

CHILDREN IN TRAFFIC

John DeWitt

Background: In Minneapolis during 1993, homicide and cars tied for first place as killers of school children. In Minnesota during 1993, traffic killed or injured 434 young pedestrians (children age 14 and under). This represents nearly one third of the state-wide killed or injured total for pedestrians.

While these figures are appalling, child traffic accident rates are now much lower than they were in the 1920s. How is this possible when transportation experts tell us that there are more cars, traveling faster than ever before? Because road accident statistics do not tell the whole story regarding road safety.

Studies attribute the reduced accident rate to "... *the withdrawal of the children from the threat, rather than the withdrawal of the threat from the children.*" According to a British study, in 1971 parents allowed 80% of children between the ages of 7 and 8 to go to school on their own. By 1980, this figure had dropped to only 9%.

We teach our children traffic safety by teaching them to fear traffic. To avoid the risks, parents chauffeur their children. The same study found that in 1990 350% more children went to school by car than in 1971. Fear of traffic was the number one reason given, twice as high as the fear of molestation. In addition to the social, safety, and environmental costs associated with more traffic, are the costs of children's freedom and independence to get about safely on their own.

Peter Calthorpe reports a recent comparison study of ten-year-olds in a small town in Vermont and a new suburb of Orange County, California. The study showed that the Vermont kids had three times the mobility (distance and places they could get to on their own) while the Orange County kids watched four times as much TV.

The Danish Safe Routes to School Model

In 1976, the city of Odense, Denmark, ini-

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PARK BOARD VOTES TO SUE OVER MINNEHAHA CREEK

MnDOT's plan to widen the 35W bridges over Minnehaha Creek threatened the Minneapolis Park Board. On January 19, the Park Board defended Minnehaha Creek by voting unanimously to sue to block the project.

The Park Board granted MnDOT an easement in 1961 to build two specific bridges for 35W over the Parkway. The current proposal violates that easement.

It is easy to be complacent when the threat is remote. The issues sharpen when they reach your front door. **The doorbell is ringing.**

While claiming the need to "redeck" the bridges, MnDOT wants to widen the bridges. Then they can add inside and outside shoulders. MnDOT now looks at roadway shoulders as an *innovative* way of adding capacity. It lets buses use the shoulders as driving lanes and lets cars use them for queuing before exiting the freeway.

Other MnDOT highlights:

- 1) MnDOT plans to close the space between the existing bridges, creating a span 144 feet wide.
- 2) MnDOT plans only minor concrete decorative elements and no other aesthetic enhancements to the design, lighting, or landscaping.

- 3) MnDOT plans **not** to add sound walls or any other noise abatement.

Voilà! Once again, a "maintenance" project becomes an expansion project.

MnDOT's schedule calls for opening bids on the "temporary" expansion project on January 27. By "temporary," MnDOT means at least ten years.

Even worse, "temporary" may turn into permanent. The "permanent" reconstruction of 35W may never happen, due to lack of funding and political support. That means that anything done now to these bridges **may be the only improvement ever done.**

That means years without sound walls, without a bridge that enhances the Parkway, and with a 144 foot tunnel that further diminishes the neighborhood.

When will MnDOT begin to show the same kind of concern for those who live near the highway as it does for those who drive on it?

Please call the Park Board and tell them you value our park land and support their suit to protect the Parkway and Creek.



THE OUTDATED CITIZENS LEAGUE

For the past decade, the Citizens League has strongly opposed the idea of building Light Rail Transit in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The League's argument is that LRT will not attract sufficient numbers of people out of their cars to make it cost-effective, and therefore bus and Rideshare should be expanded rather than fund LRT.

The transportation world is changing. However, travel continues to increase in the Twin Cities and our freeways are becoming increasingly congested. At the same time, transit use is declining at alarm-

ing rates. Part of the solution in many cities across the country is implementation of Light Rail Transit. LRT can help achieve many goals such as increasing transit use, helping shape land use around its stations, and concentrating development in urban areas.

The federal and state governments have shown their support by authorizing funding for the design of LRT in the Central Corridor between the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Earlier this year, the

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NTN INTERN TO DO COMMUNITY OUTREACH, ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY AND FATHER PATRICK ASSIST

by Eric Haugee, Student Intern

During January and throughout the year, NTN will create a coalition of religious organizations to assist community efforts to bring "Trains not Lanes" to 35W. These congregations once again face the displacement that the highway originally created in the 1960s. By working together we will prevent this from happening in the 1990s. The congregations and their neighboring communities will be stronger if the Twin Cities Region develops a viable transit plan instead of perpetuating an expanded system of highways and cars.

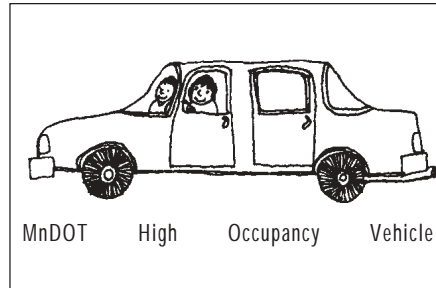
There is power in numbers, and involving the various religious communities impacted by the proposed highway expansion, extends our efforts. With more people participating, this will move NTN's efforts further in the public arena. With more people involved, NTN hopes to extend its strategies and tactics as well as its victories. This collective community effort will link the congregations with the neighborhood community.

So where do I fit in this picture? I am a Junior in Sociology/African American Studies at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As part of my education, I intern with community organizations. My family lived in the Kingfield neighborhood, so I experienced the consequences of 35W. My family lived only four blocks from the freeway. I still remember the roar.

At that time, I didn't think much about transit. It was not until I was in Chicago for another student internship that I recognized the effects that transportation has on a community. Racing by on the on the "el trains", I watched cars parked on the expressway. I got a good look at the surrounding communities in South Chicago: miles of housing projects; abandoned buildings; and empty, undeveloped brown land—brown even in the spring. The same is also true on Chicago's West Side. In contrast, when you use the Red Line to travel through the North Side, there are no expressways. Instead, there are busy streets, crowded stores and a feeling of community. Different types of transportation made different types of communities.

The Twin Cities Community can either enhance its current vitality or it can further concentrate poverty. The way the Twin

Cities develops its transit system is critical. Our fate hinges on the choices made. So, for January, I have invested in the efforts of NTN to develop contacts with various religious organizations to obtain their help in this effort. If you would like to get involved, or want more information, please contact NTN.



NTN RECEIVES GRANT FROM STPP

NTN will be one of five sites nationally to monitor the extent of public participation in the transit planning process. Ideally, the Twin Cities Region will be able to develop viable transit alternatives rather than just an expanded system of roads as proposed by MnDOT.

The Neighborhood Transportation Network was awarded a grant from the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) to ensure that the general public will have a voice in transit planning. Funding for this project was obtained by STPP from the United States Federal Transit Authority. STPP was able to channel these federal funds to grass roots organizations who were already involved in local efforts to promote intermodal public transit alternatives over "concrete" road projects typically proposed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

The Neighborhood Transportation Network has been working with STPP the last several years. The Surface Transportation Policy Project is a national organization based in Washington DC and has helped keep local groups informed about transit policy, especially the implications of the Intermodal Surface Transportation and

US VS. THEM

Deb Dornfeld

In the continuing debate about the future of LRT on 35W, I hear a lot of "us vs. them" rhetoric. City folk accuse suburbanites of selfishness and shortsightedness, and suburban commuters accuse Minneapolitans of the same.

But, aren't we in this together? Doesn't the health of the city depend on the health of the suburbs (and vice versa)?

Pollution and congestion have no respect for political boundaries—the suburban child with asthma is affected just as negatively by increased traffic, and the resulting decline in air quality, as the city child.

LRT would benefit city and suburb alike, as commuters from St. Louis, Toronto, Portland, etc. will attest. Property values increase along LRT lines, and pollution decreases, with a "win-win" result.

Energy Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The ISTEA legislation encourages, state and local governments to use transportation funds to promote better mass transit. Transit planning and development should also encourage public participation in the process and avoid the historic confrontations between MnDOT planners and the public.

In Minnesota and the Twin Cities Region, NTN has a big task ahead. NTN will be working during 1995, as it has since the organization was formed, to ensure there is more public participation MnDOT's planning as well as more transit alters to their typical auto dependency policies.

NTN wants to thanks Hank Dittmer and the staff at the Surface Transportation Policy Project for their support and encouragement by promoting these local efforts. NTN also wants to thank the Federal Transit Authorities for promoting local public decision making in transit policy. NTN has learned in its efforts on I-35W that transit planning is too important to the vitality of the Twin Cities Region to be left to just the highway engineers.

NTN will continue to need the support it has received from area residents, neighborhood groups, religious organizations, elected officials and countless others who have rallied to support public transit for the Twin Cities Region.

Children in Traffic *from page 1*

tiated a Safe Routes to School (SRS) project in response to public concern about the effects of traffic on their children. The Danes based the SRS model on two basic principles. First, traffic speed is the decisive factor in determining the safety of a street for children. For example a pedestrian hit by a car traveling at 30 m.p.h. survives 10% of the time. At 24 m.p.h. the survival rate jumps to 55%, and at 18 m.p.h. it jumps to 95% (however, the survivor often remains handicapped for life).

The second principal is that educational campaigns misplace the burden of traffic safety. Children need developed perceptual and conditional skills to predict and react to traffic movements. Lacking them, they are unable to adapt to our traffic dominated public environment. This explains why children between the ages of 5 and 9 suffer more fatalities than any other age group.

With a mandate for real change and an understanding of these two principals, the Danish government initiated an extensive community participation process (which included school children as key players). They mapped out the primary routes to and from schools throughout the project areas. They adopted an acceptable speed limit range between 9 and 18 m.p.h. to integrate the street's different user groups: cars, bicycles, children, etc. Then they reduced official traffic speeds and "traffic calmed" applicable streets.

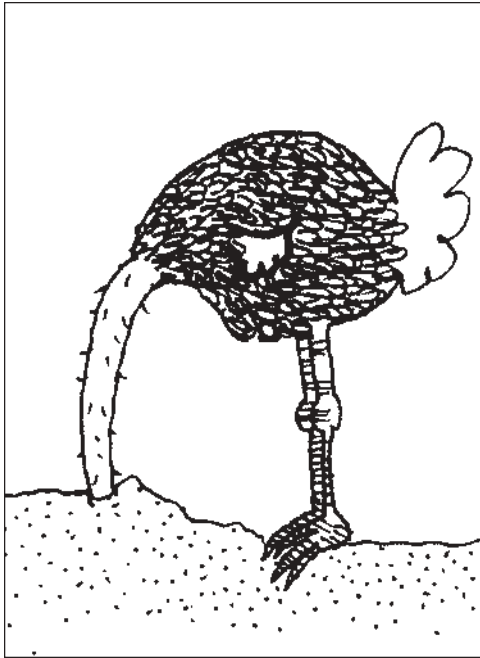
The significant results of the program included: up to an 85% reduction in accidents, reductions in air and noise pollution, reductions in traffic volumes, and a drop in average speeds from 30 - 33 m.p.h. to 12 - 15 m.p.h. Since then, other European cities and towns adopted similar programs—successfully.

The Better Transportation Coalition in Ontario made a commitment to introduce SRS programs to communities throughout that province. We need to implement the SRS program in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and other cities throughout Minnesota.

(This article was adapted from a paper prepared by Tom Samuels and The Better Transportation Coalition in Toronto, Ontario with assistance from the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario. All speeds have been converted from kilometers per hour to miles per hour.)

"The automobile requires 1600 hours of our year (including work to pay for it) so it yields an average speed of 5 m.p.h."

The Ecology of Commerce Paul Hawken



Outdated *from page 1*

Minnesota Legislature authorized state bonding for \$10 million for LRT final design, and the Congress appropriated \$5 million in addition to the present \$2.8 million available.

Three public opinion polls, in recent years, have shown that Twin Cities' residents strongly favor LRT. According to the most recent metro survey (August 1994), 73 percent of respondents think it is a good idea to develop LRT in the Twin Cities, and 48 percent think LRT should have the highest spending priority among transportation alternatives.

The most recent examples of LRT openings are Denver and St. Louis. Denver opened this October with a 5-mile starter line. A new light rail system opened in St. Louis last year. The 18-mile Metrolink has exceeded all expectations in terms of number of riders and public acceptance. Approximately 40,000 people now take the Metrolink each weekday, more than double the original ridership projection.

The Citizens League is currently considering alternatives to LRT. We sincerely hope that members of the League's "Effective Transit Task Force" will consider the recent transportation developments in the Twin Cities area and other parts of the nation as they make a recommendation relating to LRT in our region.

Times have changed. We hope the Citizens League's outdated stand on LRT will change accordingly.

Commissioner John T. Finley, Chair, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority and Commissioner Sandra Hilary, Chair, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority.

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Yes, your contribution is
tax deductible

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PROTECT THE HEALY HISTORIC DISTRICT

David Piehl

In the 1890's, development of the 3100 block of 2nd Avenue South began. The area was predominantly upper middle class and the homes reflected the high Victorian style of the day. Master Builder and Architect T.P. Healy constructed several of the new homes, for buyers such as J.B. Hudson, and the Sears family.

In the 1960's, 35W ripped through the residential area, destroying all of the homes on the west side of 2nd Ave., and defacing those left standing on the east side. What MnDOT promoted as "a beautifully terraced and planted parkway, below grade" (almost conjuring images of tranquillity), grew into a huge, unsightly mound; overgrown, unkempt, and littered with trash. They aimed an off ramp at the homes and dumped thousands of automobiles daily at their doorsteps. The noisy "parkway" soon moved hundreds of thousands of cars past their second story windows. Thus began decades of deterioration and decline for the remaining houses and the adjacent neighborhood.

In the late sixties, people began to recognize the unique quality of the houses along 2nd Ave., and some attempted to preserve them. During the 80's, crack houses, drug dealers, prostitutes, and other criminal elements inundated the area. Some residents fled, others fought back. Eventually they drove out most of the criminal elements, and initiated the long process of rebuilding a shattered neighborhood.

The National Register of Historic Places now lists 14 of the block's 25 houses and all the houses have local historic designation. This makes the Healy Historic District a veritable "speed bump" on 35W. It protects the houses from demolition by other federal projects, projects like 35W. Three homes are presently undergoing extensive restoration, and two more are scheduled for restoration by the MCDA. The grass roots effort is beginning to pay off, or is it?

I am always amazed when I watch television how the "bad guys" always seem to rise up from the ashes with new and more diabolical ways of "getting the good guys".

With their 35W plans, MnDOT has risen up again. Out of the blue, they hit us with their "preferred alternative". Preferred by whom?

The impact on the Healy block includes: an expanded off ramp, a tall retaining wall topped with a wood sound wall where we presently have green space, and a bridge built at approximately the elevation of the rooftops. With the villainous highway rising so high above 2nd Ave., will the sun set at noon? Are we just in "that part of town"? Should we allow MnDOT to sacrifice the historical Healy Block just to save suburban commuters four minutes on their trek into the city?

"The combination of rising environmental costs, rising energy demand, and a shrinking resource base promises that the energy transition the United States must go through in the next generation or so will likely be the most abrupt and expensive transformation that any nation has ever undertaken."

How Many Americans? Leon Bouvier and Lindsey Grant

MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEARING ON 35W

Subject: City's Position on 35W

10 am, Thursday, February 2nd

Room 319, 3rd Floor City Hall

To get on the speakers list so you can give testimony, call Jan Hrcir 673-3130

The City of Minneapolis is under pressure to change its position on 35W. The suburbs to the south and MnDOT favor a plan different from the one the City supports. The City currently supports construction of Light Rail Transit before adding any freeway lanes. This will allow the effects of LRT to be assessed before we commit to additional lanes.

Please come to the public hearing on February 2nd and voice your support for reaffirming the current position.



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