

**China Planning Network (CPN) CPN Urban Transport Congress**

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**Session 2 Summary: Transport Policy and Planning**

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This session provided a rich set of perspectives on urban transportation planning and policy challenges, now and in the future, and importantly, all relevant to rapidly urbanizing China. Michael Woo discussed the historical disconnect between land use and transportation in the U.S., highlighting the viscous cycle of road-based solutions: rising traffic congestion prompts governments to expand road capacity which creates more automobile-oriented built forms which over time induces more car travel and more congestion. California's bold legislative efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have focused mainly on green technologies versus urban land-use management. Woo suggested that climate change will gain policy attention in China's urban planning circles since rising sea levels, unpredictable weather patterns, and heat island effects threaten the welfare of highly urbanized coastal cities of China as they do other parts of the world. Because of its phenomenally rapid pace of growth, China is in a position to take a leadership role in advancing sustainable urbanization that help reduce GHG emissions.

Robin Visser provided a historical perspective on metropolitan master planning in Beijing, focusing on the rhetoric of planning and use of metaphors in the process of developing a regional plan and building consensus among stakeholders. Four largely spatial and physically oriented master plans have been advanced for the Beijing region in recent times with these focuses: the sustainable city ideal; rail transit for a compact city (including a "jade necklace" built form); affordable housing; and the underground city (involving, for instance, the construction of below-surface parking). Visser's talk reminded us of the important yet often ignored cultural and political contexts of plan-making in metropolitan China.

Ralph Gakenheimer focused on the broad policy implications of rapid motorization in Chinese cities, noting the speed of change often overwhelms the ability of local governments to plan for this growth. His research showed a general trend toward higher car ownership levels among those residing on the fringes of metropolitan Beijing, matched by increase car-based travel. Among the strategies that hold promising for responding to and managing these trends are: improved traffic management, road pricing, land-use planning, and new institutional forums for planning and infrastructure financing.

Ming Zhang showed U.S. experiences with measuring and monitoring traffic congestion. The most widely used index measures the ratio of peak-period to free-flow travel times. The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) has studied the sources of rising congestion levels in the U.S., attributing it mainly to operational factors like non-recurring incidences and bottlenecks. It is up to planners to remind us that these are often symptoms, and an exclusive focus on traffic engineering and operational "solutions" ignores the systemic, longer-term sources of congestion, such as the disconnect between land-use patterns and transportation investments. Zhang showed the congestion index can be used for testing

future growth scenarios within a metropolitan area, using Austin, Texas as a case context.

All speakers addressed the urban planning implications of their research for China. Robin Visser reminded us that China is culturally and politically unique yet Ralph Gakenheimer's statistics show certain universal truths hold: rising incomes increase car ownership that are too often matched by less walking. Michael Woo reflected on the roles of regulation and proactive physical planning in bringing about more sustainable futures, using California's experiences with legislating GHG emissions reductions as a policy context. Ming Zhang similarly provided a U.S. context whose experiences are transferable to China: traffic congestion are ideally monitored and modeled at both the inter-metropolitan and intra-metropolitan levels.