TRANS PORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

Tulsa faces a tsunami of change: of technology, environment and climate, economy and demographics. Transportation policy and practice is crucial to our collective well-being, economy and environment. Increasingly it is a mark of the City's **sense of fairness**. Tulsa and the State perform poorly on many measures, in particular those to do with poverty, life expectancy, health, access to nutritious food, mass transit and economic development.

The transportation system is vital to all those factors - and more. It is how we principally experience our city: how safe we feel, whether we enjoy being out and about, how livable and connected our neighborhoods are, and how affordable transportation is relative to our family's income. **It's not surprising that transportation is the biggest single cost in the city's budget - as it is in the average Tulsan's household budget.**

This Annual Report highlights how the City should focus its transportation strategy in a world that has changed significantly even since Tulsa's current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2010. We must respond more coherently, more quickly, with more purpose - and we must measure our progress - in order to become a **resilient, sustainable and prosperous city**.

City of Tulsa Transportation Advisory Board
Annual Recommendations December 2015
Chair: Jamie Jamieson

Fig. 1


What Global Factors are Affecting Transportation?
Ethical
Social/ demographic
Technology
Economy
Environment
Political
Legal
Continuing rise of women in a changing workplace
rising 'middle-class' poverty
urbanization
Growing pressure on allocation of infrastructure & emergency resources
growing income disparity between rich and poor
increasing segregation of rich from poor
Millennials/Gen. Z: new priorities, ways of working
seniors working longer
urban strategies increasingly focused on resilience and sustainability
Growing importance of Latino population
health crisis
Economic and climate-led migration growing
driverless cars
'Race' relations degenerating over policing, poverty
accelerating pace of change
China: economy, military, technology, environment
Uber, Lyft, Zipcar, etc.
mainstream politics stretching - left and right
disruptive technologies re-shaping every industry
more, extreme weather events
climate change
automation (robots) replacing workers
'internet of things'
transitioning to 'clean energy'
drought
digital future
crumbling infrastructure
Globalization continues - shifting to east and south
growing water scarcity - requiring much more efficient cities
de-industrialization of America
US education system falling behind
Carbon emissions reduction

Which of those factors affect transportation in our daily lives?

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Fig. 2	external factors	Travel Safety?	access to work & shops?	access to education?	leisure pursuits?	health?	cultural integration	transportation affordability
Social/ demographic	growing no. of women in the workplace	✳	✳		✳		✳	✳
	income polarization, working seniors, un-employed millennials					✳		✳
	very high transportation costs relative to income		✳	✳	✳		✳	✳
	growing proportion of Latinos in US		✳	✳	✳		✳	✳
	Accelerating migration: economic, climate and war						✳	✳
	urbanization	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳
Technology	accelerating pace of change		✳		✳			✳
	automation (robots) replacing workers		✳					
	disruptive 'digital' technologies re-shaping every industry	✳	✳		✳	✳		✳
	driverless cars, Uber, Lyft, Zipcar…	✳	✳	✳	✳			✳
	growth of clean energy					✳	✳	✳
	internet of things'	✳	✳	✳	✳			✳
Economic	millennials/Gen Z: different priorities, ways of working		✳	✳				✳
	growth of technology-led 'mega-regions'		✳					✳
	out-of-date, crumbling, urban infrastructure	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	✳

Which of those factors affect transportation in our daily lives?

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Fig. 2.1	external factors	Safety in travel	access to work & shops	access to education	leisure pursuits?	health	cultural integration	transportation affordability
Environment	climate change	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳
	depleted aquifers, lower rainfall (requires much more efficient cities)	✳	✳					✳
	more extreme weather events, drought	✳	✳	✳	✳			✳
	crumbling ecological infrastructure	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳
	clean air act conformance					✳		✳
	fiscally and environmentally un-sustainable sprawl	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳
Political	federal investment policies geared to fiscal sustainability and '6 livability principles'	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳
	carbon emissions reduction	✳	✳			✳		✳
	institutional reluctance to change	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳
	resistance to perceived tax increases	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳
Legal & Ethical	immigration, race and migration	✳		✳	✳	✳	✳	✳
	equity in allocation of infrastructure & resources	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳
	health crisis (obesity, diabetes, heart disease)		✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳

What overall conclusions can we draw from these external factors?

That they all have a direct bearing on transportation policies and practices.

That cities must embrace many new imperatives simultaneously and swiftly - or get left behind.

That disruptive, new technologies and a changing economy mean cities must think and plan ever more carefully.

That the pressure to compete effectively with those cities and regions that *are* rapidly embracing change is increasing: there is a growing divide between leaders and laggards.

(See Figs. 1, 2, 2.1)

What's the good news?

Some of those global factors have ***common solutions***, such as:

- ***A return to traditional, urban population densities****, which…*
  - *reduces the costs of utilities and emergency management, and*
  - *make neighborhoods safer and more livable.*
- ***Mass transit****, which…*
  - *Reduces waste of urban land - in traffic lanes and parking, for example;*
  - *Reduces carbon emissions, social inequity, transportation costs;*
  - *Addresses structural changes in consumer preferences;*
  - *Stimulates economic growth.*

What is Tulsa already doing to address these factors?

Tulsa has a sound **Comprehensive Plan**, which includes a well-considered Transportation section. It prioritizes:

- *Increasing population density*
- *Investing in the pedestrian, in mass transit, and in cycling*
- *Designing streets better (through Context-Sensitive Solutions)*
- *Better use of infrastructure*
- *Reducing costs of travel*
- *Better air quality*
- *Delivering a better return for the tax-payer*

The City has taken some steps to re-balancing our transportation system:

- *In 2012 it adopted a* **Complete Streets** *policy, which is gradually being implemented.*
- *Tulsa is planning to expand into Bus Rapid Transit.*
- *It has developed a plan to meet* **ADA** *requirements.*
- *The City's present 'Vision 2025' funding package includes a 'Sustainable Return On Investment' (SROI) project, which, when implemented, is designed to ensure a positive and sustainable return on taxpayers' investment in all transportation projects. It should also help to de-politicize project selection.*
- *In 2014 Tulsa was awarded funding from the Rockefeller Foundation as one of* **100 Resilient Cities***' with the purpose of making Tulsa a truly resilient city in social, economic and physical infrastructure terms. The federal program includes the concept of a 'Chief Resilience Officer.' Such a strategic focus would help to improve the chances of Tulsa surviving and thriving in the decades ahead. At the time of writing the recruitment process for appointing a Chief Resilience Officer is underway.*

INCOG, the region's metropolitan planning organization launched a bicycle and pedestrian master plan process in 2015, which will integrate plans for new sidewalks and bicycle trails into Tulsa's streets and ten suburban municipalities.

How effectively are we addressing those factors, compared to our competing cities?

Tulsa's response in the above initiatives has been ***slower*** than benchmark competitors.

Tulsa has been slow to embrace the urgent necessity for land use reform, finally adopting an updated Zoning Code Nov. 5, 2015, ***five years*** after the Comprehensive Plan described it as the most important priority. (The new code provides for mixed uses, greater density and less off-street parking.)

Further, Tulsa has ***repealed*** its progressive *form-based code*, placing the city at odds with over five hundred, progressive municipalities across the USA. The form-based code provides for much more walkable, safer and attractive neighborhoods requiring less dependence on the automobile.

Tulsa has persisted in spending public monies on ***dis-credited, auto-oriented projects***, in contrast to competitors that are transferring their investment focus to 'complete streets', public transit, cycling and walking.

The source of operational funding for Tulsa's Bus Rapid Transit system is not yet confirmed, and the launch has been pushed back to 2020.

Tulsa's ADA compliance plan is under-funded and un-acceptably long-term. According to the Plan, arterial streets will be brought up to compliance in 30 years' time - but there is no plan for non-arterial and neighborhood streets - where people actually live. The Americans with Disabilities Act became law in 1990, and Tulsa will continue to fall short of compliance for a long time - despite the return of a growing number of wounded veterans and an aging population.

Together these put the city behind its peers, including its neighbor and competitor, **Oklahoma City**, whose economy and reputation continues to grow.

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Recommendations: What principles and criteria should underpin Tulsa's transportation investments?

- **Social equity** must play a bigger role. This principle of "fairness" amounts to the equitable distribution of impacts, benefits, disadvantages and costs. This is an important planning goal and a requirement for sustainable development which balances economic, social and environmental **objectives**.[1]

Since the 1950s Tulsa's public infrastructure has flowed south, and neglected the core of the city and the poorer neighborhoods to the north, west and east. The results are very evident.

- **Safety:** All Tulsans, of whatever physical capacity, should be able to safely use the city's transportation system.
- **Sustainable Return On Investment:** Tulsa should **prioritize investments** that deliver the best, measurable solutions to as many of the compelling external and local factors. Outcomes must be measured and evaluated in terms of *benefits to the user.*

Recommendations: What should be Tulsa's strategic priorities in 2016?

A Resilient City

- The City should aim to become a much more **resilient** city as rapidly as possible, led by a Chief Resilience Officer working across all City functions.
- The role's scope should prioritize the transportation system; and accordingly should promote implementation of related, progressive strategies, including the following…

Recommendations (Continued):

Mass Transit

- Select and implement a ***dedicated source of funding*** for mass transit (like all Tulsa's competitors), now that it has received the recommendations of the Mayor's Transit task force.
- Integrate mid-range plans for transit with plans for transit-oriented housing and commercial developments.

Complete Streets and Context-sensitive design…

- Accelerate the implementation of Complete Streets in transportation design; it is vital to making Tulsa a safe, resilient city.
- Integrate 'Safe Routes to School' design approaches in Complete Streets.

Safety: Vision Zero

- Incorporate **Vision Zero** principles and practices into the Complete Streets methodology, as recommended in the TAB's December 2013 Report, and again in March and September 2014. Vision Zero has been successfully adopted by a growing number of cities.
  - *Tulsa is one of a group of twenty-two cities with the country's highest levels of pedestrian deaths.*
  - *Oklahoma is 6th highest nationwide in pedestrian deaths. Vision Zero complements Tulsa's 'Complete Streets' policy.*
  - *It will save lives and make Tulsa more livable.*
  - *'Vision Zero' echoes the priority that Mayor Bartlett has given to public safety.*
  - *Vision Zero requires little or no additional funding.*

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[1] Todd Litman and David Burwell (2006), "Issues in Sustainable Transportation,"International Journal of Global Environmental Issues, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 331-347; at www.vtpi.org/sus_iss.pdf.

Fig. 3

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Recommendations
December 2015
Summary