PATH AS PLACE

The Experiential Side of Transportation

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1. How we Got to Here
2. Rethinking our Streets
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Cindy Zerger AICP, ASLA
Urban Designer
Planning + Landscape Architecture

Passionate about creating memorable public realm experiences. Doubles as a mom who loves landscapes, soccer, trail running, and cycling.
Ian Lockwood PE
Livable Transportation Engineer

Before

After

I enjoy helping paths to become places

photography  teaching  cartooning  and cycling
Work together...
Work together...
HUMAN NATURE: SAFETY AND MOVEMENT.
SHELTER WE COULD MOVE WITH US ON THE HUNT, TO GET PEOPLE TO FOOD.
AGRICULTURE LED TO PERMANENT SHELTER LED TO BETTER PATHS TO GET FOOD TO PEOPLE.
ANCIENT WALKING TRAILS BECAME CART TRACKS WHICH BECAME RURAL ROADS
PAVEMENT. BECAUSE BIKES.
CARS. BECAUSE INNOVATION.
TRAFFIC. BECAUSE PAVEMENT.
MORE TRAFFIC. BECAUSE MORE PAVEMENT.
CHAOS.
BECAUSE TRAFFIC.
WE CREATED CITIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXCHANGE.
WE CREATED CITIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXCHANGE.

The purpose cities: to concentrate and arrange the components for civic life within a place to foster efficient & effective exchange (i.e., social, economic, and cultural exchange) (e.g., exchange of labor, social contact, entertainment, services, justice, education, goods, ideas, accommodations,...)
STREETS AS A PLACE OF EXCHANGE
Modern Conception of the Purpose of Streets

- Access
- Throughput

Local  Collector  Arterial
Buffalo
Hartford
Modern Conception of the Purpose of Streets

- **Access**
- **Throughput**

**Categories:**
- Local
- Collector
- Arterial
Traditional Conception of Access & Throughput

Throughput

Access

Volume

Local

Collector

Arterial
Traditional Conception of Access & Throughput

Volume

Access

Throughput

Local

Collector

Arterial
Which street provides more mobility?

The populations’ capabilities and strategies to move in order to access what they need to live within the city.

people who have disabilities, have different income levels, and/or are young, elderly, millennials, pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, students…
Which street is a better place?

What happened to the original intent? (i.e., mobility and place)
PARKWAYS
Not just a road, a park that contains a road
BRONX RIVER PARKWAY RESERVATION

LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

SCARSDALE TO WHITE PLAINS

Bronx Parkway Commission

NEW YORK

[Diagram of the Bronx River Parkway Reservation showing Scarsdale to White Plains]

1918

[Signatures of Madison Grant, William N. Miles, and Commissioner's sign]
More than a motorway. The parkway’s primary purpose was to transform a polluted river valley into an attractive linear park full of recreational opportunities and attractive scenery.
The Bronx River Parkway has always been more than a motorway. In the eyes of its original creators, the parkway’s primary purpose was to transform a polluted river valley into an attractive linear park full of recreational opportunities and attractive scenery. The Bronx Parkway Commission developed a variety of recreational facilities aimed at appealing to a wide range of tastes and social preferences.
Bronx River Parkway

More than a motorway. The parkway’s primary purpose was to transform a polluted river valley into an attractive linear park full of recreational opportunities and attractive scenery.
The roadway was significantly changed in the 1950s-60s to accommodate increasingly heavy traffic. New lanes were added and portions of the roadway were significantly straightened.

Bronx River Parkway

The cheap, flood-prone land along the lower Bronx River valley had developed into a mixture of loosely regulated commercial and industrial enterprises, tenements, and small homes served by a confusing array of local streets. Parkway construction transformed this haphazard urban sprawl into a comprehensively designed linear park. The free-flowing parkway drive wound in graceful S-curves through a broad expanse of greenery, providing an attractive and restful experience for commuters and recreational drivers. The roadway was significantly changed in the 1950s-60s to accommodate increasingly heavy traffic. New lanes were added and portions of the roadway were significantly straightened, making it more efficient but less park-like.
The term “parkway” was co-opted: A parkway is a broad landscaped highway (Merriam-Webster).
What happened to the original intent?

Bronx River “Parkway”

The term “parkway” was co-opted: A parkway is a broad landscaped highway (Merriam-Webster).
HIGHWAYS
A road originally intended to link but not intrude into cities
Interstate highway system

We built 26 thousand miles of highways in 15 years.
We built 26 thousand miles of highways in 15 years. Circumference of the Earth + 2901 miles.
Highways as intended

It is an important system to be sure.
Highways as implemented

It is an important system to be sure. But implementation deviated from its initial intent.
WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD?
President Eisenhower went on to say that the matter of running Interstate routes through the congested parts of the cities was entirely against his original concept and wishes.

Source: Memorandum of a 1960 meeting in the Oval Office.
Interstate highway system
What happened to the original intent?
IT'S TIME TO RETHINK TRANSPORTATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
Mobility (in the past)

The movement of people & goods.

Assumption: faster, farther, and in greater numbers means progress for society.
Mobility (now and in the future)

The populations’ capabilities and strategies to move in order to access what they need to live within the city.

Many Populations: people who have disabilities, have different income levels, and/or are young, elderly, millennials, pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, students…
Mobility (now and in the future)

The populations’ capabilities and strategies to move in order to access what they need to live within the city.

The movement is purposeful:

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<td>24.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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</table>
Hello? Mixed land use and density reduce my average weekend trip length by about 85%.
Which street network and land use pattern provides more mobility?
Which street network and land use pattern provides more mobility? Which streets have the highest potential to be nice places?
Vision

A consensus on what the *place* ought to be like in the future.

(Place: village, town, city, district, downtown, park, countryside, main street, boulevard, parkway...)
Somerville, MA:
“To become an exceptional place to live, work, play, and raise a family.”

Energy Corridor, Houston TX:
“To become internationally recognized as a high-quality place in which to work, live, and invest.”
Downtown Knoxville, TN:
“...will be the economic and cultural heart of the region, a vibrant, walkable place where people congregate to live, work, shop and play.”

Charlottesville, NC:
“A great place to live for all of our citizens.”
PATH AS PLACE

Balancing getting somewhere with being somewhere.

Photo source | Ken Ray
PATH AS PLACE

Path: a road, street, way, trail, track, highway, route...essentially linear features
PATH AS PLACE

Path: a road, street, way, trail, track, highway, route...essentially linear features

as: through design and composition is all of or part of
**PATH AS PLACE**

**Path:** a road, street, way, trail, track, highway, route...essentially linear features

**as:** through design and composition is all of or part of

**Place:** a defined area, location, or space within the built and/or natural environments.
PATH AS PLACE

Our experience of path and place is inextricably linked.
PATH AS PLACE

Our experience of path and place is inextricably linked. Sometimes the path and the place are the same (e.g., a Main Street).
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Sometimes the path and the place are the same (e.g., a Main Street).

Sometimes a path contributes to and supports its place (e.g., a street in a downtown, a parkway in park).
Our experience of path and place is inextricably linked.

Sometimes the path and the place are the same (e.g., a Main Street).

Sometimes a path contributes to and supports its place (e.g., a street in a downtown, a parkway in park).

A path can be equal to but is never more important that its place.
Our experience of path and place is inextricably linked.

Sometimes the path and the place are the same (e.g., a Main Street).

Sometimes a path contributes to and supports its place (e.g., a street in a downtown, a parkway in park).

A path can be equal to but is never more important than its place.

Paths should never dominate their places.
PATH AS PLACE
applicable to every context
Fills current void:

- Gives *legitimacy* to the idea that the street is a *public space*. 
PATH AS PLACE

Fills current void:

- Gives **legitimacy** to the idea that the **street is a public space**.

- Gives standing to the “static users” of the path, the importance of the fabric of the place, the relationships across streets, and reframes the idea of “edges.”
PATH AS PLACE

Fills current void:

- Gives **legitimacy** to the idea that the street is a **public space**.

- Gives standing to the “static users” of the path, the importance of the fabric of the place, the relationships across streets, and reframes the idea of “edges.”
  - curb vs building façade
  - arterial as a barrier or as a seam
Fills current void:

- Gives **legitimacy** to the idea that the street is a **public space**.

- Gives standing to the “static users” of the path, the importance of the fabric of the place, the relationships across streets, and reframes the idea of “edges.”
  - curb vs building façade
  - arterial as a barrier or as a seam

- Provides a **priority and rigor** for design and people involved where the path cannot diminish the place.
PATH AS PLACE

Three important elements to get us there
EMPATHY
People’s lived experiences must inform our work.
Empathy is the capacity to see, hear, and feel what another person is experiencing, from within their frame of reference.
Empathy is the capacity to see, hear, and feel what another person is experiencing, from within their frame of reference.

More than pity or sympathy, which can disconnect us from people, empathy fuels a better connection with the people we serve.
Empathy is the capacity to see, hear, and feel what another person is experiencing, from within their frame of reference.

More than pity or sympathy, which can disconnect us from people, empathy fuels a better connection with the people we serve.

This connection is what inspires the creation of creative, positive, and community-focused solutions.
Empathy

13% of people 16+ do not drive. In addition, 21% of pop is under 15. That means more than 1/3 of the population do not drive.
Empathy

“For the Invisible riders, two wheeled transit has nothing to do with style or making a political statement.”
- David Butow
Empathy

We are all pedestrians at some point in the day.
Empathy

We need to go beyond just ADA compliance.
We need to design for the human experience first.
PUSH BUTTON TO CROSS STREET.
INTERNATIONAL MORSE CODE

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www.learnmorsecde.com

START

DIT

DAH
Disability becomes a handicap only when we encounter barriers.

(George Covington and Bruce Hannah, Access by Design)
INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

We need to bring our unique skills together to serve a shared vision.
The walls between art and engineering exist only in our minds. - Theo Jansen, Visual Artist
Bran Ferren:

To create for the ages, let's combine art and engineering

TED2014 · 20:12 · Filmed Mar 2014

26 subtitle languages 🎨
View interactive transcript
The worlds of **art and design** are not, in fact, incompatible with **science and engineering** contrary to what we learn in school [and sometimes feel reinforced in the professional world]. When combined, we can **create things that are amazing** and couldn’t be created in either domain alone.
How do projects of unprecedented creative vision and technical complexity actually happen?
How do projects of unprecedented creative vision and technical complexity actually happen?

1. A brilliant creative vision
How do projects of unprecedented creative vision and technical complexity actually happen?

1. A brilliant creative vision
2. Story telling and leadership
How do projects of unprecedented creative vision and technical complexity actually happen?

1. A brilliant creative vision
2. Story telling and leadership
3. A mastery of science and technology that pushes existing innovations even farther
Interdisciplinary collaboration
From the beginning to the end of a project.
LANGUAGE REFORM
Use language that help both professionals and public understand
"Words.  
The clothes that thoughts wear."  

Samuel Beckett  

Source | johnminihan.blogspot.com/p/samuel-beckett.html
Once your street is improved, the curb will be right here.
Language controls conversation

The terminology we use is causing confusion.
Improvement
Upgrade
Traffic Demand
Efficient
Accidents
Capacity
Level of Service
Delay
Reliability

Functional Classification
Right-of-Way Preservation
Freeway
Capacity Deficiencies
Conflict Points
Access Management
...
Words solidify ideas
Words set priorities
Words have consequences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accident</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Transportation</td>
<td>Walking, Biking, Transit (be specific)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Modification or Change</td>
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<td>Demand</td>
<td>Motor Vehicle Use or Expected use</td>
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<td>Efficient</td>
<td>Increase Speeds or Faster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upgrade</td>
<td>Widening or Reconstruction</td>
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</table>
Bottom Line: To help change the paradigm, we need to coin & popularize more words & phrases that capture & advance our ideas.
Bottom Line: To help change the paradigm, we need to coin & popularize more words & phrases that capture & advance our ideas.
PATH AS PLACE EXAMPLES
WINTER GARDEN
Softening a Hard Place
Hard
Maintenance

Hard                                Soft

Experience

Maintenance
Experience

Maintenance

Hard                                Soft
SULPHUR SPRINGS
Creating Place and Inclusivity
CAPITAL CITY BIKEWAY

Ushering in a New Era of Streets
Context

Capital city of Minnesota

8 80 Initiative
Capital city of Minnesota

8 80 Initiative

City adopted Bicycle Plan
Context

Capital city of Minnesota

8 80 Initiative

City adopted Bicycle Plan

Downtown Loop - “area for additional study”

Sidewalk level bike facility planned

“Not just about a bikeway”
FIRST SEGMENT
JACKSON STREET

Just about 0.651 miles
2, 1-week charrettes
Engagement

2, 1-week charrettes
3 advisory committees
Engagement

2, 1-week charrettes

3 advisory committees

Individual meetings with property owners
2, 1-week charrettes
3 advisory committees
Individual meetings with property owners
Open house
Pop Up Meetings
Engagement

- 2, 1-week charrettes
- 3 advisory committees
- Individual meetings with property owners
- Open house
- Pop Up Meetings
- Weekly construction meetings
Engagement

2, 1-week charrettes
3 advisory committees
Individual meetings with property owners
Open house
Pop Up Meetings
Weekly construction meetings
Design Process

“Ideal” typical section

Collaboration of planners, urban designers, landscape architects, and engineers

Outside In
100% OVERLAP
Planning concurrent with final design

9 MONTHS
0% to final design of Jackson Street in 9 months

3 COMMITTEES
Community, Technical, and Policy Advisory committees

100% NO PRESSURE
Mayor wanted the first segment fully constructed before leaving office

100% FUNDED
Fully City funded project (8 80)

3 DEVELOPMENT
Economic development driving factor
Together we have crafted a world-class standard for bikeway design that will usher in a new era of streets – streets that accommodate all users of the system, no matter their mode, age or ability. – Mayor Coleman
CHATTANOOGA
Repairing the Relationship
With 2020 hindsight, you decide the truth:

**Option A:** “The City’s lifeblood is the highway. The mobility it provides is vital for economic health and the convenience of the motoring public. If anything, the highway should be expanded to fight congestion. Removing it is simply anti-progress.”

**Option B:** “Walkability and access to the waterfront, parks, trails, and other places in the downtown is key to the economic and social health of the City. The highway has contributed to the woes of the City and needs to be replaced with something that contributes to an urban context.”
THANK YOU!

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