

# The SEVENTH GENERATION

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."  
- From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

## Fight Auto Dependency and Promote Transportation Equity

By Tom Angotti

Dependency on the automobile as the main means of transportation is one of the main reasons for air pollution and its attendant health consequences: lung disease, cancer, asthma, and the growing population of obese and overweight people, now 64% of the U.S. population according to the Center for Disease Control. Deaths by auto number over 40,000 a year in the U.S., a casualty figure that wouldn't be toler-

ated by the Pentagon on any battlefield. As Lisa Schreiberman notes in her article in this issue, government is all tied up throwing chemicals at the West Nile Virus, which has left far fewer casualties than the car, while daily car crashes on highways across the country are still treated as "accidental." Instead of making auto dependency a public health emergency, Washington and Detroit give us new safety gadgets, false hopes for alternative fuels, and other technological fixes that induce more people to drive, buy bigger cars, burn more gas, and face the risks. As seen by the auto and insurance industries, and government regulators, "accidents" are the fault

of drivers, not cars that are, as Ralph Nader found decades ago, "unsafe at any speed." Planners as a profession have been much better than others at recognizing the effects of auto dependency on the quality of urban life. The sprawl that comes with cars wastes land, extends the workday for most people, increases water pollution from runoff, and decreases public space. Planners who back Smart Growth imply a need to reduce auto dependency and favor more benign modes of transportation. Many planners have been vocal advocates of mass transit, bicycling and safe pedestrian circulation.

### TRANSPORTATION JUSTICE

Planners on the whole have been less responsive to questions of economic and racial equity in transportation planning. As John Stolz shows in his article on page 5, much more needs to be done to address the inequities in the planning and development of transportation systems. Over the last decade, the environmental justice movement has been the leading advocate for the involvement of communities of color and low-income communities in transportation decision making. Eugene Patron's article about Montgomery, Alabama, Patricia Nolan's article about Chicago, and the other cases noted by Stolz, give examples of the vibrancy of the transportation justice movement.

In his other article, Stolz reminds us that Congress will reauthorize the federal transportation bill over the next year, and planners will have a new opportunity to advocate that greater proportions of funding go to more environmentally friendly and urban friendly modes. Planners can also press for strengthening the requirements for transportation equity and broad participation in transportation planning.

There is a darker side to the role of the planning profession. In the immediate postwar years, the largest organization of urban planners enthusiastically supported the interstate highway system, federal urban renewal [Cont. on page 8]



Autos are displacing bikes in Shanghai

Photo By Tom Angotti

## PLANNERS NETWORK

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### Statement of Principles

The Planners Network is an association of professionals, activists, academics, and students involved in physical, social, economic, and environmental planning in urban and rural areas, who promote fundamental change in our political and economic systems. We believe that planning should be a tool for allocating resources and developing the environment to eliminate the great inequalities of wealth and power in our society, rather than to maintain and justify the status quo. We are committed to opposing racial, economic, and environmental injustice, and discrimination by gender and sexual orientation. We believe that planning should be used to assure adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care, jobs, safe working conditions, and a healthful environment. We advocate public responsibility for meeting these needs, because the private market has proven incapable of doing so.

# PLANNERS NETWORK

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## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Planners Network seeks articles that describe and analyze progressive physical, social, economic and environmental planning in urban and rural areas. Articles may be up to 2,000 words. They should be addressed to PN's broad audience of professionals, activists, students and academics, and be straightforward and jargon-free. Following a journalistic style, the first paragraph should summarize the main ideas in the article. A few suggested readings may be mentioned in the text, but do not submit footnotes or a bibliography. The editors may make minor style changes, but any substantial rewriting or changes will be checked with the author. A photograph or illustration may be included. Submissions on disk or by email are greatly appreciated. Send to the Editor at [tangotti@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:tangotti@hunter.cuny.edu) or Planners Network, c/o Hunter College Dept of Urban Planning, 695 Park Ave., New York, NY 10021. Fax: 212-772-5593. Deadlines are January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1.

### UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUES [Articles welcome]:

- A Critical View of Community/University Partnerships
- Is There an Energy Crisis and Why?
- The 2004 Election

**7th Generation** [Cont. from page 2] program, and mortgage guarantees for suburban homeowners. Together these programs produced the sprawl and auto dependence we're stuck with today. Today, for all the talk about Smart Growth, the planning profession is still utterly meek in addressing auto dependency. Perhaps it's because most planners work in sprawled suburbs that can do little by themselves to get out of their fix. But while jumping on the Smart Growth bandwagon, planners often end up advocating slightly higher density and infill housing *without* the mass transit, bicy-

co. Organized labor is virtually absent from this fight, and consumer groups are split. Unlike the tobacco industry, auto and oil are much bigger and more heavily invested. They're not about to give up an industry that sees a bright future in a world every bit as auto-dependent as the U.S. In Asia, people are giving up walking and cycling, neo-liberal trade policies have opened the door to transnational auto corporations, and the internal combustion engine and chronic smog are growing blissfully into the future.

#### GLOBAL AND LOCAL

Planners can also play an important role through local action. They can work with advocacy groups and activists to create alternatives to the auto. This can help change people's travel behavior and consciousness about the environmental consequences of auto dependency. The series of four articles on Toronto in this issue show how advocates for pedestrians, cyclists and mass transit can work separately and together. They are helping to save public transit from cutbacks by conservative politicians who would never touch the billions lavished on auto users for highway construction and use.

Faculty and students on college campuses have a special opportunity to fight auto dependency. As Carlos Balsas says in his article, we can start right where we are and reduce and even eliminate auto use. Bicycle and pedestrian modes are best suited for the multiple short trips students and faculty take in the course of their daily activities. They suit the limited budgets of many students and faculty. And what a way to learn how to convert our principles into practice and train the next generation of transportation planners!

#### ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Oren Yiftachel's story in this issue shows how land use planning in Israel and the Occupied Territories reinforces inequalities based on ethnicity. It offers further evidence of how Israel's land use policies result in the systematic removal of Arab people from land, perhaps one of the largest and most brutal examples in the world of urban renewal as a form of ethnic cleansing. We invited Prof. Yiftachel to contribute this story because so little information about this massive displacement process is available to planners in the U.S. On October 16, PN Magazine sponsored a forum in New York City called "Rebuilding Homes in the Occupied Territories," with Israeli

Jeff Halper and Palestinian Salim Shawamreh, founders of a grassroots network of Palestinians and Israelis that rebuilds demolished Palestinian homes. Halper and Shawamreh were on a national tour and appeared on Pacifica Radio's Democracy Now.

U.S. financial and military support of the Sharon government—\$3 billion a year of your tax dollars—effectively condones the illegal takeover of Arab land by the Israeli government and Jewish settlers and the formation of *bantustans*. Adam Hanieh, in the October 2002 issue of *Monthly Review*, tells the chilling story:

A nine-meter-high wall stretching for hundreds of kilometers is being finished around the northern West Bank towns of Nablus, Jenin, Qalqilya, and Tulkarem. A similar wall is being built around Jerusalem. In conjunction with this construction, a new pass-card system has been put in place that requires any Palestinian wishing to move between Palestinian towns to obtain a special weekly permit issued by the Israeli military commander of the West Bank.... In essence, the West Bank has been divided into three cantons—in the north, center, and south of the West Bank—with all movement of goods and people between these areas under the control of the Israeli military. These three cantons in the West Bank are separated by large Israeli settlement blocs and sprawling highways that are off limits to Palestinians. Special license plates distinguish between Palestinian and Israeli drivers and constitute another pillar of the emerging apartheid system in the West Bank.

If you read Edward Said's pained and impassioned plea in the same issue of *Monthly Review*, you may better understand how desperately the situation calls for political alternatives to the Bush-Sharon axis and the terrorism they both need and provoke to achieve their colonial and imperial objectives. Ask your representatives in Congress why the U.S. has for decades allowed Israel to flaunt U.N. Security Council resolutions calling for an end to Israel's illegal occupation of the Occupied Territories, while paying so much attention to Iraq's purported (and unproven) violations.

As the U.S. prepares to invade Iraq to control that country's oil and get a strategic foothold in the region, an adventurous act sure to create havoc throughout the Middle East, protest is the only thing that will stop them. And at a time when the constitutional freedom of speech is threatened in this country, we are obligated to defend our right to criticize and oppose government policies we believe to be morally and politically bankrupt. I invite other views about the Middle East by PN members, but I hope everyone will appreciate how little space there is today in the mainstream media for anything but blind patriotism beating war drums. Why should planners be concerned? Well, with the military budget going up and revenues going down, we can kiss goodbye the hopes for greater funding of community development, low-income housing, and healthier urban environments. And we should oppose all schemes for creating cities as segregated enclaves for poor people based on their ethnicity.

*Tom Angotti is Co-Editor of Planners Network.*



Amsterdam: Cyclists, pedestrians and mass transit get preference.

cle or pedestrian systems that should go along with them. The New Urbanists are perhaps at the extreme — producing low-density walkable enclaves that fit well within, but never challenge, the auto dependent metropolitan regions.

The most important contribution that planners can make is to join the national and global movements for more sustainable and just transportation. In the U.S., auto and oil are still the largest bloc among top corporations, and now they are quite at home in the White House. It will take a major long-term effort to dislodge them, a campaign even tougher than the one against tobac-

## PN AT THE ACSP CONFERENCE

*Baltimore, MD*

*Nov. 21-24, 2002*

### Planners Network related events:

- PN Reception on Thursday night
- Panel on Chester Hartman's book, *Between Eminence & Notoriety*, Saturday at 2:15 PM