

WHAT THEY WANT US TO BELIEVE

Deb Dornfeld

"Light Rail would cost \$474 million and deliver 33,700 riders in the year 2010; an Express Busway would cost \$218 million and deliver about the same number of people."

Is this scenario presuming the same kind of government support, commitment, and subsidy for LRT riders as exists now for bus riders? If that's the case, well, then--of course the numbers will be abysmal.

If mass transit were marketed and subsidized at a level even approaching automobiles, we might see transportation habits begin to change.

Coming at the issue from a more punitive angle, if auto owners were charged the full costs of highway construction, parking, congestion, pollution, and highway patrol, mass transit wouldn't be able to keep new riders away with sticks.

MnDOT's Scenario also presumes that the Minnesota driver will sit contentedly in his or her car, day after day, jam after jam, watching the LRT jaunt by at 60 unvaried miles per hour, and not take notice.

LRT can run on time, at constant speeds, in any weather. An Express Bus, although a step in the

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SPEAKING OF SPOKES

Todd Anderson

On a foggy morning a few Saturdays ago, two thousand cyclists with scant 4,000 legs took to the road for the Multiple Sclerosis 150 Bike Ride. I was amazed to see so many handicapped people at the starting gate. This year's route: Duluth to Blaine via Hinckley. As luck would have it, the truck that delivered our bicycles was late in its arrival, but after a little patience, my group of six was able to start the ride. We departed Spirit Mountain Ski Chalet midmorning. From a cyclist's standpoint, conditions were ideal. The air was calm, the temperature cool, the scenery beautiful and most enjoyable of all, there was virtually no auto traffic. For one who has logged over 30,000 miles from a bike saddle, one of the best cheap thrills in life is a ride of solitude in the absence of motorized vehicles.

The ride continued on road surface for a short while until we reached the bike trail -- another stretch of pleasure. The next day, our journey took us south on a number of county roads. However, this day was different. This day was to be defined by Sunday-driver traffic.

I was quickly reminded how polite drivers are when they encounter an almost endless sea of cyclists. To someone who always rides in large organized tours, this driver courtesy is the norm. But for those of us who like to commute during a Twin Cities rush hour, a friendly wave from a motorist makes you wonder if you might have a sign stuck to your back that says, "Wave, and I'll give you \$100." The fact is, most motorists respect large groups of cyclists anywhere, anytime. So when you're cruising with thousands, it has been my experience that the motorists accept the two wheelers, no matter how silly those helmets look. Perhaps the cliché "safety in numbers" would apply.

When commuting to work in the morning, however, the cyclist loses this edge. The rules become obscure and our presence becomes a nuisance rather than a beacon of nonpolluting and healthy transportation. There are groups of nobles such as Critical Mass and the

Midtown Greenway people who employ a political agenda in order to promote bicycle transportation. I wish them all the best. If, however, you are like me and not accustomed to taking up battle with bureaucrats, there is still plenty you can do. Most of us are not political activists nor do we have the time it takes to impact the political arena. What we do have, however, is a bicycle. A means of transportation perhaps rusting away in the garage. We ought to have the courage to just **ride**. The agenda can be simple; to get from point A to point B. Don't ignore political agendas entirely, but do get out on that bike. Build the numbers and I believe that safety will follow. Make your presence known and motorists will become used to the idea of sharing the roadway. It won't happen overnight, but you can get the process started tomorrow.

Tips for a bicycle commute:

- 1) Assume all motorists think you're bugging them, that way you'll be pleasantly surprised when someone smiles at you or waves a friendly gesture.
- 2) Ride rain or shine, that way you'll never worry about the weather.
- 3) Wear a helmet, but make sure you take it off at work.
- 4) Learn some basic repair skills just in case you "have a flat on the way to work." But don't worry, you'll be astonished how forgiving your boss will be when they find out you were riding your bike.
- 5) If it's too far to ride to work, consider a park and ride. You may think this is a waste of time, but consider the years you'll be adding to your life in exchange for the moments it takes to unload your bike from the car.

You can impact your life dramatically with far less than a well-planned political agenda. You can do it with an old rusty bike in the garage and your two legs. And for those of you that may have less than two, it still can be done, I've seen it.

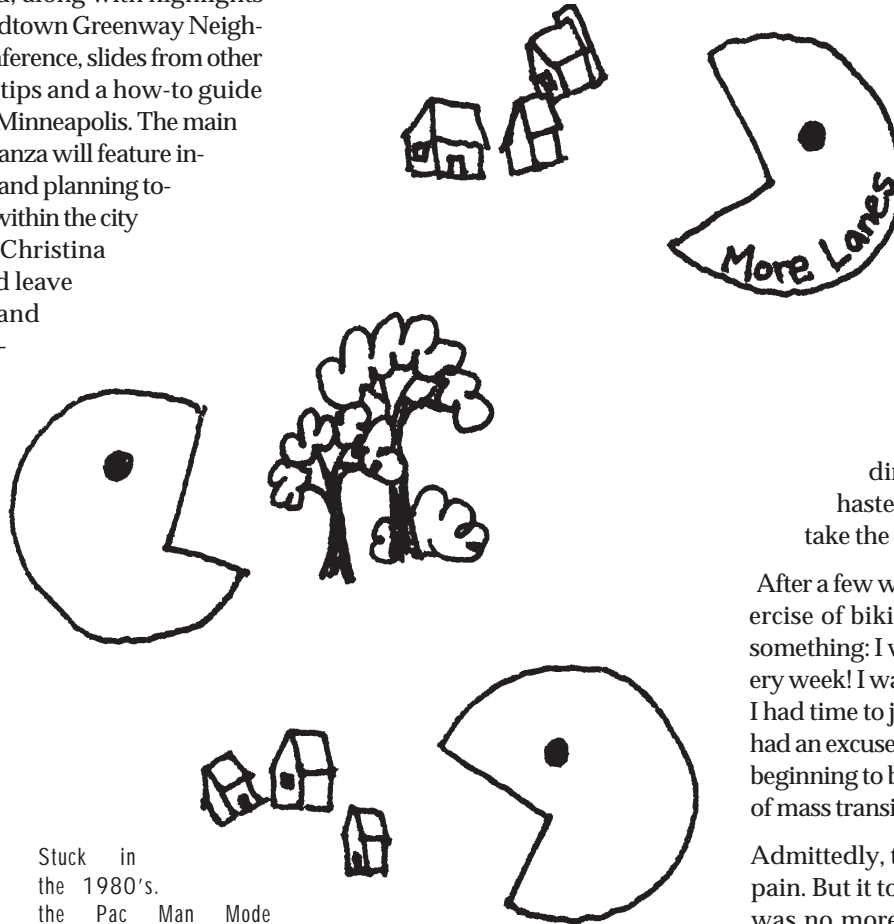
Todd lives in Uptown and commutes daily to work in Brooklyn Center.



1994 MINNEAPOLIS BIKE ROUTE PLANNING EXTRAVAGANZA

Christina Hakala

The Second Annual Minneapolis Bike Route Planning Extravaganza will occur at the Nicollet Island Pavilion Tuesday, July 26, 1994, 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m. Registration starts 6:30 p.m., at which time bicyclists can meet others and talk with people from organizations that are paving the way toward a more bicycled-friendly Minneapolis. There will be several information displays, so plan to arrive by 6:30. The emerging downtown bicycle lane system will be showcased, along with highlights from the 29th Street Midtown Greenway Neighborhood Visioning Conference, slides from other cities, plus a few brief tips and a how-to guide for bicycle planning in Minneapolis. The main portion of the Extravaganza will feature interactive presentations and planning towards bicycle systems within the city of Minneapolis. Call Christina Hakala at 333-3249 and leave your name, address and phone number to receive further updates prior to the event and to stay informed afterwards. The Second Annual Bicycle Planning Extravaganza is a collaborative effort led by citizen bicyclists with assistance from NRP, Public Works and the Park and Recreation Board. Don't miss it!



Stuck in
the 1980's.
the Pac Man Mode

What They Want Us To Believe

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right efficient people-moving direction, must travel the same speed as the traffic surrounding it. If traffic stops, the Express Bus must stop. Even in High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, a bus must slow down during inclement weather—hardly incentive for folk to leave their beloved cars.

We have faith that more commuters than predicted will make the intellectual leap, while stewing in stop-and-go traffic, "Hey, I could be on the LRT, and **out** of this jam!"

TOWARD A MORE LITERATE, RELAXED SOCIETY

Deb Dornfeld

"Doggone it! Aarrggh! Dang" I was steamed. My car was dead and, as an underpaid, over worked graduate student, I couldn't afford to pay for repairs, let alone a new car.

So, that summer I rode my bike to work in good weather. It was a wonderful way to begin and end days. I biked myself awake in the morning, and biked off my work frustrations in the evenings.

In stormy weather, however, I felt forced to take the Dreaded Bus. A novice to mass transit, I had been warned by world-weary friends, "You'll hate it.

They're noisy, you have to transfer, they take a long time to get anywhere. Poor You!" With those preconceived ideas, I rode the bus as little as possible.

But, as always must happen in Minnesota, summer was followed by fall, which was followed directly, and with great haste, by winter. I began to take the bus consistently.

After a few weeks of missing the exercise of biking, I began to realize something: I was reading a book every week! I was also warm and cozy. I had time to just sit and think, and I had an excuse to relax. In short, I was beginning to be converted to the joys of mass transit.

Admittedly, transferring was still a pain. But it took no more time, and was no more uncomfortable than starting and warming my car had been on wintry mornings.

I graduated two years later, found a full time job at the U of M, and bought an operational car. As I looked for a new apartment, I looked for one near a bus line.

I found a wonderful duplex near Minnehaha Creek, and 2 blocks from an Express-to-the-U bus stop. This bus dropped me off, 45 minutes after I'd left my kitchen, three buildings away from my office. Talk about convenience (and car drivers always do)!

On those days when I needed to run errands after work, or go places after dark where I felt less than safe, I drove. That is a car's purpose, in my opinion—occasional, well-planned use.

And oddly enough, when I did drive, I missed my quiet daydreaming and reading time. I found myself looking forward to my next bus ride, when I would truly be able to relax again.

MNDOT DECLARES NO FORMAL PUBLIC HEARINGS ARE REQUIRED ON THE FINAL EIS ON 35W EXPANSION!

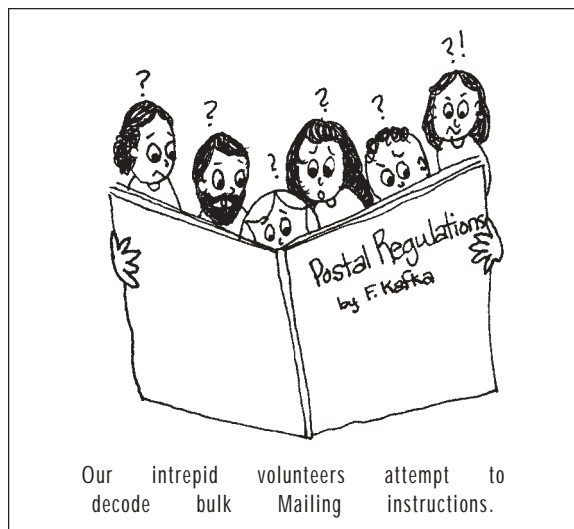
Michael O'Neal

In a letter addressed to Minnesota House of Representative Karen Clark from Chales A. Siggerud of Minnesota Department of Transportation, MnDOT indicated that "There are **no** Federal or State requirements for additional public hearings at that time, and **none are contemplated.**" (emphasis added) In other words, they don't have to consider the public opinion and therefore they won't!

This means that regardless of the condition of the Final EIS, and regardless the disproportional impact it will have on all of us near the highway, there will be no further public review to change the impact. It means that MnDOT can build the highway of their dreams, with "space" for light-rail, without considering the disruptive impact it will have on the neighborhoods near the highway. The design plans to-date show an even larger dislocation in the Phillips Neighborhood and acquisition of about the same acreage in Windom. It does leave several apartments intact, but abutting the highway. In these two neighborhoods, the question remains who would want to live there when MnDOT gets through with their de-construction of the area.

MnDOT has offered to conduct "informational meetings" on their design, but if you have attended one of their *infomercials* in the past, you will remember that these meetings are conducted in such a manner where MnDOT tells you what they are going to do and there is little you can do about it—as if this were new information!

It is obvious that MnDOT still doesn't get it! Transit and highways are not the same and people will not accept their version of Rondo-II as an appropriate transit alternative for the year 2010 and beyond. We need your help, your participation and your ongoing support to prevent MnDOT's highway expansion plans.



Central Corridor On Track for Light Rail Transit between Minneapolis and St. Paul

Michael O'Neal

Funding for the implementation of Light Rail Transit (LRT) continues to move toward the day when LRT finally becomes a reality in the Twin Cities. This year state legislation authorizing \$10 million in bonding to match federal funding was approved for the final design of the Central Corridor LRT project.

In testimony presented by Commissioner Peter McLaughlin of Hennepin County and Commissioner John Finley of Ramsey County before the U.S. House of Representatives, it was pointed out that LRT in the central corridor would connect the two major cities in the area as well as provide transit to the University of Minnesota.

Their testimony also indicated, "We cannot continue to add roadway capacity for additional single-occupant vehicle trips. We cannot continue spiraling down the 'Black-hole Theory of Highway Investment.' Increased traffic results in additional pollution, adding to mitigation and cleanup costs. Increased travel time results in lowered productivity in the delivery of goods and service. Land use issues are magnified, as the demand for public systems, including transportation, spreads to areas farther out, draining resources from more densely developed areas where they are more cost-effective to provide. We must reverse the downward spiral. The economic, social and environmental health of the Twin Cities depend on it."

We can only hope that MnDOT was also present so they could hear the message. Highways will not solve traffic congestion, nor will highways improve transit. It's time for LRT, not only in the central corridor, but also as the only solution to 35W. LRT should be the preferred, and only alternative considered for improving transit and safety.

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**INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?
NTN NEEDS YOU!
CALL MICHAEL O'NEAL
AT 872-4079**

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

If you wish to comment on this or previous newsletters, or want to submit articles for future publication, contact us at the office. If you would like to join our newsletter committee, come to our next meeting: Wednesday, August 10 (call the office first).

This newsletter is partially funded under a contract with the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority.

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ISN'T IT TIME WE TALKED ABOUT EQUITY?

Hank Dittmar, Executive Director, STPP

Some 30 years ago, Rosa Parks sparked the greatest social change of my lifetime by refusing to sit at the back of an Alabama bus. Today Rosa Parks might find bus service nonexistent in her community. Or she might find that people of color were the **only** passengers on the bus.

In the decades since Ms. Parks took her rightful seat, we have achieved nominal integration of our society, yet our economic policies have divided us in profound ways. People with money have fled the cities to settle in mostly white suburban enclaves. From a society with transportation options for everyone, we have become a society in which the ability to afford a car determines most of our opportunities. Futurist and author Peter Schwartz recently cited the Federal Home Administration home mortgage program and the Federal Highway Administration Interstate Act as the two singlemost defining forces for social changes after World War II. This issue of STPP Progress focuses on the role of transportation in creating equitable communities. Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Scott Bernstein, Executive Director of the Center for Neighborhood Technology, have contributed excellent articles on this subject. The federal role in ensuring equity in investment and access derives as much from the equal protection clauses of the Constitution as from the federal role in Interstate commerce. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is specifically referenced in the Federal Transit Act and in the new state and metropolitan planning regulations. These regulations also call for attention to the economic needs of central cities and to housing issues. President Clinton's new Executive Order on Environmental Justice asks all federal agencies to look more closely at the impact of their activities on disadvantaged communities. Finally, ISTEA's statement of policy suggests that states and localities be funded to "help implement

national goals relating to mobility for elderly persons, persons with disabilities and economically disadvantaged persons."

For decades, transportation officials saw their role as being to provide capacity to meet projected demand, leading to national design standards which rendered community needs secondary to vehicle needs. Now they see things in terms of a dichotomy between mobility and environment, and fear that one must be sacrificed to have the other. Can these same officials evolve to a new paradigm which seeks to meet multiple objectives, including mobility and the environment, while respecting community integrity and addressing profound social inequities?

Both officials and activists should seek transportation solutions that revitalize communities and put people first. At the same time, we must all be certain that everyone in society share in the benefits of our progressive solutions.

Reprinted from Progress, Volume IV, Number 5, June-July 1994, a newsletter from STPP (Surface Transportation Policy Project).

Distribution of Net Benefits of Transportation

Michael Cameron, Efficiency and Fairness on the Road, Environmental Defense Fund.

"In 1991, the 20 percent of the population with the highest incomes accounted for 32 percent of all miles traveled in cars and buses. Those in the middle income group accounted for 19 percent. The lowest income group accounted for only nine percent of travel."

Southern California, 1991, Income Quintile.

WINE AND CHEESE PARTY

You and your friends are invited to help NTN pay its legal fees by sharing a glass of wine, a bite of cheese, or a mouthful of some forbidden dessert at the home of George and Gerry Sell on Sunday, August 7, between 7:00 and 10:00 p.m. Suggested donation: \$10.00 per person. However, we are not fussy (read: Beggars can't be choosers!). So, we'll take whatever you can give. If you happen to win the lottery the night before, we can help you answer the question, "Gee, what'll I do with my winnings?" For Sell's address, or if you know someone who should receive an invitation, or if you would like to bring a dessert, please call Gerry, 823-3248.



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