

"Megacity on a Human Scale", Moscow Urban Forum, December 4–5 2012, Session on Public Transport. - Pierre Laconte's Interview

1) *What is the role of transportation in urban planning?*

Transportation has been the core factor of urban development. Trains and trams have changed the face of NY, London, Paris, etc.

2) *Moscow as an agglomeration is facing huge transportation problems in the last years – public transport is congested and there are traffic jams at any time of a day. Now the authorities start to change policy (implementing fare for parking on a street etc) but this is very slowly made. How did other countries solve the problem? Should these changes happen in steps or it should be done dramatically?*

Cars are using around 20 times more road space than pedestrians using public transport. But in addition the cars need parking space when they do not ride. The total area of space consumed by the car multiplied by time is close to 100 times of the one consumed by a pedestrian. The UK SACTRA Report (1995) has shown that more roads generate more congestion, not less, because they generate more traffic

Why then do elected officials invest in roads rather than in public transport? Because they tend to overestimate the automobile vote, as shown by a SocialData survey for the International Association of Public transport comparing the preferences of citizens and of elected officials.

Zurich has devised a politically clever way to reduce congestion by cars entering the electoral boundaries of the city. They can only park for free during 90 minutes. After that they have to find a place in a paying car park. The Zurich elector-citizen receives a sticker allowing privileged parking. This decision brought a huge election victory for the mayor of the city, who is elected by the citizens, not by the commuters.

Citizens enjoy using a car as long its use of space is free of charge, i.e. its external costs are not paid by them.

3) *Moscow has radial structure – all the roads lead to the center. It is a huge problem because you can not avoid the center. Is it possible to improve the situation?*

Beijing has tried the US way : multiply concentric ring roads. This has cost a lot, has increased traffic and thus congestion, and has made Beijing a « smog » city. By contrast Shanghai – on the model of Singapore - has introduced a monthly auction of licence plates : so many plates each month. This has allowed people who most need a car to get a license plate right away, the others having to wait.

Moscow has tried the Beijing way of making ring roads but now hesitates to continue that way.

Its present orbital metro line is a unique asset to link parts of the city situated outside the centre. The emergence of clusters and of large urban projects in the city should lead to a rethinking of the urban public transport system and a better understanding of the need for new ring links.

The Moscow Metro Development Plan includes the creation of chord connections. It seems a good orientation and can be implemented quickly, with the latest tunnelling techniques, like in Madrid. Needless to say, new lines should be driverless like in Singapore. Even existing lines could be retrofitted towards driverless operation, like Paris line 1, increasing its safety and its capacity by reducing the interval between trains.

4) *How to break car-dominative attitude in a society where everyone wants to own a car?*

Yes everyone likes to own or at least use a car, to save time and enjoy its comfort. Citizens enjoy using a car as long its use of space is free of charge, i.e. its external costs are not paid by them.

These advantages may be eroding because the time lost in congestion and because the price of fuel necessarily goes up as drilling costs increase. That is why the demand for PT is rapidly growing in most very large cities. This should encourage elected officials to vote for an investment priority in favor of rail public transport

