

EcoPlan International

TECHNOLOGIE, ÉCONOMIE, SOCIÉTÉ

Paris, 6 June 2000

Dear Colleague,

As you may know, earlier this year we had the good fortune to cooperate with the mayor and the city of Bogotá to support them in organizing the first ever Car Free Day in a Third World mega-city. It was a terrific, much debated high profile event that has created a great deal of interest and spin-offs of many kinds, as you will see in these pages.

But as we have so often said, the goal of a car free day is not just to have a nice time and enjoy some part of a city for a few relatively blissful and quiet hours. The real objective is to provide those who care with an opportunity to see their city and its transport arrangements with fresh eyes, and perhaps as a result begin to gather their thoughts and resources to begin to do things a bit differently. (In Bogotá the subtitle of the day was, "Let us imagine a new city"... precisely!) Few of the European CFD projects thus far have dug in and really tried to do this properly. But the Bogotá team got the message and took that part of it very seriously -- and as a result came up with some interesting findings and results which they are now busy implementing. (An example which, incidentally, we can only hope will rub off on the Europeans as they gear up to give the concept another spin next September.)

After spending a hectic week in Bogotá, from which I have just returned and during which I had a chance not only to present and analyze the results and findings of the car free day from out international perspective, as well as to review their plans and on-going actions which are intended to deal with the city's many and challenging transport-related problems and prospects, I sat down to write up as best I could in the limited time available the results of my observations and what I learned from my stay there. These you will find in the following somewhat sprawling memo or, as I have decided to call it, 'thinking exercise'. My aim: to inform, and to inspire thought and comment which can in turn help us to create something rather better than this first draft.

You will find that the draft is generally devoid of hard numbers and references. Nor are there any graphics (yet), which is really a pity since there is a lot of very interesting and I think increasingly convincing visual evidence which points up that they are moving in the right direction. In parallel with the present expert review in which hopefully you are participating, we are working to correct some of these deficiencies and omissions, and my hope is that within a few weeks at most we shall have a much more complete and authoritative background piece posted on either the @World Car Free or possibly a new Bogotá Challenge web site. My intention is to insert reviewer comments directly in the text, in an attempt to present a more rounded and complete view.

In the meantime, you have this draft which I put before you because you have indicated that you would be willing to have a look and perhaps share with me in turn your critical comments, corrections, amplifications and suggestions that might help us do better in a later and more complete version. If you care about people, sustainable transport and social justice, you will see that we owe a lot to the team who are trying so hard to make this work in Bogotá. And if we can help them in any way, we should be trying to do so. Or so at least this one soul thinks.

With thanks for your willingness to get involved. So many prefer not to.

Eric Britton

Organization of Dossier

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I. What's going on in Bogotá in the year 2000?

A couple of general points of background on the Bogotá scene and plans and accomplishments to get us going.

1. **The accomplishment:** The Bogotá team are building and putting into place what is rapidly developing into no less than a whole new model for mobility (a) in their city and, incidentally (b) in Third World cities more generally (and (c) quite possibly elsewhere as well).
2. **The goal:** To create through a highly participatory process a genuinely sustainable transportation system that serves the multiple objectives of economic viability, quality of life, environmental integrity, and social justice.
3. **The means:** What is perhaps most striking about the Bogotá project is not its many component parts – most of which are long known to the leading edge thinkers in the field, well done and altogether appropriate to the circumstances – but the energetic and ingenious way in which their team is moving beyond the theory and rhetoric of sustainable transportation, to its actual realization on the street and in the daily lives of those who live in Bogotá. Thus, what is their main accomplishment is, above all, their path-breaking exercise in what we have to call: the Politics of Sustainability. It is for this reason above all that we all need to give especially careful attention to what they are doing there. There are valuable lessons for all to be learned.
4. **The background:** But before we begin to peer into this any further, let's not forget the crushing reality of the transportation situation that the people of Bogotá have to deal with on their streets each and every day. It is, to use a mild phrase, close to hell on earth out there. How can I describe it to you if you have not been there of late? It's epic. Words like out of control, chaotic, careening, dangerous, dirty, confusing, demeaning, debilitating, dehumanizing et al simply fail to convey the awful reality of the situation that most of the 8 million inhabitants of the city face when they enter the traffic stream. The poorer you are the worse it is. Try this for a life: Two tough hours just to get to work on time, high incidence of respiratory infections¹, continuous exposure to social violence, daily humiliation and no choice. Of course if you're in a nice car, a good driver who knows his way around, and a little luck, it's bearable. But even there you can be sure of a lively moment

¹ Peñalosa makes the point that in Bogotá you can smoke three packages of cigarettes a day, without even opening up the box.

("terrifying" may be a better word) every couple of minutes or so. You can die of lots of stuff out there in the traffic stream in Bogotá -- but no one, no one has ever died of boredom.

5. **An alternative transportation system:** It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that their team, led by their passionate mayor Enrique Peñalosa, is for the first time in a major Third World City laying the base for what is shaping up to be no less than a full scale, 100% coverage, "alternative transportation system" (i.e., one that will in a few years hopefully fulfill something like 98% of the movement requirements of its population by arrangements other than people driving around in their own cars). Now we have had a lot of theory and posturing on all this (the "car free city") over the years – but the team in Bogotá is actually moving actively and with deliberation in that direction... putting in place the various necessary bits and pieces of a full-function alternative transportation and getting it into service. Just like that.
6. Let me see if I can put this in other words in an attempt to make quite sure that I am getting through on this critical point. The underlying point is that certain cities, their city anyway, and perhaps many others in the Third World, are either for cars -- or for people. But not for both. And the Peñalosa team has decided that the Bogotá transportation system is going to be for people. And not cars. Point à la ligne! ²
7. We must be clear about one other point in this context. This is not some kind of naive, isolated or extreme position on the part of the Bogotá team. Their team is moving ahead with substantial support from the leading edge of thinking and practice in the international expert community (if not yet as much as they deserve). In a way, in fact, what is presently underway in Bogotá can be taken as a symbol of the new thinking that has begun to take over in these circles in recent years. Indeed, the support of once less than supportive institutions such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, UNDP and other well placed international organizations has been crucial as part of this process.
8. The driving force behind all this is their mayor and his young team, though the obstacles they face are more than one and far from trivial (including the constant threat of assassination that he has to live with).
 - i. But first, since no one has yet seen such a system in actual operation anywhere before in the Third World, there are a lot of doubts, particularly in the press and what can fairly be called the "opposition circles", as to whether this can be done. ³
 - ii. Then there is, as one might expect, considerable political resistance, some of it on the grounds of a certain logic, but most on the grounds that the "other party" is always wrong (without forgetting, however, that the mayor has more than 80% of the population behind him on this one). ⁴

² There has over the last decade or so been a great deal of posturing and soft-headed writing and posturing around on this topic, often uniformed, usually quite shrill, and almost always quite irritating. But... and this is where the irony comes in, in this case that's exactly the choice. YOU QUITE SIMPLY CANNOT DO BOTH! The trick is, however, to find the way to move from theory to practice. And that is what is going on in Bogotá today.

³ You can get a taste of this from the program, accomplishments and attitudes in Zurich (see the article "Three Messages from Zurich concerning the new transport policy" which is available in our site The Politics of Sustainability at www.ecoplan.org/politics, click Thinkpiece). Of course everyone then says, "well that's Zurich and you know...". To which we and Peñalosa respond: "Well that's Zurich and WE know".

⁴ See poll results of the last car free day (at www.ecoplan.org/carfreeday).

- iii. Next, there is the problem that he must at the end of the year turn over his office to whoever it is who is elected on October 29th, and who may in fact decide to try to reverse all that has been accomplished thus far, for whatever reasons.⁵
- iv. As a result there is a major challenge in terms of the time available over the remaining six months to get the basic plan built and fully in place. In this respect there appears to be little room for error.
- v. And of course if all that were not enough there also is a war going on there, then there is the whole drug situation, and finally, just to crown it all. . .
- vi. A real economic crisis due to above all to some pretty rotten government economic policies (in good part foisted on them by the draconian prescriptions of the international financial community).

So this will give you the basic state of play in Bogotá this morning. All in all as you can see, not an easy task.

9. What Peñalosa and his team have going for them, on the other hand, are a number of things, perhaps enough to give them a real shot at longer term success.
 - i. First, it just so happens that they in their basic thesis they are right and profoundly so. The arguments for a non car-based transport system in a place like Bogotá are simply overwhelming. It may be surprising, sound puerile and idealistic, but no.... it's the way to go!
 - ii. Fortunately, there is enough experience, knowledge and capability available at the leading edge of policy and practice in the world today to help them handle the mobility and access problems of the city with a new set of integrated transport alternatives. (Let me try this in other words: Over the last years, the concept of sustainable transport and sustainable cities has advanced to the point where there is now at least a base of understanding of the issues and eventual solution sets that is there for anyone to draw on, if they chose to do so. Not very many years ago, this was simply not the case.)
 - iii. Third, there is the fact that the mayor is very smart, has fire in his belly, and is a true and convincing leader. (He's not perfect but then again, who other than thee and me. And sometimes I wonder about....) Moreover, Mayor Peñalosa is publicly and totally committed to the success of this whole venture. He is prepared to be judged on the success of this initiative and has at no time hidden behind ambiguous rhetoric or any other form of political shield. It is **his** project, he is the one who is behind it every day, and if it fails, well then you will know where to go to make your complaints. This level of highest personal commitment, energy and understanding of the issues is, in my view, one of the main reasons why this amazing experiment is moving ahead.
 - iv. Next, the mayor and his team are getting high level peer support, and increasingly more than that, from the leading edge of the international transportation and city planning community. You have some signs of this if

⁵ This in my view is among the greatest test the mayor faces in these last months of his term, since the pressure of time is preventing him from being as consultative as such programs should at best be. But he simply has no time so much forge ahead with his (excellent) idea. This means that he inevitably is going to make mistakes and in the process possibly lose some people. But as he sees it (and I think correctly) there is simply no choice. The basic system has to be up, working and credible by the end of this year and his term. Otherwise. . .

you check out the Bogotá International Guest Book (see ecoplan.org/carfreeday/) developed in support of their first car free day last February, but the actual interest and support in international transport and policy circles is in fact running far deeper than even that.

- v. And finally, there is the level of talent, energy and commitment of the teams behind this daring project. There are a lot of bright, committed people there (most of them quite young), and they are responding to this leadership challenge with enthusiasm and ability.
10. The following may seem too simple and obvious, but let me anyway ask your patience to set the stage for what follows by taking a minute to remind us briefly of the basic building blocks of which a city transport system actually consists. Abstracting from a city with metros (which anyway is not our case here) these include:
- i. The city street network and its construction, management and maintenance (including provision for all kind of vehicles, including non-motorized movements and pedestrians).
 - ii. Those other parts of the urban real estate that support the system (mainly, parking and service faculties)
 - iii. The vehicles out there on the street (private cars on the one hand, and then a variety of other vehicles and ownership and use patterns)
 - iv. The service and supply chain that keeps all those vehicles on the road and moving.
 - v. The people and groupings behind all that (again covering a range which varies greatly from place to place of individuals, groups, agencies, etc.)
 - vi. The institutional and legal context
 - vii. And, increasingly, the electronic environment within which all this takes place
11. The Bogotá team is presently well into the process of creating a new pattern of these building blocks to craft an entirely new alternative transport structure, of which the following may be of interest to you and food for thought.⁶
- i. The net thrust of their program is to take away street and other urban space consistently and strategically from private cars -- and turn it over to better and more productive uses. This is intended to be a key of the overall continuing effort, not only in the present stage of work, but also in the longer run.⁷

⁶ Please do not take this as an attempt to report in a comprehensive and authoritative way on the many things that are presently going on in the city to deal with their problems of mobility and urban amenity. There are many projects, programs and challenges which are not covered in this entirely personal and eclectic overview. I can in time try to provide references that will help you if you wish to have more and perhaps more solid information and insight on all this. But this note still has a job to do, as I hope you will now see and appreciate.

⁷ The mayor has announced that he intends to call a major referendum in the city on October 29 in parallel with the local elections, where a detailed, overriding legal framework will be created that will literally do away with ALL private car travel in peak periods in Bogotá in specific steps over a total of 15 years (to give everyone enough

THE BOGOTÁ CHALLENGE

- ii. An aggressive program of parking control and constraint (that is causing great howls but still going ahead).
- iii. The world's best (in fact the only even half decent) even/odd car restraint day, every day, which they call "Pico y Placa".^{8 i}
- iv. A major and massive traffic calming, sidewalk construction, and pedestrian pathing and protection scheme which is currently under construction throughout the city. (The whole place is a construction site for all this stuff).
- v. A world-level bicycle transportation infrastructure of which more than 200 kms is either already in place or under construction. (The quality of this program is very high, and financial and other provision is being made to ensure that in addition to the infrastructure, there is also the broader supporting structure that is needed to make sure this is gong to work.)⁹
- vi. A recent public announcement by the mayor subsequent to the car free day of February 21st announcing the decision **not** to take the planned new metro project any further – on the grounds that (a) a metro in ten or fifteen years will solve not a single one of today's aching problems and priorities, and (b) they don't happen to have the \$3 billion anyway that it would take to build it.ⁱⁱ
- vii. The Transmilenio is to provide the high capacity line haul capacity for the city, starting already in this year and to be steadily expanded over the next few years to create a city wide, fine mesh network offering high speed service over the whole metropolitan area. Three lines and the first 200 articulated buses are planned to be on line this year. The first line is to open in early October. Construction is, of course, fully underway.
- viii. The 30,000+ buses, busetas, minibuses, and colectivos are a real challenge and are to be the object of a major rehabilitation and overhaul program. There is a huge amount of work that has to be accomplished if they are to take their place as key components of the city's sustainable transportation system. Among the other targets: massive fleet renewal, huge emissions and noise reductions (internal and external), accident reduction, passenger safety improvements, driver training, route realignment and rationalization, integrated ticketing, new services, greatly improved maintenance, improved work conditions for all involved, job security and pay, etc.

time to adjust). The final objective: on January 1, 2015 there will be ZERO cars permitted anywhere in the entire city in peak hours. ZERO!

⁸ For details on how this works, see the end notes, But God only knows how they managed to take what has to be the world's most feeble car reduction strategy, odd/even, and make of it something that works and works very well indeed. This considerable accomplishment is a real testimony to their thoughtfulness and capabilities to make this work. To appreciate this you have to have some familiarity with two things: (a) how badly the basic idea has worked in every other place it has been tried, and (b) how successful it is in Bogotá where it is creating a visibly improved mobility environment during peak hours every day of the week. NOBODY ELSE HAS DONE THIS!!!

⁹ Both the cycle and pedestrian schemes are managed as part of a considerably broader "public spaces" program that reaches out to include such things as small parks, tree planting programs, street furniture, and other forms of public space amenity and use.

- ix. The city's 55,000-odd taxis offer another huge challenge to both policy makers and to the operators. This process is under discussion, but it is likely that major progress will have to await visible results in the rest of the system. There are some tough barriers (and some very tough people) who have to be brought to the table and somehow made part of the solution.
 - x. How do you make all these bits and pieces work together in a harmonious and transparent way that will facilitated "systemic" use of all the various bits and pieces – through a unified fare policy, naturally! But where are they in that important part of the whole. In process (I think) but not without consciousness of the importance that this has in the broader scheme. So watch this space.
 - xi. A real problem, that is getting attention but which requires real resources, has to do with the condition and maintenance of the existing street system, which at present is in many places in pretty bad shape. In any city potholes are a problem, but where streets are winding and mountainous, as they are in much of Bogotá, and traffic is dense and very fast, potholes can and do become a major source of the 500 or so traffic accidents that occur each and every day (only 100 or so of which get reported).
 - xii. And where, you may well ask, is goods movement in all this? The answer to that non-trivial question has several parts. First and perhaps a bit surprising, both observation and the statistics indicate that on the city streets at least trucks are not the main part of either the traffic flow or the problem. You simply do not see all that many of them on the street. That is not to say that there are not problems here as well, but the overwhelming priorities at this stage have to do with moving people. At the same time, it can be noted that the city's planners are making provision to rationalize and cut back in unnecessary truck movements, without threatening the regional economy. But for now the thrust of policy is on finding ways to provide better mobility and transportation conditions for people.
12. That in a few short paragraphs is my appreciation of the highlights of the traffic and transport situation in Bogotá as of the closing days of May 2000, as well as the outline of the city's plan to attack the problems and deal with them in an entirely new and highly innovative way.¹⁰

¹⁰ Caveat: Let's keep in mind in all this however that, bad as it is in many respects, it is also possible, if we proceed without the necessary care, that the overall transportation and amenity situation can be made even worse. All too easily. Warts and all, danger and injustice in all, today's system does somehow manage to provide something on the order of 20 million plus trips per day to the citizens of Bogotá. So, our objective must be not to make conditions worse for people (which there are a number of ways of doing, many of them with the best of intentions), but to move in secure sensible steps to a better, fairer, safer more sustainable transportation system. That is what the Bogotá team is now working on. Not in theory, but out there on the streets of their city.

II. Where is all this going?

1. Please don't write off what is going on in Bogotá as a one shot, sui generis, cowboy event. There is an excellent chance that they are in the process of laying the base for a whole new model of transport for Third World cities, building further on and going well beyond the Curitiba experience, to name one of the best known precursors. (Peñalosa is every bit as far sighted, responsible and energetic as Jaime Lerner, and he is well aware of the implications of what he is doing and the fact that they stretch well beyond the single city of Bogotá.)
2. As perhaps you know, the Bogotá program, via the Car Free Day project of last February, is not only getting world level attention but is also a winner of the Stockholm Challenge Award. This recognition is important both for the mayor and the city in their efforts to make sure that their program "sticks" (i.e., stays on track no matter who becomes the next mayor), and for this approach as a 'New Model for Transport Policy and Practice in Third World Cities'.
3. A next step in this process will be the second Car Free Day which is to be organized on Thursday, 21 September, building on this first experience but now going much further.
 - a. One intention is to invite a number of mayors from other major Latin American cities to come to Bogotá to observe and learn from the day, via a four day workshop.¹¹
 - b. It is hoped that in addition to extending and building on the lessons of the first Day and everything that will have been done since in terms of new infrastructure development, it will be possible to open up the first Transmilenio line, at least on a demonstration basis and, one would hope, free.
 - c. We have already met with the national Ministry of the Environment who have indicated that they will be willing to see what might be done to extend the Day to other Colombian cities.
 - d. There is a good possibility that a certain number of other cities around the world will join in this event, making it the first @World Car Free Day .¹²
 - e. From the mayor's perspective one of the critical roles of this second car free day will be to prepare public opinion for the Referendum that is planned to take place four weeks later. As a reminder the first Day got 87% public approval in the polls, but at the same time showed a certain number of weaknesses. Now that these are known, the Bogotá team is targeting to do even better, in order to ensure that the vote will be overwhelming. And my guess is that, tragedy aside, it

¹¹ We have, in fact, had a major role in drawing up this part of the next stage plan, and are presently looking for funds that will permit the cash-strapped city to extend these invitations and to cover the expenses of the workshop. There are, one might point out, some interesting sponsorship possibilities there for any groups who might wish to be associated with such a program. Ahem!

¹² For the record, it is important to distinguish this kind of Car Free Day approach from the much milder version that is presently being played with in parts of Europe and which will in fact take place as limited demonstrations in a certain number of cities the following day. (We call these "low peturbance" or "Car Free Lite" days, as opposed to the much deeper and more difficult and far reaching approach that we are seeing in cities like Bogotá.

will be.

4. **Massive Overhaul of the City Public Transport Fleet:**

- a. This is a particularly exciting opportunity that to my limited knowledge is not as yet perhaps fully appreciated or targeted by the Bogotá team (as much as anything else because they have their hands full with their work in progress). But give them a bit of time. they will get there. They are demonstrating their considerable abilities in the programs that are already in full swing. Let me sketch out a few of my thoughts on this.
- b. The first step in this conceptual remapping of what is in fact the resource base and eventual solution to this part of the puzzle – lies in tossing all the available public vehicles into a single pile: all taxis and all the buses of all sizes and types, and looking at them collectively as the fundamental starting point of the future shared transport system of the city (hand in glove with Transmilenio which is presently being sorted out and given a well defined and critical backbone role).
- c. This means that the transport resource base we have to work with is something on the order of 80,000+ vehicles of a huge range of types, sizes, conditions, ownership arrangements, profitability, what have you.
- d. In most studies and reports in the past these are usually defined and targeted as key parts of the **problems** of Bogotá's transportation system. I, by contrast, chose to view them as key parts of the SOLUTION.¹³
- e. Consider this: What we have here is basically one shared vehicle per 100 people living in Bogotá. That's what they have today, and of course we also know that there is a lot that is wrong with it as things presently stand. But what if we work with these owners, drivers and the concerned public institutions and agencies, and put real resources to bear on the problems; the result might well be permuted into the Third World's best city transport system. If you crank through the numbers you find some intriguing possibilities.
- f. This totally re-articulated, re-engineered, and in time renewed fleet is for the most part going to be privately owned and operated. That's simple fact. A number of visiting experts have recommended that it would be desirable to get them all off the street and have the whole mess replaced and run by a nice clean (and nicely deficitary) publicly administered First World public transit operation. These critics are twice wrong and flagrantly so in this claim: First, because a "Northern model" classic public transport simply could never meet the full spectrum of needs that are necessarily associated with a high quality, no-car mobility system. And secondly, if you ever tried to cut out the private ownership, you would have a revolution on your hands. And it would not be the first time that a Third World government was toppled by a desire to screw around with the transport sector.

¹³ Many of the consultancy and technical reports that we have reviewed on the subject recommend such things as: "get rid of the minibuses", "reduce and rationalize the number of buses", "the city has at least twice as many taxis as needed", and the like. Understandable enough counsel perhaps in a first instance. But not in a second and upon mature reflection. . Not to be cruel, but somehow it seems as if what these planners and critics have in mind is to make of Bogotá (and the other cities of the Third World) something on the order of the transport equivalent of Corbu's Ville Radieuse. Flat, uniform, imposed, administered, mechanical. But that's not the way things are, or the way they are going to be.

- g. The restructuring of the shared transport system opens up a huge spectrum of new opportunities for both service providers and other players capable of getting in and offering new kinds of services, all while working with the people who are already involved in hanging on to their bit of the turf.
- h. The end result will doubtless be that these eighty thousand old-style and problematic vehicles will gradually morph into somewhere between ten and twenty distinguishable types of vehicles and service arrangements, ranging all the way from what will probably be a considerably smaller, more or less classic 'yellow taxi' fleet as presently exists, via combinations and permutations of feeder systems, shared taxis, line taxis, specialized microbus services, new age van pools, shuttle buses, and yet others, all working in close cooperation with the ever expanding Transmilenio operations.
- i. One critical advantage that these new service arrangements are going to enjoy is more and better access to street space. We can anticipate that as with the Transmilenio, the public carriers are going to have increasing access to reserved lanes and a variety of priorities which, combined together with the continuing reductions of private cars on critical routes, are going to permit them to move more quickly and with fewer accidents through the traffic stream. That at least is the logical and necessary target.
- j. New, cleaner, safer and rather different kinds of vehicles. Better and safer drivers, better trained and better paid. A much broader range of services for the traveling public. And all of that increasingly mediated by new information and communications technologies.

5. **Future Role Of Electronics and IT**

- a. At present the electronics interface of the city's transportation system is pretty rudimentary. Traffic lights with some older generation control technologies for the most part, plus radios in many of the taxis constitute the bulk of what is presently in place. Not much.
- b. The Transmilenio represents the opening wedge in this technology revolution.
- c. And further more, if and when the players begin to get hold of the needed restructuring and reengineering of those 80,000-plus vehicles that are and will continue to be out on the street, there are going to be a steady stream of new communications options opening up.
- d. There will be many opportunities to bring this stuff on line piece by piece.

6. **Natural Gas**: Given the special environmental and air quality problems of the city, in combination with the ready availability of natural gas and pretty good and reasonably cost effective technologies available to put them into vehicles, this is surely an area which is worth some thought and attention.

7. **Urban clustering and other planning approaches to reduce transport needs:**

This too is an important element of the Bogotá strategy, though at the present time, given the problems and urgency, the bulk of the policy emphasis is on the other measures as outlined here.

8. **Carsharing for Bogotá ?** As a long time proponent and supporter of the concept of carsharing (see @World CarShare Consortium at <http://www.ecoplan.org/carshare>), I

nonetheless have not thus far made any active suggestions about carsharing as part of the near term strategy for the city, on the grounds that it might be too early for such a radical idea to take hold in a place that still has such a strong status association with the good old motor car. I have been taken to task (kindly so) for this omission from Paul Barter of the SUSTRAN network whose comments on this appear in the endnotes:ⁱⁱ

9. **Who wants this to fail?** You might think that such a project would have only allies in a poor, embattled city like Bogotá. After all the traffic and environmental situation is one which is so grave, total systemic collapse is right on the horizon, and the need for just this sort of massive and sensible restructuring is clearly so enormous, so why would anyone wish it to fail? Well the truth is that there are a fair slice of people and interests who have come out publicly against this project and the approach behind it -- and more yet who will tell you in private that it's a rotten idea and one that needs to be obliterated as quickly as possible. I have heard intelligent and responsible people characterize the entire project as a "populist scheme that just can't work", "totally corrupt", "going against all good senses", "anti-car", "going to ruin the city", "make it impossible for me to use my car", "ruin all commerce.", "dangerous because the streets are unsafe and we need our cars for protection", and the list goes on. There is also the usual political rejection that occurs because this entire project is associated with both the person of the mayor and his political party. Thus, anything he does automatically becomes a candidate for removal when the new folks move in.¹⁴

10. **How to make it stick:** This is without any doubt in my mind the biggest challenge I see them facing now. As you have hopefully seen, the basic plan is a strong one and their execution appears to be on target.
 - a. But what happens if another political party or attitude about cars and transport in cities were to come in and try to reverse all that has been accomplished thus far? And all that will still remain to be done at the end of the year when the new administration comes to office.
 - b. To my mind, there is one answer to this: THERE MUST BE VISIBLE AND CONVINCING RESULTS!. If enough of those cycle paths are out there and carrying large numbers of people to school and work each day, if the first Transmilenio lines are up and moving passengers through the traffic stream at good speeds and comfortably, if enough sidewalks have been built and enough cars been cleared off them so that there is tangle proof that this is working. . . than all this is going to be very difficult to reverse. And if not... well, not.

11. **Proposed Referendum:** The Mayor is currently examining the possibility of calling a popular referendum on 29 October asking Bogotans how they want the Bogotá of 2015 to look in terms of its transportation arrangements. The idea is to use such a popular vote to build in a kind of citizens' guarantee and pressure to keep the program in place. One idea being considered is to call for constructions of a certain number of lanes for Transmilenio every year, kilometers of cycle-paths, a CFD every year, etc., together with a regular extension and strengthening of the Pico y Placa scheme to phase out in stages ever more cars during those key peak periods. The longer term goal? A city without

¹⁴ A part of the resistance can fairly be said to come from the "Country Club" set. In this case, this is not an entirely figurative expression, since in fact the mayor is also hard at work at buying out a beautiful park in the center of the city which for years has been housed the most exclusive country club in Bogotá. The plan is to open this up for free public use. As you might guess, not everyone in town is in love with his project.

cars.

12. **World Transport Policy & Practice:** A special issue of the Journal of World Transport Policy and Practice is planned in December that will be entirely devoted to the Bogotá Challenge. It will be a major number and get broad distribution publicity around the world. We hope that this is going to provide increased international understanding and support for the Bogotá initiative.¹⁵
13. **The Stockholm Challenge Prize:** In this context, something like the Stockholm Challenge Prize, which was awarded to the city of Bogotá and EcoPlan on the 5th of June for socio-technical innovation in ways which combine new technology and new thinking on major environmental and life quality issues, has particular relevance in several respects. The presence of the mayor of Bogotá in Stockholm at the center of this important international event will give him an opportunity to show the world something about the way his city is looking and facing these difficult challenges (this being a critical part of the “Bogotá Challenge”). It will also be an occasion for him to issue his Challenge to other cities of the Third World and beyond to take a fresh look at their own transportation situations and to seek to break many of the old bottlenecks, including in new and often unexpected ways. Thus, this international award and event have become part of the solution process for Bogotá.

¹⁵The Journal will be organized in two main parts: a report from Bogotá which spells out the what, how and why of their project. And then an international commentary (for which perhaps you will have some ideas.)

III. To conclude . . .

- Bogotá is a huge and fast growing city.
- There are many like it in the Third world.
- Until the present push, the city has been a typical mega-sufferer from the limitations of the old transportation paradigms. If nothing changes in terms of its policies and mobility arrangements, its transport system is within a very few years of total collapse.
- But based on this new program it is now beginning to look as if their transportation future is going to be vastly different from the suddenly old and tired arrangements which are so blatantly failing to do the job throughout the Third World. (And in a lot of other cities as well!)
- An important part of the puzzle is the hard-pressed practical decision to allocate available resources **not** to building a metro, that may or may not provide answers for some minority part of the city's transport needs in say ten to fifteen years time, but to direct all efforts and available funds to dealing with the priority problems today.
- The dominant mode of 21st century transport in Bogotá and all these cities over the next decade or two is going to be . . .(a) rubber-tired vehicles (b) that move flexibly on city streets (c) guided by human drivers.
- And increasingly all of these are going to be something other than private, owner-driver cars. (which are gradually being planned out of the system).
- The quality and range of the alternative service arrangements is going to exceed vastly the old perceptions of what constitutes "public transport".
- The information and communications content of these systems can be expected to play an increasingly important role in the workings of the new system.
- These novel patterns are going to open up new domains of opportunities for innovative public/private partnerships and collaboration, with business opportunities for the private sector on a scale which can only be described as huge.
- Bogotá is emerging as a world leader in setting this new pattern. We can anticipate that it will be followed by many others in the years ahead.
- We can also anticipate many opportunities for South-to-North 'transfers of technology' as northern planners observe and learn from this experience.
- There are not as yet many people or groups in the world who fully understand all this and who could help Bogotá and other innovating cities in a range of practical ways – whether as policy advisors, sources of financial support, or suppliers of equipment and services.
- The Bogotá team needs and deserves additional help, resources and international recognition to make their project stick. And they need it now!

Annex A: The Bogotá Car Free Day in Brief ¹⁶

On February 24th, 2000 the city of Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia's capital, organized its first-ever Car Free Day. After a full month of intensive planning, public discussion and preparation, it was held on a [Thursday](#), a normal day of the week like any other -- with of course one small exception this time around.

Bogotá is a fast growing city of some seven million inhabitants, a delicate ecosystem, already more cars and traffic than it can handle, and in dire need of a new transport game plan. The fifth most polluted city in Latin America, where automobiles account for 70 percent of all air pollution: 700 tons of carbonic gas, 57 tons of hydrocarbons, 24 tons of nitrogen oxide and two tons of sulfuric monoxide every day, it was the first major Third World city to give this innovative but challenging concept a try.

The city went about its business as usual on Thursday, 24 February 2000 – with the exception that between 6:30 in the morning and 19:30 in the evening an estimated 800,000 private cars stayed at home.

- People got around on the 24th by a combination of walking, skating, running, cycle, other two-wheel transport, and public transport, including 55,000 taxis and around 25,000 small buses (colectivos).
- More than 250 km. of special paths were reserved for bicycle use on the day.
- Fines for illegal car use in target area totaled 406 over the day. This compares with average of 930 for the city's (excellent and innovative) 'alternative odd/even day scheme: 'Pico y placa'.

Scoreboard results:

- Traffic Accidents: 27 reported accidents (on an average day this number is around 100)
- Traffic deaths: 0 (On an average day this is in the area of 2-3. First time in four years that no one died in traffic)
- Traffic injuries: 24. 8 of which slight accidents involving cyclists (Average day – 70-80)
- Hospital emergency services: Reported 20-30% decrease in usual admissions
- Environment agency reported 8% reduction in nitrous oxides
- 22% reduction of carbon monoxide levels
- 21% reduction in particulates
- School absences: Average day reported by each of 20 administrative centers for the region (a poll of El Tiempo reported normal attendance levels in schools and universities across the city)

¹⁶ The following summarizes materials which are reported on in full detail in the supporting World Wide Web site at <http://www.ecoplan.org/carfreeday>. Sources: City Hall, Police, Secretary of Health, DAMA (Environment Agency), Secretary of Education, El Tiempo, National University, Gimnasio Femenino, Yankelovich Acevedo y Asociados.

- There were indications of dissatisfaction by some local businesses, though no unusual problems of employee attendance were reported. (This is surely an area in which further consultation and fine tuning is needed.)
- One month of planning, consultation, preparations and media campaigns were carried out to prepare the Car Free Day, under the direction of the Office of Mayor, with the cooperation of all concerned local, regional and national organizations. (Some fine tuning was required during the day to adjust for specific problems as they occurred.)
- More than one hundred international experts and political figures were brought together by The Commons and EcoPlan in support of all aspects of the Day over the month of preparatory work and consultation. The International Guest Book was signed by more than 70 leading figures in the transport and environmental fields, including Ministers, Secretaries of State, European Commissioners, Members of Parliaments, professors, consultants, and others (see the Bogotá Guest Book under The Commons site at <http://ecoplan.org/carfreeday/>)
- The preparation for the event and the Day itself were covered by radio and television, more than 100 articles appeared in the national and international press, and two Web sites were set up to support the planning and implementation process (go to <http://ecoplan.org/carfreeday/> for both).
- An independent poll showed a high degree of citizen satisfaction. 87% of those polled indicated that they agreed with the idea of a Car Free Day
- 88% of those polled indicated that they thought that such days should be organized more regularly, half of whom suggested once a month.

[For more on this you may wish to check out the draft report and notes on Car Free Day results which is freely available at <http://www.egroups.com/files/carfreeday/%3CB%3EBogota+Car+Free+Day/April+report+and+commentary.PDF>]

Annex B: References

Some first Web references and links to get you started. (If you happen to have the latest versions of MS Word and Internet Explorer you can directly access these sources from the Word document.)

- Maps of Bogotá - www.generation.net/~starr/colombia/bogota/maps/bog-map.htm
- About Colombia (Guide for visitors) - www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/bogota/colombia-e.htm
- Short history of the city - <http://pages.infinit.net/colombia/bogota/history/bog-his.htm>
- Transport in Bogotá (organization of public transport in the city and its environs). - <http://www.ecoplan.org/tp2000://pages.infinit.net/colombia/bogota/trans/bog-tra.htm>
- Overview of Bogotá current transportation system and situation - www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/transmilenio/transmilenio_actual.htm
- Bogotá City Hall Web page- www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/
- Mayor Enrique Peñalosa Londoño bio - www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/alcalde.htm
- **Enrique Peñalosa conoce como pocos los problemas de Bogotá** : Semana - <http://www.semana.com.co/users/semana/semana99/ene11/infesp.htm>
- Transmilenio - High capacity bi-articulated bus on reserved lanes – www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/transmilenio/index.html
- Pico y Placa – Successful local variant on the usual even/odd day car restriction schemes – <http://ecoplan.org/carfreeday/bogota/pico.htm>
- Bogotá's first traffic cam - www.imagine.com.co/atractores/kmara/imaginefoto.htm
- Bike-Path-Map - www.egroups.com/files/carfreeday/%3CB%3EBogota+Car+Free+Day/Bike-Path-Map-mapa_ciclorutas.gif
- Weather in Bogotá - www.wunderground.com/global/stations/80222.html
- Ministerio del Medio Ambiente (Ministry of the Environment) - www.minambiente.gov.co/
- Red De Desarrollo Sostenible - <http://www.ecoplan.org/tp2000://mma.rds.org.co/>
- Ministerio de Transporte - www.mintransporte.gov.co/
- Department of National Planning - www.dnp.gov.co/
- Ministry of Education - www.icfes.gov.co/mineducacion/men.html
- Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá - www.ccb.org.co/
- Bogotá Visual (A cultural tour) - www.bogotavisual.com/index.htm
- Instituto Nacional De Vias - www.invias.gov.co/
- Colombian Yellow Pages - www.quehubo.com/

Local and National Media:

- El Tiempo - www.eltiempo.com/hoy/
- El Espectador - www.elespectador.com/
- La Republica - www.la-republica.com.co/

- Dinero - business magazine - www.dinero.com
- Semana. Weekly news magazine - www.semana.com.co/
- RCN (private television and radio networks) - www.rcn.com.co/
- Caracol (private national television) - www.caracol.com/television
- Teleantioquia. Regional Television station.- www.teleantioquia.com.co/
- Radio in Colombia - www.colombia.com/eradio.htm
- Radionet. (National radio network) - www.radionet.com.co
- CNN (español) - www.cnnenespanol.com/

Bogotá Car Free Day References: ¹⁷

- Draft report and notes on Car Free Day results - <http://www.egroups.com/files/carfreeday/%3CB%3EBogota+Car+Free+Day/April+report+and+commentary.PDF>
- @World Car Free Day site - <http://ecoplan.org/carfreeday/>
- **Traffic-Choked Bogotá Breathes Free** : NY Times, 25 February - <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/i/AP-Colombia-Car-Free-Day.html>
- **Bogotá Mayor Bans Private Cars for a Day, LA Times, 25 Feb.** - <http://216.35.197.109/929/actualidad/ZZZRL21TU4C.asp>
- **Bogotá breathes easy on a car-free day** : ENN, 25 February - http://www.enn.com/news/enn-stories/2000/02/02242000/carfree_10365.asp
- **El día sin carro - Semana, 20 Feb.** - <http://216.35.197.109/929/actualidad/ZZZRL21TU4C.asp>
- **Drivers give up their cars -- for a day -- in smoggy Bogotá, Miami Herald, 25 Feb.** - <http://www.herald.com/content/today/docs/016589.htm>
- **Follow up to CFD, El Tiempo, 13 May** - http://www.eltiempo.com/sabado/bog_n002tn0.html
- Car Free Day pictures - http://www.egroups.com/files/carfreeday/%3CB%3EBogota+Car+Free+Day/Car+Free+Bogot%80%A0%A0%E1_Picture+Book.doc
- Car Free Day Poll Results - http://www.egroups.com/files/carfreeday/%3CB%3EBogota+Car+Free+Day/Bg_Poll_Results_in_English_24_Feb.PDF
- **Thursday.Breakthrough Strategies for Transport in Cities.PDF** <http://www.egroups.com/files/carfreeday/Thursday.Breakthrough+Strategies+for+Transport+in+Cities.PDF>

¹⁷ You may need to sign into the eGroups site to access some of these materials. Easy directions as to how to do this will be found on the @World Car Free Day site at <http://ecoplan.org/carfreeday/>.

Annex C: Endnotes

ⁱ Pico Y Placa: "Pico" = peak (hour); "placa" (the license plate of your car). Something on the order of 60,000 to 70,000 new cars are added to the vehicle parc each year in Bogotá. Line them up in a row and they stretch some 870 kms. "Pico y Placa" is a simple system that has been developed to curtail the circulation of cars twice a week, twice a day, from 7 A.M. to 9 A.M. and from 5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M., depending on the last number of the license plate of the vehicle. The restrictions work according to the following table:

- * Monday: 1, 2, 3 and 4 are restricted
- * Tuesday: 5, 6, 7 and 8 are restricted
- * Wednesday: 9, 0, 1 and 2 are restricted
- * Thursday: 3, 4, 5 and 6 are restricted
- * Friday : 7, 8, 9 and 0 are restricted

This project demonstrates the level of the citizen's collaboration, it is a social experiment in which all Bogotans participate in one way or another to achieve a better quality of life. The principal benefits that have been derived from this measure are:

- * Visible reductions in traffic in the weekly peaks
- * An increase of traffic speeds
- * Average reduction of the time of the average work trip by 29 minutes (almost one hour per day)

ⁱⁱ In this respect you may find some interest in the exchanges on the topic of metro futures in the Third World that took place in the Politics of Sustainability discussion forum (via Sustran) which you can find at <http://www.ecoplan.org/politics>, and then toward the bottom of the menu bar click "Discussions". From there type in the phrase "thoughts on metro" in the Search box, from which you can then recuperate the discussions on this subject.

ⁱⁱⁱ (*Notes of Paul Barter, SUSTRAN*) I didn't see any mention of car-sharing in my quick skim of the document. Thinking out loud.... It occurs to me that a very strong promotion of car-sharing might be able to play a role in some kind of gradualist compromise on these bold plans (the taxis can also be part of this gradual approach too). The small eventual role for cars could eventually be for car-share and taxis only - with almost no individually owned cars perhaps.

In an interim period perhaps the proportion of car travel that is in car-share cars could be made to rapidly go from zero to 30%, 50%, 70%.... which would lead to a significant reduction in parking requirements (as you know). And once car-sharing becomes that pervasive it would also become amazingly convenient - since there would always be a car nearby and one would have a choice of vehicle-type. And driving per driver would probably decrease because the costs have been shifted from the up-front purchase etc towards paying for each trip. A few more middle-class people might find they can afford to car-share when they could not afford to own a car - but the strong discouragement to cars in general would still be happening to compensate for this.

Since Bogotá is already considering such radical measures then this is not outrageous. And rather than banning individual ownership of cars it could probably be achieved with some strong carrots and sticks... such as parking controls (reserve lots of parking for car-share vehicles), taxation, etc. The benefit of gradualism might be to increase the chance of political acceptance. Car sharing seems to be a great way of "weaning" the addicted from their habit rather than going cold turkey. The car sharing companies could become a lobby in their own right and become part of the political support for the change? Car-sharing as an option might also placate those in the middle-class who don't now have a car but think they want to in the future... the prospect of being able to afford to occasionally use a car share vehicle would be tempting. (I am suggesting this as part of the package rather than as an alternative.)