

Eliminating the Painful Connection

**TIMED TRANSFER
PRESENTS PIERCE
TRANSIT RIDERS WITH
NEW TRAVEL
OPPORTUNITIES**

**Riders, Drivers, Staff and Board
Work Collaboratively to Develop
New System Model**

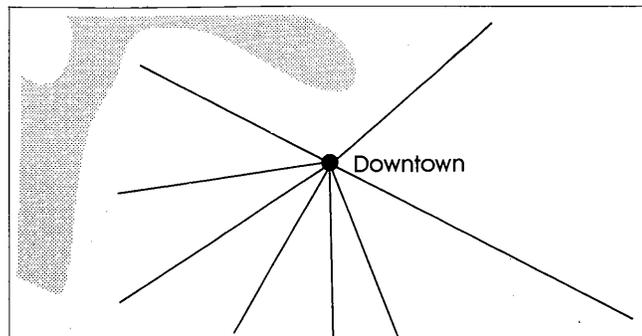
Taking The Public Pulse

The City of Tacoma Transit System had remained static for decades, operating a pattern of radial bus routes linking downtown Tacoma with outlying neighborhoods and three adjacent communities. For the most part, this system had been based on the old street car lines and the primacy of downtown Tacoma as the major destination for commuters.

Suddenly, almost overnight, the system expanded to include all of Pierce County—all the way from Tacoma to the base of Mt. Rainier. The service area tripled. Voters had approved a bond levy in 1979 which led to the formation of the Pierce Transit Benefit Authority.

Transit planners felt that a new concept for bus routing was long overdue. To test this supposition, a series of workshops were held to ascertain public preferences for travel opportunities and services. While participants confirmed a desire to travel to and from downtown, it was only one of numerous destinations requested. Other important places included neighborhood shopping centers, Tacoma Community College, and outlying suburban areas. In general, Pierce County residents expressed a strong desire to have their transit service mimic the opportunities presented by an excellent arterial highway system: the ability to travel throughout the city and region with minimal diversion.

(Continued on next page)



The original radial plan for Tacoma Transit was based primarily on the old street car routes.

**PLANNING EDUCATORS
CONFERENCE HELD IN SF**

The Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) held its twenty-fifth annual conference in San Francisco last month, with representatives attending from schools of planning around the country.

The ACSP organization is dedicated primarily to developing and expanding the foundations of planning education, theory and research, complimenting APA's stronger emphasis on planning practice and public agency intervention. The Association also publishes the *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. For details, write Professor Jayanta Chatterjee, Dean, College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, 45221.

**No. Monterey County LCP
Reduces Sedimentation
in Elkhorn Slough**

A system of land use controls to reduce sedimentation in Elkhorn Slough is being implemented as part of the North Monterey County Local Coastal Plan.

One of the goals of the North Monterey County plan, approved by the California Coastal Commission in April 1982, is the reduction of sediment impacts on Elkhorn Slough. This 2500 acre wetland encompasses the second largest salt marsh in California and has been designated an Estuarine Sanctuary under the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act.

Professor Thomas Dickert and Andrea Tuttle of the Institute of Urban and Regional Development, U.C. Berkeley, documented the effects of upland land development on the wetland in a new study "Elkhorn Slough Watershed." Some of their findings: existing land uses within Elkhorn Slough contribute sediment load far in excess of natural rates of deposition; intensive agriculture has more than twice the disturbance potential of urban development; and unvegetated sites, particularly on steep slopes, are the greatest contributors to the sedimentation of the slough. While mitigation measures for reducing concentrated runoff are necessary for individual projects, Dickert and Tuttle propose that the most effective means to control the long term cumulative impact of development in the watershed is to allocate land uses by their potential for land disturbance.

These findings form the basis of the land planning system:

- Existing sources of erosion will be reduced through diligent enforcement of the County's Erosion Control Ordinance; new development proposals must include erosion control plans.

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TIMED TRANSFER (continued)

Instead of the single main transfer point in downtown, timed transfer is a system of centers located throughout the metropolitan area. Bus schedules and routes are reorganized so that several routes converge simultaneously at each center on a regular "pulse". This also allows circumferential trips without the tedious, time-wasting need to go in and out of downtown, as dictated by the older radial plan.

In theory, timed transfer gives tremendous flexibility and accessibility to transit dependent citizens of Pierce County. At the same time, it helps eliminate the so-called "painful connection," waiting on a street corner with a transfer slip for the next bus to one's final destination (not a very pleasant activity in cold, rainy Tacoma). If properly located, transfer centers can also support or reinforce neighborhood business districts and local commercial establishments.

Eight potential sites were identified as possible transfer centers representing a mix of employment, shopping and educational centers; some were representations of all three.

Following the participatory tradition set in motion since the Agency's inception, Pierce Transit Staff hosted a series of public planning workshops. In all cases participants confirmed the general transfer center locations. Over 1,200 individuals participated in the workshops and an additional 1,800 responded to mailers and newspaper articles with letters or phone calls suggesting bus routes or supporting existing plans.

The Interim Centers

Before committing more than \$4 million in capital improvements the planners decided to test their theory. The eight transfer sites were established on the ground as interim centers.

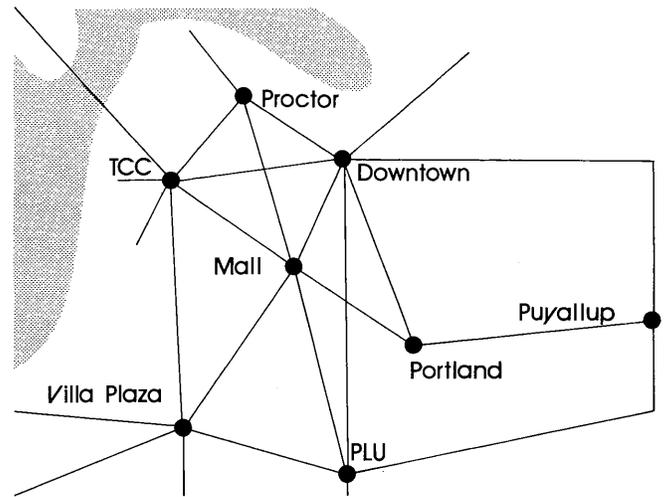
Parking lots in the approximate location of the centers were turned into bus "meets"—a vacant department store in a strip commercial center—a parking lot at the local community college—the entrance to Tacoma Mall, and even intersections of residential and commercial streets. Passenger facilities were purposely kept spartan; system graphics and signage were minimal.

The System Assessment

While staff planners were convinced that timed transfer was an appropriate system design, the Board of Commissioners were naturally more skeptical. Staff were responding to complaints from passengers who had experienced few or no changes in transit service for decades.

An assessment procedure was therefore developed to provide an independent account of how well the new system was working based on surveys of the major populations using, operating and managing Pierce Transit: Riders; Drivers; Staff; and the Board of Commissioners themselves. A further objective was to provide general planning and design information for future transfer center development if evaluated favorably.

Custom-tailored survey instruments appropriate to each group were then designed and administered, biased toward methods emphasizing high levels of participant interaction such as one-on-one interviews, focus groups and workshops. In this way, many qualitative perceptions and feelings about the system and its users were incorporated in the assessment, helping to guide interpretation of the quantitative data. While these methods were inherently more time



Timed transfer grid links desirable travel destinations in the Pierce Transit system.

consuming, they offered longer term benefits especially by serving organizational development functions like improved internal-agency communication and staff and consumer participation in transit policy development.

Results from the Assessment

Overall, the system assessment confirmed not only the transit center locations, but also the suitability of the timed transfer system for providing service to the Pierce Transit District. Less than two percent of the riders surveyed preferred the "old" Tacoma System, while eighty percent expressed an overall positive response to the new system.

The overwhelming positive response among riders was perhaps the most encouraging element of the entire system assessment. Pierce Transit staff had been responding for months to letters, phone calls and even personal visits from irate passengers whose routes or schedules had been altered. The ridership survey helped put these complaints into perspective—in actuality the dissatisfied riders were a very small percentage.

Of all those surveyed, drivers and staff focused in the greatest detail on system improvements, both internal and external, but support for the timed transfer system was still strong. Subsequently, based on the findings, the Pierce Transit Board reconfirmed its commitment to continue implementing the timed transfer system and to proceed with site selection and design for eight transfer centers.

Continuing Public Involvement

By highlighting problems of the system and development of the centers, the system assessment served as a starting point for developing solutions and provided a focus for further probing in a new round of public workshops held during the next phase of the project.

The Pierce Transit experience illustrates that a public agency can go a long way toward providing opportunities for constructive public involvement in policy and decision making. While the technology is widely available it must be coupled with a strong agency commitment to incorporate and respond to feedback from its constituencies.

D.S.I.

Copies of a paper describing the Pierce Transit system assessment model in more detail can be obtained by writing Daniel Iacofano, Moore, Iacofano, Goltsman, 1824 A Fourth Street, Berkeley, CA, 94710.

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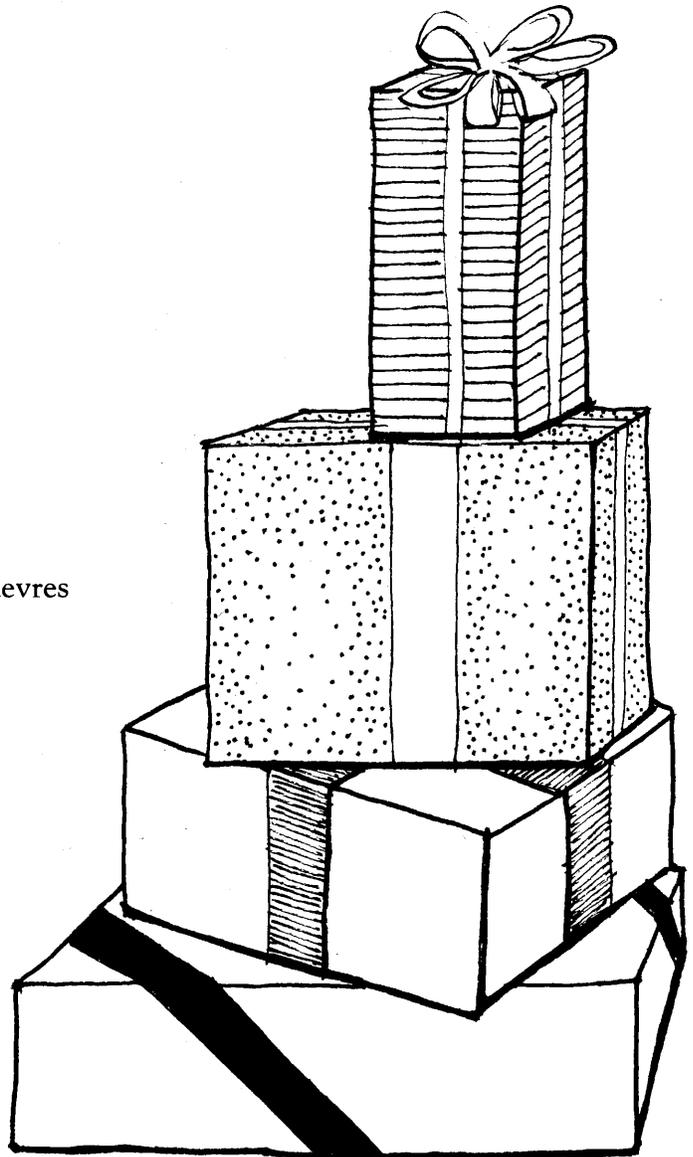
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Elkhorn Slough (continued)

- "Land disturbance targets" (total acres of bare ground) are established for each sub-watershed; cumulative amount of bare ground in each sub-watershed cannot exceed these targets.
- Sub-watersheds currently exceeding land disturbance targets are designated "watershed restoration areas," where the County will focus its attention for reducing bare ground exposure and enforcing the Erosion Control Ordinance.
- Agricultural Management Plans will be required before new areas are brought under cultivation in "critical erosion areas" (defined as areas steeper than 25% slopes and/or on certain highly erosive soils), or in watershed restoration areas.

Permits are currently being handled by the Coastal Commission. The County will take over this function upon approval of its implementation plan, which will be completed by the beginning of 1984.

Further information may be obtained from the Monterey County Planning Department in Salinas, or the Coastal Commission office in Santa Cruz. Copies of "Elkhorn Slough Watershed: Linking the Cumulative Impacts of Watershed Development to Coastal Wetlands," may be purchased from the Institute of Urban and Regional Development, Wurster Hall, U.C. Berkeley.

Rob Olshansky

Mr. Olshansky is a free lance consultant and a Ph.D. student in environmental planning at UC Berkeley.

URBAN DESIGN ON CABLE TV: The Walnut Creek Downtown Design Clinic

Two nationally acclaimed urban designers, Hideo Sasaki, of Sasaki Associates and the Harvard University School of Design, and Alan B. Jacobs, Professor of Urban Design at UC Berkeley and former Planning Director for the City of San Francisco, will be seen on local cable television later this month. The broadcast features videotape highlights of a Downtown Design Clinic held in the City of Walnut Creek last summer during which Mr. Sasaki and Mr. Jacobs, together with City officials and residents, debated issues on downtown conservation and development. The show will be aired four times: November 15 at 11:00 am. on Channel 13; November 16 at 7:00 pm. on Channel 6; November 17 at 9:30 pm. on Channel 6; and November 22 at 11:15 am. on Channel 13.

Some of the topics covered in the broadcast are pedestrian activity centers, streetscapes, building height ordinances, landscaping and trees, open space views, saving unchanneled portions of Walnut Creek, and housing preservation in Downtown.

The Design Clinic was sponsored by the Walnut Creek Community Development Department and held in connection with the City's overall effort to revise the existing Core Area Plan. For further information, contact the Walnut Creek Community Development Department at 943-5834.

Northern News UPDATE...

The Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) will hold its annual conference in San Luis Obispo, June 28 through July 2, 1984. EDRA is a professional organization dedicated to improving the quality of human environments through research-based design and planning. For conference details, write to EDRA 15/1984, Cal Poly Extension, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93407. For EDRA membership information, write: Willo White, EDRA, L'Enfant Plaza Station, PO Box 23129, Washington, D.C., 20024.

* * *

The jury is still out on WEST PLAN Magazine, the new quarterly publication launched by Cal Chapter. Section Director Steve Orlick reports that most other California Section Directors would prefer to redirect the magazine's funds to help finance section activities. What do you think? Please write or phone in your comments care of Northern News . . .

* * *

The AICP and AWARDS Committees are looking for new members. The AICP coordinators are responsible for organizing the annual exam preparation seminars; Awards committee members review nominations of individuals and projects for local, State and National recognition. Participation on either committee offers Section Members an opportunity to strengthen and raise planning profession standards and expectations. Call one of the Northern Section Board Members for more details (See Directory).

* * *

Subscriptions to Northern News are available: \$10/year for non-members; no charge for APA members residing in Northern Section Cal Chapter. Approximately eight issues per year. Includes Jobs In Planning listings.

Northern News Staff: Daniel Iacofano, Editor; Lois Jones, Associate Editor for Jobs In Planning; Susan Goltsman; and Louis Hexter.

Northern News Staff wish you Happy Holidays!



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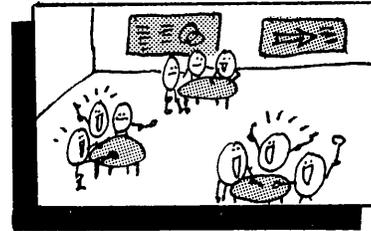
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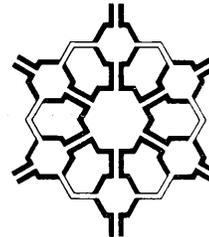
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