning and civil engineering firm in their Petaluma office. Position provides planning services related to land development, city and regional planning, and redevelopment. Duties also include preparation of feasibility studies and entitlement documents, processing of project applications, environmental studies, site planning and design. Requires B.A. or B.S. in planning or related field; excellent writing and speaking skills; graphic skills with constraint maps, site plans, grading and drainage design, and AutoCAD; knowledge of California planning and zoning law and CEQA. Please email cover letter and resume to: WayneL@cswst2.com, or mail to J.T. Wick, CSW/Stuber-Stroeh Engineering Group, 1301 Redwood Way, Suite 200, Petaluma, CA 94954.

Assistant/Associate Planner

Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc.

Salary: DOQ

Growing environmental firm in Monterey is seeking an Assistant/Associate Planner with a B.A. in environmental/land use planning or related field, plus 2 years planning experience and/or a master's degree in city planning. Experience preparing environmental documents (NEPA/CEQA), regulatory permits, and monitoring reports is preferable. Computer skills are desirable. Please fax a cover letter and resume to (831) 373-1417 (fax preferred), or mail to Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc, 947 Cass Street, Suite 5, Monterey, CA 93940.

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The Planning Group—a joint powers authority (JPA)—is seeking an experienced professional planner to prepare an implementation plan for the Group's *Cooperative Plan for Agricultural and Open Space Preservation*. The *Cooperative Plan* covers a 10,000-acre agricultural and open space area located between the cities of Benicia, Fairfield and Vallejo. The implementation plan must identify and analyze implementation priorities, management structures, and open space management financing strategies. The contract is product-oriented, and completion of work is anticipated within one year. Individuals or planning firms may apply. For job announcement and scope of work, contact Harry L. Englebright, Department of Environmental Management, 601 Texas Street, Fairfield CA 94533, (707) 421-6765, henglebright@solano.com. Final filing date: January 7, 1999.

40TH ANNUAL APA JOURNALISM AWARD COMPETITION

The American Planning Association (APA) announces the competition for its 40th Annual APA Journalism Award, which honors newspapers "for public service rendered in the advancement of city and regional planning through outstanding journalism." The award is made to a newspaper in each of three circulation categories: less than 50,000; 50,000 to 100,000; and more than 100,000. The newspaper articles honored may be efforts to inform the public about the issues, problems, and choices that confront them in improving their community or region. These articles must render outstanding public service in their coverage, perspective, interpretation, and impact.

Eligibility extends to any daily or weekly newspaper published in the United States, its territories and possessions, or in Canada. Entries must be articles published in 1999, or a series of articles ending in 1999. Nomination may be made by an editor, publisher, or any other person. For information on how to apply, contact the APA at 122 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60603, phone (312) 431-9100, fax (312) 431-9985. Deadline for receipt of entries is January 17, 2000.

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- **Conferences and Workshops.** Listing of conferences and training sponsored by other organizations, updated monthly.
- **Careers.** Everything you need to know about careers in planning.

Crazy About Cars...

Today, concepts of new urbanism call for a reintegration of streets with buildings and automobiles with other modes. In addition, traffic-calming strategies, such as traffic diverters, roundabouts, and speed bumps, are becoming widely implemented and will continue to be important tools in traffic management.

Cost

Cars loans, insurance payments, and gasoline make up a large part of our monthly expenses, but auto costs have mostly been a matter of private concern. If a car costs beyond our means, we may decide not to buy it, to share it with others, to find a lower price, or to buy a more fuel-efficient model. Leaving this problem to the private sector, however, results in inequities. Those of us with the lowest incomes have the most difficulty supporting the cost of a car. Lower income households may have to forgo buying a car and rely on transit.

Should public policy directly help lower income households pay for cars? Public policy has attempted to address the accessibility issues for low income households by improving transit service or calling for economic development, not by addressing automobile expenses. For example, Enterprise Zones are intended to introduce more jobs and services into lower income neighborhoods, reducing the distance to be traveled. Automobile cost issues will become increasingly important in the early years of the next century, as the wage gap continues to widen, an emerging trend of the information economy.

Parking

Lack of parking is also a problem that affects inner cities more than suburban or rural areas, where more abundant land allows for more parking. While

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parking shortages may frustrate us, lower amounts of parking serve as a disincentive to driving and can help encourage alternative modes of travel. In the future, as congestion worsens, we will need to re-evaluate our parking standards. Parking requirements are often outdated and reflect the needs of stand-alone, single uses. In dense, mixed-use areas, reduced standards, shared parking provisions, and application of on-street parking toward requirements can help limit the parking supply and reduce auto incentives.

An Ongoing Legacy

The problems of the automobile do not diminish its benefits. Cars provide door-to-door travel service, on demand, and maximize flexibility and convenience. They eliminate physical effort from travel and the wait time associated with transit. And for better or for worse, cars are a vital part of our transportation network, serving as the most common mode of travel. Moreover, in a short 100 years, cars have transformed our vision of the world. With a car, we can go virtually anywhere, and we can get there quickly and easily, a luxury unknown to our great grandparents. Suddenly, a vast world became smaller and we could see and experience things that were previously beyond our reach.

As planners, we do not have to pay homage to the car, in the fashion of Le Corbusier. But we can continue to find constructive ways to live with the car and to minimize and manage its impacts.

Joseph Ferrucci is the Editor of the Northern News. He lives in San Francisco.

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NORTHERN SECTION CALENDAR

December 1999

- 6 DEADLINE: AICP exam application.
- 15 Annual NSCCAPA Holiday Party, The Clubroom at Delancey Street, 7-11 p.m.

January 2000

- 1 Best Wishes for 2000!
- 15 DEADLINE: APA Region VI Annual Conference session proposals. Conference scheduled for September 16-19, 2000 in Long Beach.

March 2000

- 1-3 Sixth Annual California GIS Conference in Palm Springs.
For more information, contact Doug Abramson at (949) 855-3691 or info@calgis.org, or visit www.calgis.org
- 20-21 The Complete Management Course for Planning Directors in San Diego. For more information, contact Paul Zucker, AICP, by phone at (800) 870-6306, or by fax at (619) 260-1138, or visit www.planning.org/educ/complete.htm

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John Banks

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