

**21st Century Transportation Committee
Intermodal Committee
by Sig Hutchinson**

Gerry Cohen, Called and Sam Hunt - Video Interview on N&O Comprehensive Plan asked me to speak, honored.

In talking with Gerry, Not – technical.

Share my thoughts about why Transit is so important to the future of North Carolina. In fact, its not only important, it's imperative. The Vision Thing. I'm pumped Call my wife, Nancy they want me to talk about my vision for a 21st Century Transportation System Sig, that's your **forte**

Honey that's the only "te" it got.

The stars have aligned and the Citizens are ready, and are asking for a life style that requires a radical shift in how we look at transportation. Our current system has outlived its usefulness. We are at capacity, and I think the reason we are ALL here today is that collectively we are saying, "**There has got to be a better way.**"

The time has come for the State of North Carolina to give its citizens their lives back. To give the people of this state their communities back, were neighbors know and care for their neighbors, and kids played together outside without adult supervision and without having to drive anywhere. We know our neighbors by name rather than competing for every square foot of asphalt through the windshields of our cars.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

My interest started over a decade ago with an interest in bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure and the development of our expansive greenways system that will soon span more than 180 miles throughout the Triangle. More recently, we are all coming to the same concluding that the solution to our transportation problems lies in a comprehensive multi-modal transportation network of which the center piece is a vibrant, safe, reliable and expanding transit system where people can finally choose the mode they want to use to move around their communities.

So in my brief 5 to 7 minutes of comments, I want to discuss 1) How such a network can give us back our lives and our communities, 2) Why our citizens are screams for these changes, 3) Why we are quickly approaching the ultimate carrying capacity and life expectancy of our existing transportation system and finally, 4) Why your work is so important in articulating a vision of what the next generation of transportation looks like for the state of North Carolina.

Why am I so passionate about this and so convinced I'm right.

It's very Simple.

Think about it. **What is the worse part of your day?** When that question is posed to citizens across the country, **one answer** consistency rises to the surface.

The worse part of our day is... Sitting in traffic trying to get to work or home. And the one thing we all know is... **It's going to get worse from here.** A lot worse. What took us 30 minutes, now takes us 50 minutes and will soon take us 70 minutes. And what use to cost 30.00 bucks to fill up, now cost 60.00 and will soon cost \$80.00.

And while we are standing at the pump, getting hosed, how many of us out there are thinking about half that money is going to support some, worthless, low life foreign dictator, whose creating havoc, and we all know that some of that cash is being funneled into a very sinister crowd who would like nothing more than to kill us.

What would our world and geopolitical landscape look like today if oil was \$10.00 a barrel? Think life would be a bit different? Think we would be in IRAQ right now or Iran would have the money to fund a Nuclear program. Think the Mideast would be a serious problem?

And while green is the new red, white and blue and sustainability is the new mantra for the 21st Century, we all realize that, what we are driving is creating unhealthy air to breath and a unhealthy planet to live on, and the only planet we have I might add. And as we continue this torrid pace, our sprawling communities are chewing up our natural resources or open space in Wake County alone at the rate of 1.5 acres per hour or 13,000 acres per year. The equalivant of 1.5 Umstead State Parks a year.

We're spending more time driving, using up more land, fouling our air, spending more money, getting fatter and unhealthier by the day; giving us less time, less money, more stress which is diminishing, reducing or some would say, slowly eroding our quality of life.

If there was every an analogy that fits, it's the very old story of how to someone can boiling a frog by slowly turning up the heat. Well, ladies and gentlemen, the water is boiling. And the reality is that people are mad as hell and they don't want to take it anymore.

I was at a Chamber event yesterday of which the leading economics for Wachovia Bank was saying. "Traffic is going to get worse, **So get over it**, Gas Prices are going up, **So get over it**. Oil is going over \$100 a barrel, **So get over it**. Well, No, **I don't want to get over it**. I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore. I want to do something about it. And so do the Citizens of North Carolina.

It's time for a change. We all realize that there has to be a better way. That's why we're here today.

The key is that we can not longer accept **incremental change**. Just building more roads and wider roads is not going to solve the **route cause** of the problems we are having. We have outgrown our capacity for our land and our land use patterns to handle more roads. When there is a better way.

So what does Plan B look like?

What if I told you there was a way to give you an extra hour minutes a day to do anything you want to with. **You could exercise more, Finally read the paper**, spend more time with the family, walk along a greenways to reduce stress, or just spend more time doing nothing. What if I told you that in addition to the hour a day, I could put an extra \$1,000.00 dollars a month in your pocket to spend on your extra hour a day, which could come from owning one less car per family? All of this is possible simply by building infrastructure that allows people to choose the mode of transportation be it, walking, biking, taking the bus, or the street car, or the light rail or the commuter rail.

But who would want to do this? Pop Quiz –

How many of you have ridden your bike or walked along a greenway? How many of you have been stuck in traffic. Which did you like better? **How many of us are stuck in traffic trying to get to the gym to ride a stationary bike?**

It's 7:15 in the morning and we've just got to slept an extra 20 minutes from our normal day. Our cell phone rings saying, if you leave right now, the train will be at the station when we arrive. After a two mile bike ride on a greenway, we park your bike; get on the light rail or street car and read the paper on the 20 minute ride to work. Along the last two blocks to work, we pick up our Latte from the Starbucks were know the staff and arrive at work relaxed, exercised, have read the paper, caffined up and ready for our day.

All of this comes from land use decisions of building transit oriented developments around transit stops and in connecting Neo-traditional or Walkable communities to transit stations. **So in many ways, this is not a transportation problem, This is a land use problem.**

And who would want to live in high density transit oriented development or walkable communities tied to transit stations? With the demographic shifts going on in America today, clearly 1/3 of Citizens would easily choose transit oriented developments creating a huge economic boom, as we look to develop these communities and infrastructure along transit corridors. In Charlotte, \$300M of new development has been built along their new light rail line with more than 1.6B on the drawing boards. That's close to \$2B. All for a \$800M dollar investment. And we're only just getting started. All creating jobs, housing, retail and office buildings in a very environmentally friendly way.

Think about the baby boomers. The first of the boomer turned 60 this year. No longer needing the "432," 4 bedroom; 3 Bath; on a 2 acre lot, they are looking to down size. Many of us already know, it cost a lot of money to run an asset like that; and time. These folks are looking to down size, but with more choices, more sense of communities where they can finally know their neighbors, more greenways and sidewalks and three transit stops away from 50 restaurants. All within walking distance.

Walkable Communities or Neo-Traditional Communities have never been more popular where today's most desirable amenity are not golf course or swimming pool but greenways and sidewalks. Connect these communities to a vibrant transit system and the need for two cars goes away and the need for even one car gets diminished significantly.

Let's talk about the echo-boomers. The 24 to 38 year old young professionals. In the next 20 years. Less than 1/3 of households will have children. As these young people are getting married later, postponing families, they are widely attracted to an urban life style where they can hang out with friends, walk or take transit to work, get out of their cars, and choices abound everywhere. Take a look at downtown Raleigh or Durham most any night and you can see the vibrancy of the **"Creative Class" coming alive.** And once again, the best thing we can do for **economic development** is to create an environment where the **Creative Class**, that Richard Florida talks about in his book "The Rise of the Creative Class," want to **come and live and work and Play.** The **Creative Class** doesn't want another golf course. They want what **I am talking about.** If we build it, I promise, they will come. In fact, **they are already here.** We just have to keep them here. The most exciting part is that the keys to creating such a vision is within our grasp and particularly your grasp where such opportunities could grow and expand.

However, to do this, we can't continue to think in a **linear fashion**, such as..."If we just build one more road, widen one more road, sprawl out one more community, things would be better. It's like trying to control your weight by letting out your belt. It just won't work any more. **We need a radical shift in the way we think about transportation and land use.**

As we sit here today, the question really is, "Where we are going to put all these new people coming to our state that will improve, not diminish our quality of life, that will preserve not destroy our natural resources. Where choices abound and once again we can hang out the Welcome sign saying we have plenty of room here in North Carolina so come for a weekend or a lifetime, start a business and a family and be a part of our world class community.

The transit system we are talking about today is not your father's transit system. No longer is transit just about giving poor people a ride to work even though the egalitarian nature of the system in moving all our citizens, is one of its greatest strengths. In today's environment, the choices in transit are limitless in its options and genres; be it cool looking Buses, Bus Rapid Transit, Curb Guided Bus Ways; Light Rail, Commuter Rail, DMU's; Street Cars; transit can be as unique as the community itself. From Classic to Retro, to Futuristic. Transit can have a personality as defined by the community and different for every place else on the planet.

In closing, I come before you today stating emphatically, this is the future that the Citizens of North Carolina are wanting; even if they don't totally know it yet. But because they are so tired of what they have, when we describe the advantage of such a lifestyle, who wouldn't want such a choice.

Now the decision is your. The problem is simple. We're not spending enough on this type of vision. A vision for a 21st Century Transportation System. Out of 4 Billion Dollars for transportation, only \$73 Million is going for transit. That's 1.8% We can't live like that anymore.

We have to change. The citizens are behind you because they're mad as hell and they aren't going to take it any more.

I'll leave you with a parable.

1908 and we're in the local saloon. We've used the family horse Bessie to get here and are hanging out with the boys talking the local business of the day including the fact there is too much horse crap around here and what are we going to do about it. When all of a sudden Sam Hunts Great Grand Dad busts in the door, and say, Boys you got to see this, I bought myself a Horseless Carriage. So we all head outside to look at this machine. Bright, and shiny and has big engine a stick to steering and Sam says, Boys, this is going to change your life, It gets 6 miles to the gallon and it don't need no hay. The boys think about it for a minute and say, "Sam, that sure is shiny, but ain't no body gonna buy that thing." Why not Sam ask, "Because there ain't no roads."

We'll Sam was right and we built the road. And we filled them up. And now their full and they won't take no more and we're all sitting here talking about all the horse crap I mean problems that these cars are creating.

Fast Forward 100 years and Mr. Hunt's Great Grandson strolls into the 21 Century Transportation Committee and announces, Ladies and Gentlemen, come on out here, I want to show you a multi-modal transportation system for the State of North Carolina. It's like a carless carriage and it give us everything we've been wanting, with more choices, more money, more time, better quality of life, better health and its all just outside the door waiting to be discovered. Of which the folks in the room responded,... "We'll, we'll just have to wait and see."

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Committee Members for your time.