

Mad Car Owner Speaks Out (And the New Mobility Agenda listens)

By Eric Britton, 1 June 2008

- *Tired of sitting in your car in traffic that doesn't move?*
- *Feel like you are paying too much for too little?*
- *Panicked at that huge price rise at the pump?*
- *Exhausted in circling the block for that parking place?*
- *Feeling fat and wobbly?*
- *Tired of being pushed around?*

Preamble: Mad Car Owner Speaks Out

Mad Car Owner (MCO): Eric, I'm so mad I could spit.

Eric Britton of the New Mobility Agenda (eb): Why's that friend?

MCO: I'm so mad I could spit -- and it's all because of you.

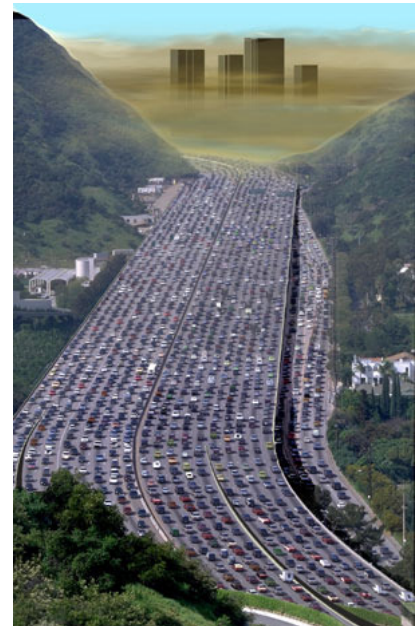
eb: Oh oh! Me?

MCO : Well maybe not just you personally, but you and all those other wise guys who have made up this New Mobility Agenda thing and are now putting it into application in cities around the world. It scares me Eric. It hurts. Don't you understand? Life is already hard for us car drivers. And getting tougher every day. All you and all those righteous friends of yours are doing is making it even more difficult. It's just not fair

eb: Oh dear. That is by no means our intention. Okay, so what do you suggest we do?

MCO: Well Eric why don't you start thinking for change about what you can do for all of those of us honest folks who have cars and who, to be perfectly fair, don't really have a choice. Sure, I think it's great that you are working to improve transportation for poor people, kids, the elderly, people with handicaps, cyclists, and all of those who want to or are able to get around without cars. But hey! there are a lot of us drivers out here and we think it's high time you did something for us.

eb: Fair enough MCO. Let's give it a try. Here is our proposal for you: "New driving for new mobility: Handy hints for cars, from cradle to grave." You'll see, we think you have some interesting choices in this new transportation environment. and you will make them because you want to -- not because someone forces you to do it. After all, the Wall came down and one would hope authoritarian government with it. .



The New Context for “NewDrive”

**The New Mobility Agenda listens:
Drivers are our customers too: So let's help them out**

Yes, yes. We are listening to every word you say.

For starters, we have to understand that a good part of the new and very tough transportation context that we are faced with is being driven by forces which are beyond anyone's control, external to transportation policy: including of course the ongoing energy crisis (the word is not too strong in this context) and the enormous overload that our present mobility patterns are making on the environment and the planet. But public policy -- that third cheer when we say “two cheers for the market, not three” -- has an important role to play in this. Let's have a look.

Twenty first century transport policy in those cities that are taking the lead -- the New Mobility Agenda -- builds on three strategic pillars, which between them condition pretty much all the rest: There is a very big difference with past policies in the sector, including the no-policy policies which have had a very big role in getting us into the present mess.

- Step (1) **Expand supply:** Work to provide the city with first class new mobility services (i.e., more, better, faster, cheaper than the old mobility options) and a greatly expanded palette of new mobility choices.
- Step (2) **Manage demand :** Reduce substantially, strategically and discretely the amount of road and parking space available to low occupancy vehicles (namely cars and above all ca motor vehicles (namely cars and above all cars with only a single person in them).¹
- Step (3) **Full cost pricing:** Cars and trucks to pay full costs, especially in space-constrained, environmentally sensitive areas (cities).

This is not all bad news. To the contrary, with the hugely powerful technologies and organizational skills at our disposal today, there is no reason why, in cities at least ,we should not be able to offer new mobility options which compete favorably or even better than driving your own car there (old mobility style).

But what about all those good people, you and all those voting citizens who today are driving their own cars and thoroughly locked into the old mobility (all-car) syndrome? And even it is costing them a bundle, even if the huge increase in gas prices has them shaking, and even if they are losing huge amounts of time in traffic still would prefer to keep on rolling in their cars. The devil they know, etc. etc.

No problem. Let's see if we can work that into our formula as well. Which brings us to NewDriving, the car owner/operators best friend in 21st century cities.



¹ Now, if this makes you uncomfortable, that's a good start. You should be! But let share this with you: (a) it can be done (as you will see); (b) it will lead to better lives and a better world (as you will see); and (c) it can help us in this one area of our daily lives to avoid destroying much of nature (which I very much hope you will not see).

“NewDrive” (The till-now missing link in the New Mobility Bouquet)

In many places there are huge numbers of citizens who are locked into their cars in a no-choice situation. So, if we aspire to providing wise public policy counsel, can we afford just to ignore these honest people, or, worse yet, force them into our cookie-cutter for change? No, of course not. We need consider them – and by the way that’s you and me when we are behind the wheel for instance, both from a human and strategic behavior.

So we ask ourselves: is there some way to roll all these much needed measures, reforms and actions into a single coherent package, which is not only good for the environment and for our cities and good for all those who live and work there? But we need something that has a *positive ring to it* so that people will welcome it as a great thing to do. Rather than scrape, gripe, grumble and at the end of the day resist (and maybe successfully at that). Which is almost always the case given the prevalent policy mindset du jour.

The central idea behind NewDriving, as the till-now missing soldier of our strategy, is to treat car owner/drivers, not as adversaries, but as our customers. We want to bring all these good car-captive citizens into that world of new mobility with a smile. So, how can we best serve our good customers? That is the question.

The idea is that as a NewDriver, you have a better, more comfortable and more economic life style. (And oh yes, you are also cool and have more friends!)

Behind all this new mode of behavior is the fact that our cities are changing because they must before the increasingly urgent climate challenge, -- but also for many other immediate local reasons.² But now, you are able to use your car AND be a good citizen and neighbor at the same time.

To achieve this leap, as a new NewDriver you now have at your disposal a rich array of technologies, partners and organizational devices which permit you to be palpably better off than you were under the old mobility arrangements which our cities are increasingly leaving behind it. You are, for sure, a car owner/driver, but as a NewDriver you are not stuck in traffic, you are not spending a bundle, and what is more, in addition to your own much loved car, now a lot more effective than it was in the old days, you also have access to a whole range of the new and improved mobility options which you can use as and when you wish to. (“Look Ma, no compulsion!”)

Now while this single, simple, understandable, positive proposal encompasses goals usually seen as “negative” – traffic reduction, less congestion, lower speeds, fewer places to park, less energy consumed, greenhouse gas reductions, resource savings, and the long list goes on – we can, I am confident, achieve these important objectives, but this time with NewDriving putting the whole thing in a positive frame for an important part of our voting and vocal public.

Also, it is positive and at the same time can be shown to lead to numerous other advantages, including offering improved mobility options and services to many people who simply would not have them if you had not put “newdriving” into practice in your city.

² You remember? Congestion, accidents, injuries, foul air, noise, high costs, destruction of urban form, lost time in traffic, car-boxes as obesity traps, loss of neighborliness, etc. etc.

NewDrive: From cradle to grave

It's a package and different people and different places will handle it indifferent ways. It will in each case bring together a dynamic set of integrated, synergistic policies, measures and technologies -- and while this is not the place for me to roll out the full carpet, here in shorthand is a first think list of some of the good things that you might want to consider folding into your program:

1. **Match-your-car:** If you are going to be using your car regularly in the city be sure that your choice of vehicle size, energy efficiency, emissions, noise, visibility (eye to eye contact with pedestrians and cyclists is important), and top speeds matches the new driving environment.
2. **Eco-driving:** This is well charted terrain as a [quick Google visit](#) will make clear.
3. **Mixed-mode driver training:** Driver training programs for new high density, mixed-mode, variable speed travel patterns to reduce accidents
4. **ZRIP - "Zip Right In Parking":** New parking technologies and packages which permit you to reserve your parking slot by mobile phone or internet before you set off on your trip, so that you can zip straight into your reserved slot without driving all over the place to find one;
5. **HOV parking:** Proportional and significant parking fee reductions and increased availability to anyone who is operating their car with three or more passengers aboard.
6. **+3 HOV access:** Privileged access to HOV lanes and conveniences, if you can figure out how to get more than three people in the car;
7. **Ride-sharing:** This is how you get those people into your car (and off the road), helping to share your costs and gaining you in the process that privileged access to the scarce road resources. It's been around for a long time but things are changing fast. Stay tuned.
8. **Digital hitchhiking:** This twenty-first century fillip for ride-sharing (car and van pools) keys on the dynamic use of mobile phones as the central organizing device. But it's going to go way further than that and will tie in carsharing, public transport, taxis, etc. (tune in to www.dighitch.org)
9. **Carsharing:** There when you need it, but someone else's problem the rest of the time. (See <http://www.worldcarshare.com>)
10. **Drive-a-Bike:** True automobility for shorter city trips (See <http://www.citybike.newmobility.org/>)
11. **Shed a car" programs:** Vehicle Buy Back incentive programs and packages, together with savings and good deals via transit incentive schemes.

New Mobility must bring with it a strong positive message – otherwise it is just one more self-righteous well-meaning phrase. And one that in a pluralistic vigorous democracy is doomed for failure.

Thus NewDriving can be carried out in parallel with high profile new mobility projects such as City Bikes, BRT, group taxis, reserved lanes, slow streets, all-mode fare cards, seamless transport, public space projects, etc. which everyone sees as positive and which not only offer options and complements to own-car travel, but also and far more subtly work on people's minds and attitudes (which at the end of the day what this is supposed to be all about).