

*ACCESS*

# THURSDAY

Breakthrough Strategies for Transport in Cities

Presentation by Eric Britton of EcoPlan International  
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EcoPlan International



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## Summary

This paper outlines a proposal for an innovative urban policy project which takes on the dual challenge of rendering our cities more accessible, while improving the quality of the environment and conditions of life for all who live, work and play there. While progress has been made as a result of strong programs and continuing attention over a period of years in some places, this is not the situation in most. New means have to be found in order to break the policy bottleneck in the many places that need to introduce major changes in these areas, but which for one reason or another have failed until now to do so.

To explain why, the paper sets out *six bones of contention*: observations which have come out of EcoPlan's international *Access* program and which show why altogether new approaches are needed to deal with these challenges in most places. It is now clear that major improvements will continue to be unobtainable in most cities without *major* reductions in car use. However, contrary to what has traditionally been assumed by planners, car users do not make rational choices between alternatives, but rather are entirely *addicted* to car use. The author argues that change on the scale that is needed is blocked in most places because of a widespread inability on the part of those concerned (including the general public) to envisage a city and transport situation which is very much different from the unsatisfactory situation which prevails today.

The paper presents an outline plan concerning one way in which a city, town or neighborhood might begin to revise attitudes towards car use: a proposal to spend one carefully prepared day without cars, and then reflect on the results. The author refers to this approach as *Thursday*. The proposal stresses (a) explicit radical targeting for that one day, (b) a major effort of preparation and consensus building and (c) meticulous monitoring of results with a view to follow-up and fine tuning. Earlier presentations of this paper elicited expressions of interest from a number of cities and groups, and discussions are now underway concerning a first wave of exemplary demonstrations on an informal inter-city cooperative basis to begin already in Spring 1995. The author is hopeful that this paper will encourage debate, inputs for further improvements, concrete follow-up actions and collaborative programs in many places. Readers are invited to address comments, project suggestions, etc., either via the ECTF *ACCESS* Library as an open communication to all readers or to

### EcoPlan International

Centre for Technology & Systems Studies, 10 rue Joseph Bara, 75006 Paris, France  
Tel. (331) 4326.1323, Fax 4326.0746, Internet: 100336.2154@compuserve.com



## 1. Cities, Cars & Access -- What is Going On?

*Automobiles are often conveniently tagged as the villains responsible for the ills of cities and the disappointments and futilities of city planning. But the destructive effects of automobiles are much less a cause than a symptom of our incompetence at city building. The simple needs of automobiles are more easily understood and satisfied than the complex needs of cities, and a growing number of planners and designers have come to believe that if they can only solve the problems of traffic, they will thereby have solved the major problems of cities. Cities have much more intricate economic and social concerns than automobile traffic. How can you know what to try with traffic until you know how the city itself works, and what else it needs to do with its streets? You can't.*

- Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961

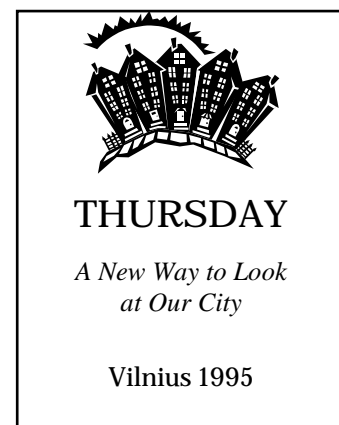
As part of our ACCESS monitoring effort of the cities/cars dilemma, we have over the years made a conscientious effort to follow the development of promising techniques and leading edge projects around the world in what we and others have come to call *centers of excellence*. As a result we have been able to locate a substantial number of techniques and approaches that can be of help to those on the lookout for new ways of dealing with the vexatious challenges of sustainable transport in their city, town or neighborhood.

But if you look out the window in most of our cities this morning you have to admit that, with pitifully few exceptions, "excellence" in this general area remains a most scarce commodity. The unvarnished truth is that things look significantly worse out on the street today than they did back in the late fifties. There are indeed places which are doing rather well, those so-called *centers of excellence*. But these are still relatively few in number and, even in the best, it is fair to say that the battle has been only engaged -- not yet won!

The harsh reality of 1995 is that there are more cars stuck in traffic than ever before, for more hours of the day, the streets are more dangerous than ever (particularly for children and older people, never mind the poor foolhardy cyclist), the air is dirtier, public transport has been steadily scaled back, the quality of urban life has considerably deteriorated, and the cost of all this has steadily mounted to the detriment of all concerned. Perhaps worst news of all, while all this has been going, the very context of the problem -- the *shape* of the city itself -- has been continuously altered, pummeled and stretched in most places, to a point where one is justified in wondering whether we can *ever* get back to a more reasonable set of transport arrangements.

All of this would perhaps be understandable enough if nothing had been done over all these years in an attempt to make things better. But, irony of ironies, all this occurred at a time when we were devoting a great deal of professional effort and taxpayer money to the goal of solving the problems. If we take a few steps back to survey the scene, what we can see as a result of all these attempts at making things better is: first, that it has indeed cost the poor taxpayer a great deal of money, and second that in most places the basic problems have gotten worse and not better as a result.

Taking all of this together, we clearly have a situation that fits very neatly with Mrs. Jacob's warning concerning our collective *incompetence at city building*. In fact, if one thinks about it, what we have in the main accomplished in many places has been precisely *to unbuild our cities*, combining what ultimately proved to be public policies on the one hand with carelessness and inattention on the other, in order to make them *less* amenable places in which to live, work and play.



## 2. Why Aren't We Doing Better? (Six Bones of Contention)

After looking closely at these problems in a number of places and for a number of years, I have reached the conclusion that most observers, planners and policy makers are, for some strange reason, not taking fully into account the *realities* of the situations that exist in most communities. Is it possible, I ask myself, that all these smart and good people might be operating on some patently wrong assumptions? Might the reason for our flagrant inability to make the major inroads that are obviously needed be that we are somehow either unable or unwilling to see what is really going on? And if so, what then is the truth of this situation? As I labored over the accumulated evidence, I was able to come up with a handful of observations which I refer to as my six *bones of contention*. While simple and straight-forward enough in themselves, together they combine to suggest that some radically different approaches are going to have to be found and put to work in order to make any major inroads on these pressing issues in most places.

### 1. Everybody Who Can, Will -- Other Things Being Equal -- Buy And Use A Car.

There is massive statistical evidence in city after city and country after country around the world that points up the general veracity of this statement. The policy key in this case is the phrase, "other things being equal", which we shall explore a bit further on in this thinkpiece.

### 2. However, We Now Know that Cars Don't Work in Cities.

At least not in all cities all the time. It is above all a problem of incompatible geometries. That much is demonstrable and unambiguous. Or, to put it a bit more moderately, there is not a city in the world that would not be greatly improved on all scores (including its economics) if it could intelligently reduce peak car traffic by, say, a factor of ten. (Notice the egregious immodesty of this objective! But as we shall see aggressive targeting is a very important element of the new policy paradigm.)

### 3. But, We Also Know that Cities Can Work "Without" Cars

There is enough evidence now to make it very clear that there are a rapidly growing number of cities which are not only agreeable places to live in and visit, but which also make economic sense -- despite the fact that the role of the private car has been greatly reduced over the last few years. On the other hand there is no conclusive evidence that suggests that if you take away the cars, the city will fall apart. (As with virtually every point made here, this contention requires qualification. While claiming that cities can work well with many fewer cars, this should not be taken to mean that we believe that any such transition can be handled brutally and without meticulous preparation and concertation. Improperly prepared programs can threaten the well-being of a city, no matter how laudable their ultimate objectives. There is also ample evidence that suggests that any attempt to force such programs is going to end up being blocked sooner or later in most places -- and rightly so!

### 4. Major Car Reductions Until Now Have Been Successfully Achieved Only in a Striking Minority of Cases

After several decades of experience at the leading edge, we know quite well what is needed in any given place to achieve major car reductions and associated amenity and efficiency improvements. But this turns out to be quite difficult. To make sure that we are clear on this score, here is a shortlist of what is generally needed to make the transition, based on accomplishments until now:



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*A New Way to  
Look at Our City*

Chester 1995

- Far-sighted and responsible political leadership
- First rate administrators in municipal government and public service
- Highly competent and flexible technical expertise (traffic planning, etc.).
- Fine cooperation with full range of concerned public and private interests in the community
- A highly developed spirit of community and social cohesion.
- Substantial cooperation with outlying areas/extended region.
- An enduring consensus that does not depend on party politics or short term election results
- Great discipline.
- Usually a pretty wealthy city/region.
- And then anywhere from 5 to 20 years to make it all work.

Now, if this is the only demonstrated formula for success -- and I can think of no other based on our study of actual achievements -- this is not exactly what you would call great news for the rest of us. How many cities in the world do you think already have or are going in the next few years to have all those pre-conditions for success? Does this mean that we are first going to have to achieve all these major achievements in our cities before making the move to more rational and sustainable transport? Or might there be something that we can do for places that have not yet achieved all of the above?

#### 5. **Are Cities Without These Qualities Unlikely to Innovate Successfully?**

I am afraid the answer is yes! There have been numerous examples of places that have at one time or another reached the conclusion that something had to be done about these problems, but which then, for any of a variety of reasons, were unable to turn their attempts into something that ultimately was able to change the face of the city and its transportation system efficiency. What one observes in such cases is not successful long term programs, but rather either nothing at all or occasional start and stop measures which remain at best as isolated incidents without ever achieving the broader continuity of coverage and interaction that is needed. Thus, a second rate (or even a first rate) pedestrian zone, shuttle bus service or occasional car-free or "air alert" day does not an Access program, nor a happy city make.

#### 6. **Car Use/Dependence Is A Habit.**

This may not sound like a particularly brilliant observation. If true, however, it makes all the difference in the world from a policy and results perspective. It has for many years been cheerfully assumed by analysts and policy makers that cars users are "rational beings" who make choices. The received wisdom is that the user, when bit by the urge to travel and before making a final commitment to his car, first scans the range of available alternatives and, should any of these become attractive enough (or should his preferred historical choice become inconvenient enough), switch over to another mode of behavior. But after years of experience and observation (including of my own very ordinary case), it can safely be said that this is patently not true. Quite another process is involved, including one tremendous discontinuity.

For virtually all who have them, car dependence is an addiction, and like any deeply ingrained habit of daily life, very very hard to break! And almost wholly resistant to reason! As with any kind of addict, it is easy to be fooled by what those effected by it say, the reasons they give for their choices. There is thus a whole universe of reasoning, words and stated noble intentions on the one hand -- and then on the other the simple, ineluctable facts of actual behavior. The truth though is that our car owner/driver is just one more addict, and all the evidence massively confirms that, like any other addict, he is going to continue to do his thing -- despite high professions or protestations to the contrary -- right up until such time that he just can't do it any more..

### 3. Alternative Approaches to Breaking the Bottleneck

At this point we reach a continental divide. Either the reader agrees that the analysis set out here is a generally accurate overview of the reality of the situation, or s/he does not. It certainly suggests that radically different approaches will be required in most places -- if a major break on these issues is to be made within a relatively short period of time. It would also seem to imply that no matter how much money you are prepared pour into building up public transport infrastructure, new and better vehicles, nicer stations, more cops on the beat, improved information systems, expanding the supply of alternative services, bike paths, and dead cheap fares, *the only way that most of us drivers are ever going to leave our cars behind will be the day we no longer have that choice.*

This may sound quite impulsive and a bit frightening as a diagnosis and prescription, but it is my sincere belief that it is in fact true. The next issue that it brings up, however, is: what exactly does this *mean* for policy makers?

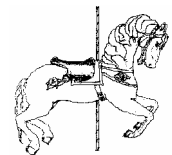
As we shop around for new approaches to do the job, the first bit of reality that we need to bear in mind is that the dominant model of public policy in the western world today is not the mighty sweep of the unopposed philosopher-king (or despot, if you prefer), but rather the messy set of arrangements that we refer to as *democracy plus contentious pluralism*. Now, if rule-by-decree had emerged as the preferred policy model in the late twentieth century, we would be able simply to outlaw with the stroke of a pen all car traffic in specific geographic areas and at specific hours. And that would be that. After a few weeks/months of discomfort, whining and scrambling, I have no doubt at all that ingenious humankind would quite quickly figure out how to survive and eventually even prosper in this brave new environment -- leaving just about everybody so much better off that there would be plenty of surplus benefit to compensate any who might actually turn out to be losers.

Seductive as it may at times though, this is of course no longer the flavor of the day in the fine art of governance. So let's step back to the real, murky and menacing world that lies crouching out there and see if we can deal with reality, a reality which is above all conditioned by that sixth and last of our bones -- the abject unwillingness of just about anybody in western society to leave her/his car behind, if s/he has a choice.

There is no doubt in my mind that by far the best and surest way for a city to deal with these issues is by mounting a broadly supported, long range program of the sort that have been carried out in leading cities across Europe and a few other outstanding places in the world. We have seen, however, that such programs succeed only in situations where extremely rigorous preconditions are met.

Furthermore, that where such successful programs have been maintained, one of the most visible results of the overall system change is *the extent to which the city has taken control of the car chaos that previously was making trouble* -- along of course with the many other things that also have to be done to make such systems work overall.

But what happens in all those places where the mandate for change has not yet received such a high level of support... the great majority? Must they remain mired indefinitely in their overall transport and amenity bottlenecks until such time that *all* those demanding preconditions have been met? Might there be perhaps simpler some things that can be done to "break the ice", to get all those concerned within the city, town or neighborhood to moving in new directions on these challenges?



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*Un Autre Regard  
sur la Ville*

Avignon 1995

With this as a target, I should now like to sketch the broad outlines of a proposal for what I believe could be a relatively easy to implement “policy action project” aimed at achieving major reductions in private car use in one or more towns, neighborhoods or cities, as *exemplary demonstration projects*. The first and most important objective behind this proposal is to organize and run successful demonstration projects in one or more places which will be directly useful to those communities. The second is to carry out each project in a such way that it can be useful to others who might eventually find the desire and will to try something along these lines themselves -- hence the term *exemplary* demonstrations.

The proposal is borne from a growing sense of dissatisfaction with both the results and the approaches that have been relied on in most places until now. Dissatisfaction with continued dithering in the face of what are clearly urgent and mounting problems. Dissatisfaction with calls for yet more research and analysis before actually getting around to doing something concrete that might help us in dealing with the issues that press. Dissatisfaction with the results of incremental policies and “solutions” whose only long term impact is to make the basic problems just that much worse.

The approach builds directly on the arguments behind the six “bones of contention”. At its core, the proposal is based on the belief that, because of the heavily inertial nature of most of us and of our institutions, it is close to impossible for us to conceive of a future for the place we live in (or ourselves) which is very much different from the realities and constraints of our current daily existence. We are literally blinded by the present. For this reason, in almost all cases we end up locked into the situations in which we find ourselves -- for better or for worse.

With this very human dilemma in mind, this proposal offers one way in which cities, which have somehow failed to make the break with their traditional ways, can substantially alter their perceptions of what they are and what they might become -- but not in a way that will be the equivalent of jumping off a cliff with one’s eyes closed. What we are seeking to develop here is a context that will provide new ways of

- (1) looking at the city, and then of
- (2) exploring alternative patterns of behavior and social organization in a striking and credible way (say as opposed to a modeling or scenario exercise which most often is neither).

In this project the context that we propose is the streets themselves, but this time in a controlled “laboratory” environment that will give all of those who are directly concerned -- political leaders, administrators, technicians and citizens alike -- a collective opportunity to observe, witness, understand and then, against this real world base, decide what they should be doing next. The immediate goal will be to organize such projects so that they that can be undertaken with a broad consensus in the host community, at an acceptable level of cost, and which offer the possibility of adaptation and fine-tuning over time to ensure that whatever is achieved will be broadly acceptable and supported by the community as a whole. Until now this has been no simple task. With the *Thursday* approach, however, it can become considerably less daunting.

This is, it needs to be stressed, not an environmentalist or *green* project. It is motivated by a deep concern with environmental and life quality considerations, but is also closely attuned to the need for cities to be efficient economic machines as well as pleasant and healthy places to live, work and grow up in. The proposal attempts to be especially attentive to the need for “political realism”, and in particular the importance of finding ways of building up the broad base of public support within the community which is needed to ensure the long run success of the program. (A short bibliography of sources which deal with some of the main background issues is attached. For those looking for more, the bibliographies of those sources offer a strong guide.)

#### 4. Thursday - Breakthrough Strategies

*To make a long story short, Thursday is a proposal for a city or group of cities to spend one thoughtful day without cars.*

The point of departure for this exercise is the decision that you cannot usefully engage in meaningful dialogue with addicts, what you have to do is *start treating them in some way*. As often as not this means thrusting the poor souls (especially poor in this case since we are talking about ourselves) into a no choice situation, at least for a time. In this particular instance our proposed “treatment” will be to find an answer to the following question in three main parts:

- a) Is there a way to get drivers out of their cars in one or more cities...
- b) In ways which will be tolerable in a pluralistic democracy...
- c) For at least be long enough to allow those concerned to learn a great deal more about the whole complex of things that need to be adjusted and introduced to make a car-less (or, more accurately, *less-car*) urban transport paradigm actually work?

One of the main tasks of planners and policy makers is (or at least should be) to ask creative questions. This one turns out to be a pretty interesting question indeed: one that presents quite a neat set of targets.

#### Harnessing a Planned or Existing Car-Free Day

There is nothing, of course, that is new about a proposal for a car-free day. In addition to a large number of small city center closure projects and pedestrian zones of varying sizes and sorts, over the last two decades there have been hundreds of cases of cities that have banned car traffic for a single day, some special event, or during some particular (usually crisis) period.

What all these projects have in common is that in virtually all cases they have been handled as once-off exercises. Typically they are done, endured and quickly forgotten, and no effort is made to follow up or build on the experience in a systematic way. Nor or they planned for with any great precision. Talk of them to most of the people who have lived through the experience, and they will either laugh (aggressively) or smile (perhaps somewhat ruefully). The consensus is almost always however that these are obviously approaches which can't work in *our* city, at least not on any regular basis.



In the face of the inherent conservatism which is the rule in most places, perhaps the least radical car-free experiment will be to *make use of existing or programmed projects events as opportunities to probe in a structured way for eventual alterations in future policy packages*. In this variant, the car-free day is redefined as a collective learning experience with a view to providing new visions of how their city or neighborhood could be organized. In such cases, careful prior study, extensive consultation and concertation, and meticulous monitoring and evaluation could provide

some potentially valuable insights and support for future policy changes of perhaps a more permanent nature.

This extremely conservative approach can be carried out at a relatively low level of cost and disruption. The great advantage is that it can help all those involved to see their city and their daily lives through an entirely different set of lenses -- on the condition that the community's planners are ready to take advantage of this

unique situation. Another is that, since it is based on events that are already planned and accepted by the community, it requires no great effort at consensus building in order to get underway. Despite the relative modesty of its objectives, however, it must not be assumed that such a project is of only limited value. All by itself it could make a major contribution!

But it is also possible that some places may be ready to consider a somewhat more radical though still basically conservative approach. This is the one that we refer to as... *Thursday*.

### **A *Thursday* Program for Your City or Neighborhood**

The “ice-breaking” approach that we present here is called *Thursday*. We suggest that the day Thursday would be a good target, because it is important that it take place on a ‘normal week day’ -- not, as often happens, on a holiday or weekend. The reason for this is that what we are trying to create a situation in which people will see their own city under ‘normal’ circumstances, but with altogether different eyes. If you try to do a *Thursday* on, say, a Sunday or holiday, you will have learned almost nothing at all about your city. Also, it is important that the project be organized (a) not on a day immediately adjacent to the weekend and (b) rather in the second half of the week than at the beginning (so that people will have enough time to get priority tasks out of the way first). Hence the choice of *Thursday*.

Here is how such a project might work? There will be as many variants as cities, but here is one possibility. On, say, the first working Thursday of May 1995 our city will undergo its first Car-less *Thursday*. From 7:00 in the morning to 19:00 at night, no private cars will be allowed on the city street. The run-up to this day will be extremely important and should involve meticulous preparatory work over at least several months or so involving the organizing team and a very large number of people, institutions, players, media, etc., so that all those concerned have plenty of time to get their fully act together for that first fatal day. Subsequent to that experience, there will be a (three month?) hiatus during which time the experience can be studied, better understood, broadly discussed and then fine tuned for eventual next stages or steps.

It is perhaps reasonable to ask, how are all those people to get around in the city on that first Thursday? Will life in the city come to a complete standstill? Will the existing public transport operations crack under the strain? Will stores and businesses just close their doors?

It is perhaps not uninteresting to reflect on how those who live in your own city or neighborhood will handle this situation, with a little planning and forethought. Certainly there will be employees who “call in sick” or just don’t call in at all, and there will be employers that will do nothing to prepare for that day and then simply refuse to pay all no-shows. But will that be the majority? There will be a rich array of potential ways of dealing with this exceptional situation. Some will take a bus or bike, others will run or walk, then there is the possibility of group rides in taxis, Park+Ride, special shuttle services, *cross-school* programs, teleworking, simply taking home some ‘home work’, using the time to take care of a medical visit to a nearby facility, spend a day with the family, clean out the attic....

The point is that, with enough preparation and collaboration, it need not be the worst day of the year for all involved. For many, it could be one of the best and most interesting.

\* \* \*

And for those who live or go into the center, and for all the rest, the importance of the monitoring and follow-up program will be critical. How did you like the way your city looked on Thursday? Were there any important differences? How inconvenient was it for you to deal with it? What might be done to make it better if we were all to agree to do it again?

I shall not, at this point, get into the richness of the activities that could eventually be carried out in many quarters of the city in order to enrich and build on this new fabric of urban life. The point is, quite simply, that what we would have here is already the making of a major paradigm shift -- but, this time, getting time on our side, giving people a chance to adjust to both the constraints and the new advantages of the changed situation, and to make, in due course, what may be some very interesting and creative decisions which would quite possibly never have come up if we had not somehow got things off the dime and moving in a new directions.



This will require a process of deep consultation and activist planning that will bring in (just to start the list) public transport operators (public and private), taxis, police, the people who handle the traffic signal timing, schools, store owners, employers of all sizes and ilks, doctors, social service organizations and groupings, etc. In the final analysis, whatever the limitations of the experience, it will be for many an opportunity to view both their town and their own lives from a new and quite different perspective. On those grounds alone, it would have to be counted as a useful experience.

### What Will Happen After That First *Thursday*?

A poorly prepared project will -- for sure! -- fall flat. But there is no reason that such a project cannot be done very well indeed.

Nor do we recommend it for just any city. The choice of site will be very important. This is, quite obviously, not the sort of thing that can be imposed by planners or central authorities. It must be a project which has the enthusiastic endorsement both of the community's leaders and, in time, of the great majority of its citizens and institutions. If such an undertaking is perceived as being thrust on the city by some sort of distant central administration, it will never succeed. Thus, a Thursday project must, in each case, be the result of a strong social consensus *in that place*.

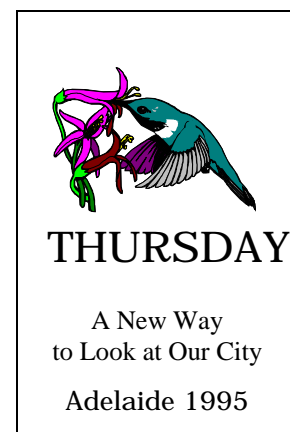
Of course, if the results of the trial are considered to be unsatisfactory, there will be no reason to consider moving ahead on this basis. If the project is a flop, it is just not repeated. At worst, the cost of failure was not unbearably high (certainly many orders of magnitudes less than an urban rail project which is unable to attract the targeted ridership or a lot of nearly empty buses scuttling around the city streets or stuck in traffic). In point of fact, even if the experiment is judged as unsatisfactory, as long the initial preparation and the parallel effort of monitoring and feedback are handled well, a great deal of useful information and ideas can be gleaned in the process.

From the outset the idea should be to look for ways to adapt and extend the *Thursday* program on a more continuing basis -- building on experiences which are considered by the community as successful. Thus for example, once the result of that first Thursday have been analyzed and discussed, a second Thursday project could be organized, say three months after the first. Then if that works the game could change and things could shift into a higher gear. In this stage, the city might move into a situation where the car is out the first Thursday of every month. That stage might last for, say, a year, and will entail monitoring, measuring, discussion, confrontation, education, and adaptation.

The main objective of this stage would be to lay the groundwork for what happens next, one year later, when perhaps the city will decide to begin in September 1996 with *every* Thursday.....

### An All-Cities *Thursday* Program

One possibility that is now getting considerable attention is that of organizing *Thursday* demonstrations in a number of places at the same time, either within the same country or even on a multi-country basis. The advantage of such cross-project collaboration will be immediately apparent. Not only will the media impact be potentially much greater, but also the possibility for inter-city collaboration should help to ensure better and stronger projects. And then there is the usefulness of emulation, as cities look at each other, learn from each other, and try to do perhaps just a bit better than some of the others. (Discussions concerning these projects are presently taking place both through the usual meetings and traditional communications, and over the ECTF Access Library and Conference Service which is briefly introduced in the annex to this paper.)



## Notes on Implementation

Such a program will best be initiated and carried out individually by each town, city or rural community as a self-organized cooperative venture of a highly spontaneous sort. It is my considered view that any attempt by any *external* body at central direction or even “orchestration” of what must in the final analysis be highly individualistic and self-contained local initiatives, would only lessen their chances of success. Each “placescape” is going to be unique in many ways, therefore highly resistant to uniform approaches or standardization. Indeed, the very fact that many different variations and approaches are possible will be in the interest of all concerned. The strength of the *Thursday* program is in numbers, diversity and total reliance on local initiative, thus all centralizing or homogenizing influences must be fiercely resisted.

That said, it will be most useful if some sort of means of communication, feedback and results sharing can be established among the various independent demonstrations. There will be many common elements and needs, and much to be gained through an enthusiastic and totally voluntary and self-regulated sharing among those cities and communities which decide to take part. Here are some of the areas in which cross-city collaboration could be mutually helpful:

- Materials and expertise sharing in general
- Development of activity checklists (e.g. preparatory tasks to complete, organizations to involve, etc.)
- Tool sharing (both in terms of the analytic tools which are needed to put a strong project in place, and then subsequently to monitor its performance, shortcomings, requirements for fine-tuning, etc.)
- Media kits and guidelines
- Peer support
- Networking and communications systems (cross-city, regional, national, etc., including integrated “War Rooms” for information and expertise sharing at different levels)
- Perhaps eventually even cross- or collaborative-*financing*

In due course there will also be an important “kit building” role, which could bring together all of the best of the practices, materials and routines in such a way that later *Thursday* projects will be able to benefit from the previous experience of the others. (Kit building, though, we must never forget, is a technique which *assists* and *enhances* but does not take the place of individual initiative, judgment or control.)

There will be numerous ways of approaching the networking aspects of these collaborative undertakings. One possibly worth thinking about is to make use of the *ACCESS* “Electronic Library and Forum” that already exists under the ECTF program that was originally launched by the European Commission, but which today serves as a fairly efficient channel of information and communications which is available for all who might be interested. (A short note introducing the *ACCESS* Forum is annexed to this paper.) Another will be to encourage existing networks of cities and public interest groups to take an active role in encouraging demonstration and action programs along these lines, possibly as *Thursday* programs but equally well as projects that they would tailor to the special circumstances of their members and mandates.

This leaves us in closing with the question: What is the appropriate role of central or regional government and other such “external” institutions in such projects? If these initiatives are to be entirely locally driven, accomplished, evaluated, etc., as indeed they should be, the answer is that regional, national and even international institutions can help, but in a much more discrete way and with a much lighter touch than has characteristically been the case in the past, where centralized decision-making, purse strings and technocratic projects were the main mode of public sector operation. In projects such as these government (other than local government, of course, whose full and enthusiastic participation holds the key to success) can learn to play a very useful enabling function, which can extend to support in all of the areas indicated in the above list

and yet others. This will be a new and rather different mode of operation for many public institutions and agencies, but the *Thursday* projects could also serve them as good learning experiences, since this is exactly the sort of thing that they are going to have to get a lot better at in many areas in the future-- and not just transport.

### What Happens if You Don't Happen to Be a City?

Agreeable as the idea may be, there will be many who will find themselves in situations where their city or neighborhood will not be prepared to make the leap and try a *Thursday* project. How for example can even the most willing citizen hope to participate in such an experiment if you happen to live in the middle of Los Angeles, London, Tokyo or any other of tens of thousands of cities where responsible intelligent people will tell you that "it is just not possible here"? (And that will, incidentally, be the first reaction in most places.)

As luck would have it you have a choice. Anyone who wishes can go out and organize their own *Thursday* project on their own terms. You don't have to be a city or even a small town. Thus, for example, if you are president of a company, you can get together with those who work there and ask them if they are interested in giving it a try. Or a school or a gym or a hospital. Perhaps you will decide with the members of your bridge club, church or karate group that you are all going to try to see what happens if each of you decides to spend just one day without getting into a car by yourselves alone. Or maybe just the people in your family. Or possibly just yourself -- one person alone who has decided that she or he is willing to take a fling to see what it might be like.

There will of course be no one best way to do it. Each person, group, and place is going to have to figure out the rules on their own. In some cases, car pooling and shared taxis may be considered acceptable, in others only non-motorized or public transport. Each grouping will decide its own rules and live its own experience. But the point that I wish to stress is that this can be an individual decision and does not have to be something that comes out of some government agency or very large collections of institutions and interests.

This is, quite blatantly, not the sort of approach that will appeal to docile, fatalistic or passive citizens. These are concepts that are going to be picked up only by more thoughtful, individualistic, self-confident individuals and groups. And it is my belief that there are in our societies many more of these kinds of people than most might think.

One of the challenges behind each *Thursday* project will be to find imaginative ways for all those who decide to participate not only to have their own unique experiences on that day, but also to get together later so that what they have done and learned individually during that fated day can somehow be summed up and inspected from a community or group wide perspective. This suggests a combination of something like individual log books wherein each participant or group can record the detail of their particular experiences, and then some way of adding these experiences up in order to draw some larger lessons from the whole. I have no specific suggestions at this point how the detail of this will best be handled, but I am confident that once the problem has been clearly posed, there will be people and groups who know what to do next. Good organization and careful planning will help, and so too could sensible use of state of the art electronic communications.



### THURSDAY

A New Way to Look  
at Our City

Cork 1995

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## **Annex B: ACCESS - Program Summary**

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ACCESS was established in 1988 as an independent international collaborative and support program aimed directly at the challenge of first defining and then implementing sustainable transportation systems. The program builds on more than two decades of cross-disciplinary research and advisory work with the problems of transport, the economy, energy, environment, industry and quality of life, and more generally with the broader challenges of managing technology in society.

The point of departure for ACCESS was the obvious conflict between cars and cities. But that was only the beginning. The next step was to recognize a gradually growing uneasiness that something has gone badly wrong: that private cars no longer work particularly well in cities, or at least not all cars in all cities. This hard fact is proving awkward for planners and policymakers alike. Despite the problems they have brought in their wake, cars continue to perform a variety of functions and are perceived by many people as essential to their daily lives. As a result they have been planned into the system. And now that they are in there, their extreme complexity of function effectively rules out any easy solutions. For this reason we cannot in most places sensibly talk about cities without cars -- but rather places with fewer and much better managed cars.

The problem of cars in cities is, in truth, part of a much broader set of social and technology management issues which are coming into increasingly high relief. The links to pressing environmental and energy concerns are obvious and critical, as are impacts on quality of life, safety, urban form and economic efficiency. More subtle are the links between cars and human behaviour, including such problems as urban isolation, alienation, violence, rejection of responsibility, and loss of human vitality, intimacy and neighbourliness. A great deal of good work is going on in many places around the world aimed at *parts* of this complex problem, but much of this is not widely known. And there is a requirement for altogether new approaches which has yet to be met.

It was against this background that ACCESS was established, with the goal of developing a long term (ten year), independent and vigorous international collaborative effort, untrammelled by bureaucratic requirements and run on an *open* basis with creative inputs and support from a wide variety of co-operating individuals, sources and institutions. Five objectives were set for the period 1989-94:

- 1 Provide concrete evidence showing how modern communities can work without today's overwhelming and damaging dependence on cars -- drawing attention to leading techniques, groups and places that have successfully tackled parts of the problem.
- 2 Encourage the development of much broader agendas of issues and approaches to the problems of transport in cities -- thereby bringing into the discussions and solution process actors and interests beyond the limits of traditional transport agencies and specialists.
- 3 Contribute to improving international communications, co-ordination and exchanges of information and expertise in the full range of disciplines and approaches involved -- so that each new project is able to build knowledgeably on the experience and accomplishments of the past.
- 4 Work to stimulate further research, tools development and problem solving as needed to improve our collective knowledge and mastery of these issues -- and find the means to inform and involve the public in both the debate and the decision process.
- 5 Encourage and contribute to exemplary projects and programs in leading cities and communities, working in close collaboration with highly qualified local partner groups and sponsoring institutions.

## Annex C: The ACCESS Forum On ECTF (Fact Sheet)

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For those who are concerned with the pressing problems of access, transport and sustainability in our communities around the world, an excellent means now exists that can help us *put our heads together* on the subject: an easily accessible and easy to use "electronic library and meeting room". What you need to take advantage of this new facility today is a computer, a phone, a modem (the faster the better), and a subscription to the popular CompuServe service (see below for some first information). While some researchers, administrators, policy makers and citizens already make regular use of these new means of communication and exchange, for most of us these innovative techniques are not yet very well known.

Fortunately it is neither difficult or expensive to gain access to them. Once you have your equipment properly installed and gain access to CompuServe via the local telephone number, your next step is to plug into the Forum with GO ECTF. On first access you will need to *join the forum*: this costs nothing - it just means registering your name to permit full access. The Forum (officially known as *Telework Europa*) was initially developed to serve individuals and institutions interested specifically in *telework* or distance working. But because these media are by definition flexible and dynamic, the ECTF has opened up its 'doors' to a number of concerns which relate to their initial orientation; and of course since much transport is work-oriented, the telework theme takes on particular importance in the ACCESS program as well

The ACCESS Forum offers a convenient means for exchanging documents, data, information, ideas and views on innovations and the search for better ways of organizing transport, communications, and land use in and around cities. Other concerns of this forum include: (1) sustainable transport and social-technical systems, and (2) the need for finding "bridging strategies" and policies which will permit the rapid transition to healthier and more livable communities. Once you get into the Forum you will see the ACCESS section, which you can then consult for a list of currently available documents. Using the Library you will be able to peruse and eventually "download" the latest copies of working papers and other documents available. Then via the Message Section you will be able to exchange ideas and suggestions with the authors and organizers, either in a public manner for others to join in or privately. It is also possible to enter into real time discussions via Conferences, but in the months immediately ahead we intend to concentrate on using the forum as a 'living library' of the latest and best printed information and as an 'electronic bulletin board' for exchanging comments and ideas. Although we expect that the facility will be used in this relatively simple way at first, we know that new ideas and types of use are going to emerge from it as we all gain experience.

The discussion and exchanges are open, free (other than the indicated CompuServe and local phone charges) and fully international. It is felt to be important that the ACCESS Forum should be open to all contributors in all ways. While this puts pressure on the forum's managers and their good housekeeping practices, it is essential to the long run success of the program which depends on achieving the broadest reach of ideas and inputs. Information on how to contribute materials to the library is available from the addresses below.

For further information, you are invited to contact

**ACCESS:** Eric Britton at EcoPlan, 10 rue Joseph Bara, F-75006 Paris, France, T: (331) 4326.1323  
F: 4326.0746, E: Compuserve: 100336.2154. In Spain: Mikel Murga at Leber Planificacion, Apartado  
79, 48930 Las Arenas, Bizkaia, , T: 344 464.3355 F: 344-464-3562 E: 100322.134@CompuServe.