

Purposeful Travel Sparks Innovation

“Purposeful travel accelerates learning, sparks innovation, and provides opportunities for collaboration”

International experiences surround us with “new” information. Since 2001, city and regional planners in Northern California have organized international planning tours for American Planning Association (APA) members and guests. The six tours include Cuba (2003), China (2007), India (2009), Brazil (2012), Eastern Europe (2014), and Southeast Asia (2017). These APA tours focus on visiting countries substantially different than the United States and meeting with a cross section of professional and academic planning-related contacts along with elected officials.



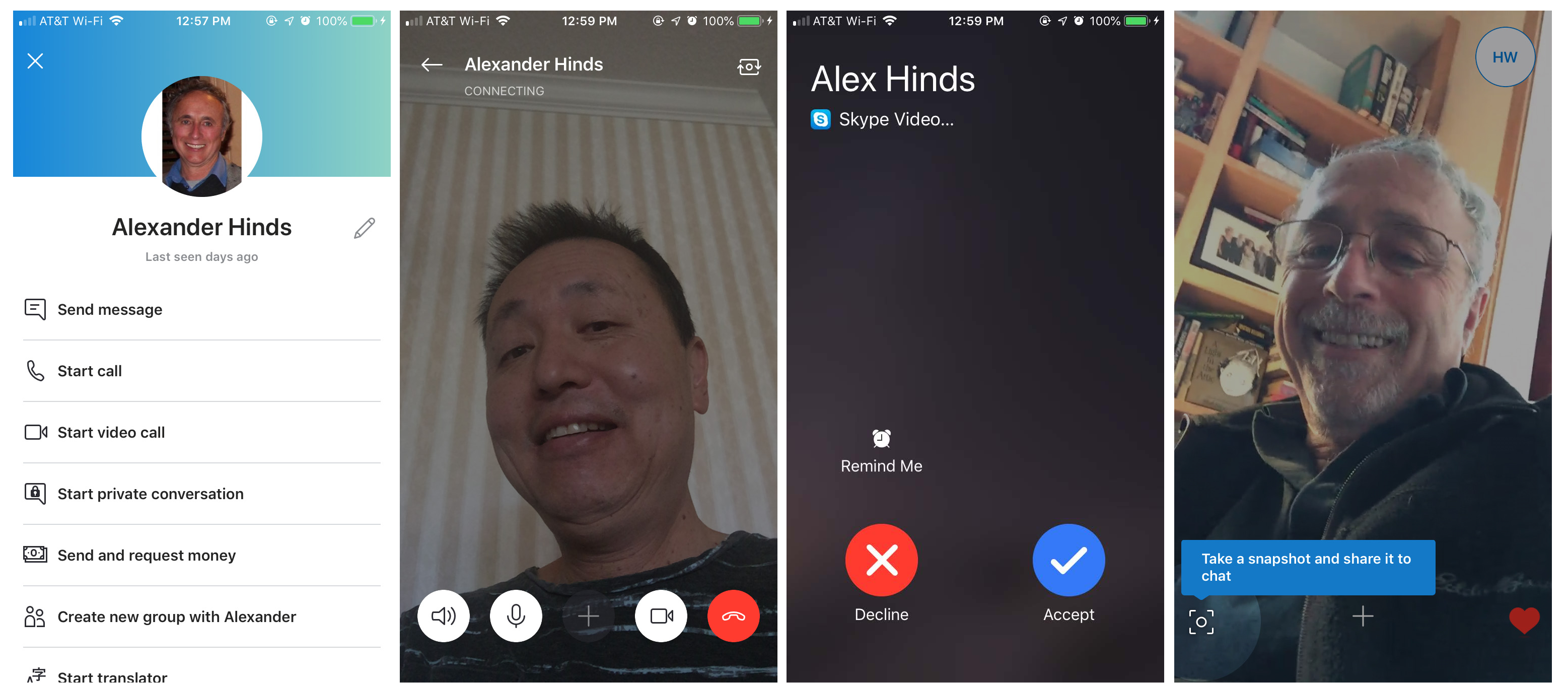
Each Sunday between 6 am and 11 am, Jakarta closes off much of its main thoroughfare to cars, so people can gather, stroll and ride bikes safely. Jakarta, Indonesia was part of the recent APA International Planning Tour to Southeast Asia. “Ciclovía”, a similar periodic car-free day event pioneered in Bogota, Columbia, has now spread around the world.

“International collaboration program develops from successful tours”

As an outgrowth of successful tours, APA California Northern Section’s volunteers initiated an international collaboration program in 2012, building upon prior international contacts. Our initial pilot collaboration was in São Paulo, Brazil – a dynamic mega city with a population of 12 million and 21 million in metro area, the largest in South America. Thanks to the help of Brazilian planner Bruno Borges, we entered our first international agreement, conducting a regional planning and governance workshop over Skype for SP Urbanismo, a São Paulo government agency. We also completed a tool kit for others interested in establishing their own purposeful travel programs.



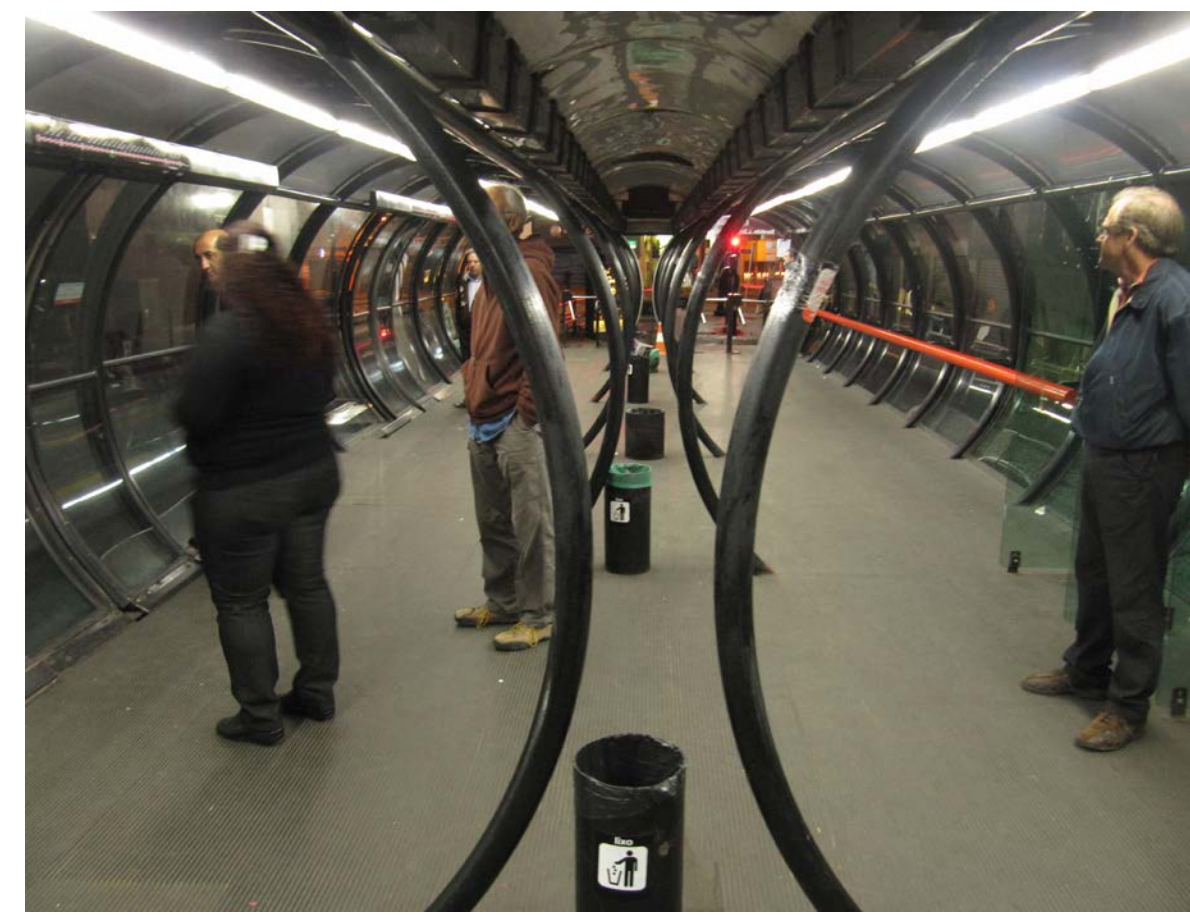
Clockwise from top left: Sergio Neves and Maria Candida Langbauer review maps with community members. Sergio Neves is a lead member of the São Cristóvão Residents Association Board of Directors. Maria Cândida Langbauer, a native of Ouro Preto and volunteer co-manager, was a prime mover for the collaboration among APA, SISU, the City of Ouro Preto, and the community group. San José State University students with Ouro Preto Mayor Julio Pimenta. Bruno Borges, volunteer co-manager, presents with San José State University students at a community meeting. Ouro Preto City Attorney Celso Carvalho (in blue shirt) facilitate group discussion.



We often use Skype – created by Estonians and popular world-wide – to communicate with international colleagues. Visiting with Estonian planners was one of the highlights of our 2014 Eastern European tour. Pictured above is Alex Hinds skyping with Hing Wong.

“International travel substantially informs the work of city and regional planners”

Historic communities that have evolved over centuries offer many valuable lessons, as do modern cultural and technological centers. Why? Cities and regions, regardless of location, face many common problems. Promising planning practices gleaned from one area may be carefully adapted to meet local needs elsewhere. Bus Rapid Transit, pioneered in Curitiba, Brazil, is prime example of an innovative practice now widely adopted around the world.



The bus system of Curitiba, Brazil, exemplifies a model Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, and plays a large part in making it a livable city. The buses run frequently and reliably, and the stations are convenient, well-designed, comfortable, and attractive.

“Current collaboration with the São Cristóvão neighborhood”

Although Ouro Preto’s well-preserved historic center is a tourist attraction and UNESCO World Heritage Site, the São Cristóvão neighborhood faces challenges including insufficient jobs, unregulated building on geologically unstable hillsides, and a lack of secure land tenure, inadequate sanitation and utilities. The City of Ouro Preto is now leveraging volunteer resources from the São Cristóvão Residents Association, the Federal University of Ouro Preto, APA California Northern Section, and San José State University. APA volunteers’ role focus on training, meeting facilitation and capacity building, drawing upon the *Lead Up* methodology developed by Eliot Allen, an Oregon based sustainability expert, that call for building consensus, greater trust and more transparent communication. Two series of community workshops have been held with a third scheduled for January 2019. Implementation calls for more tourism job opportunities, revolving loan funds, a revitalized community courtyard and improved infrastructure.



Left to right: Nearby festival attendees parade up hilly terrain on the outskirts of Ouro Preto. San José State University students attend a class at the Federal University of Ouro Preto on the history and development of São Cristóvão neighborhood.



**American Planning Association
California Chapter
Northern Section**

For additional information on APA California Northern Section’s **International Planning Program**, please check out our website at:

www.norcalapa.org/resources/international-planning

Download the **Purposeful Travel – A Planner’s Tool Kit for Initiating International Collaboration** from our website.

APA California Northern Section International Planning Program

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