



The use of automobiles for personal transportation has historically caused a feedback cycle in which automobiles become the standard mode of transportation. This causes a dependency at the cost of alternatives that may offer greater efficiencies. As more autos are driven through urban areas, more space and resources must be devoted to facilitating traffic and parking demands. These investments in automobile infrastructure tend to reduce investments in public transit and walking/biking lanes, which reduce their viability as primary transportation modes.

Automobile alternatives are often stigmatized, leading to the cultural perception that other modes of transportation are associated with certain classes of people. This further erodes the acceptance and therefore use of automobile alternatives. This contributes to and is exacerbated by trends towards suburbanization and urban sprawl. This renders automobiles as the primary transportation option for most development patterns that are congruent with this planning model. Which can lead to inner cities declining as their finances are distributed outward from the city center.

Overcoming this cycle can be difficult, as the more automobiles and the infrastructure that supports them become entrenched, the harder it is to institute reforms. It can take decades to alter transportation networks, and resistance to this change is driven by the cycle of automobile dependency.

SOURCE: Todd Litman (2013). Smarter Congestion Relief in Asian Cities: Win-Win Solutions to Urban Transport Problems. Published in the Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific.



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