TTP220 Transportation Policy and Planning

History Part 1

Key concept: Density gradient – trade-off between land cost and transportation cost

3 Rules that guide history of urban transportation
1. Innovation – speed – sprawl: higher speeds mean greater distances in same time
2. Accessibility – development: development goes where accessibility is highest
3. Innovation - expansion: direction of causality not straight forward

Eras
Rise of Transit: 1825 to 1900
Rise of Automobile: 1900 to now
Fall of Transit: 1920 to 1950s

Transit innovations: omnibus, steam train, horsecar, electric streetcar, cable car, mass transit, motor bus, trolley bus, rapid transit

Streetcar system characteristics
1. Affordability for working class meant growth in mobility and outward expansion of city
2. Multiple private companies in each city, overseen by regulatory agencies, meant expansion to increase profits

Streetcar ironies
• Irony 1: Great success was also the beginning of the demise
• Irony 2: Private industry but really a subsidy from investors to general public
• Irony 3: Poor management led to dramatic and lasting change in form of cities

Streetcar demise: GM conspiracy or public choice? See “Taken for a Ride”

Rise of the automobile
Recreational Car Era: 1920 to 1945
Freeway Era: 1945 to now

Why public investments in roads but not transit?
• Seen as quick and cheap in contrast to long-term investments in fixed-rail transit
• Highways served both public and private transportation
• More in American tradition of individualism
• Seemingly paid for by gas and tire taxes

Next: History of federal transportation policy

Readings:
“The Interstate Achievement” – TR News
“Planning for Cars in Cities” – JAPA
If we have time we’ll watch “Taken for a Ride”. Think about the following:

- What was the state of the streetcar systems by the 1950s?
- What were the options for the streetcar systems at that time?
- What role did GM play in determining their future?
- Who were the other players and what roles did they play?
- What did people really want at that time?
- What about the role of government?
- What points especially strike you or surprise you from the movie?