Sustainable Transportation on Campus and in the Community
Keynote Address: "Aligning Vision, Values and Choices For Sustainable Communities"
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Okay, we'll see how I do with this podium. Don will tell you I 'm not very good with barriers. So, we'll see how this works out for me.

I want to talk a little about that whole piece of what it means to be an asset to the community, how you determine that. And how you hold that over time, so again, I'm going to get back to the pieces in the general context of the framework that Don set up for us. But particularly focusing on aligning vision, values, and choices for sustainable communities over time. I do have a little animation here. Creating a community dialogue for sustainable transportation, I think is the key to moving forward. I'm going to basically talk about three key issues with that.

*The first is engaging policy bodies around a common agenda. It's so easy to think everybody has the same thing in mind even when they say the word "sustainable." From 15 years of practice in this area, I can tell you that they do not. A lot of times when you talk to a corporation about sustainable business, what they mean is they want their business to be around in fifty years and they want it to be more profitable. That's not necessarily what their other stakeholders mean.

*We want to broaden the context for choice. I want people to understand more of what the future really holds about making decisions today. We were talking earlier, if you make a decision around a building you're going to put up and you decide how you're going to put that together and frame that, it's going to last fifty to one hundred years. You make choices about building a billion dollar bridge; you're talking about something that's going to be there much longer, usually, than one hundred years. So you have to have the best context you possibly can. One of the smartest things I think we did in the Idaho long-term planning process was engage a futurist to help us take people- to help people step back from the present, into the future, and say what is it that we're going to be building for.

*The third piece is to seek the integration of disparate needs. Don talked about the principles in sustainable transportation being at odds with each other, and that's not the only place these things- these values- are in conflict. There are many, many things people care about. How many? A lot of times I speak to engineers, senior engineers at several different colleges around the issues that they're going to face with the public when they walk out of there. There's nothing so alarming for a design engineer to do something perfectly good, a perfectly good transportation solution and find out that the community does not really give a damn about his perfectly good or her perfectly good transportation solution because it is in conflict with other community needs. So, what we want to do is seek integration of disparate needs and make sure sustainable transportation can actually create breakthroughs for that vision.

So here's what we're talking about with those disparate needs. There're all these things in communities, and I'll tell you, these are just a few of the puzzle pieces. Separately taken, these can look like their own picture. You have a need for a certain kind of recreation, in fact in every college town I'm ever at, there's this incredible- certainly in Boulder, whenever I'm in Boulder, I'm just amazed at the number of people

on rollerblades and bicycles… Their alternative mode spectrum is very wide. But it's true in every community that those needs are there. They can look like their own agenda if you just look at those, but they're inherently integrated with everything else. So you have to pull all those pieces together, you have to think in a much broader frame than you typically think and pull all these things together. What are the real issues with your growth and demographics? There's been this constant thought in the- actually up until just recently- about the growth curve in this country and in the world. And now the experts in this area and in the Census Bureau are starting to stand back a little bit and say, wait, this is going to flatten off and go down sooner than we think. And what is that going to mean for us in terms of economics, and mobility and what and what people really need to be doing and what all of us as individuals need to be preparing for, for our kids to have a future that's going to be as good or better than ours.

Again, Don talked about centers. I don't care whether they're town centers or community centers, or other kinds of places for people to gather, but people like to gather. And the more you make this available for them, the easier it is.

So if you get all these things together including the transportation and you actually have a sustainable vision that you can work (toward), part of the big work is to get all these puzzle pieces in one place.

You see how I have a big, green globe behind that? Because one of my strongest beliefs and what I often am called to bring back to the table is that we're not driving the behavior of the world. Our earth is what it is and we sit in the context of a contained environment. And if we ignore that environment, it will punish us. And it will survive. So we have to make all these decisions in that context as well.

Transportation is not independent of community vision. That's part of what was on that last slide too. Our current political process does not lend itself very well to political will. People are always talking about, "Well, gee, why won't the politicians and policy makers just do the right thing?" Well, gee, let's take a look at what we've done to those politicians. A lot of election cycles, term limits, the ability to actually interact with something that sustains over time. So it's my strong belief that communities in our society have a higher than we used to think of responsibility to be educated about the future and about the choices that we're making, and to hold that vision over time. To actually maintain that vision so the politicians understand how to make those decisions and can be successful even in the framework we've created for them. To achieve this, we really must include a hearty cross section of the community and demographic. It's very encouraging to see you've got a third of the participants (here who) are students. We're so- it is really very easy to think you have to have a certain number of years and wisdom in place to make these kinds of decisions and have this broad context, but I'm always impressed with what young people, and sometimes very young people, bring to the table, and frankly, also the elderly, who we think we're just fixing things for and trying to take care of them. So I encourage you to really broaden the context and cross section of your demographic. And finally, and definitely most in my mind is you have to capture- you have to use compelling language and elements of the vision to keep it alive. Things work when you engage people's brains and their hearts. They have to get excited about this vision for the future. It has to have something that's cross-generational, and can be translated to people over time.

So, to talk about this a little more, I really am doing a lot of work right now in frames and reframing. The frame is the way we hold what we think. Our belief system comes from basically how we frame the issues, and words matter because people pay little attention to facts. It's very interesting to me that you can lay out a whole set of facts for people, and say, "this is the right choice for you to make," and they pay little attention to that. People have a strong belief around their personal interests and they won't always act in their own interests. They will, however, align their choices and their behaviors with their sense of identity. And that sense of identity is led by their values. So focus on refining the frames, that put the values on what people want in their lives, back into play. Strong family, a nurturing environment, a place that's safe for our kids. One of the things that impressed me the most in the rural communities we worked in in Idaho was, as we created this one-day forum where they got to understand what the future was going to be like in a demographic perspective, and the potentials that were going to be really facing them, and without a whole lot of prodding from us, they really did their own work and they come up with solutions that included, gee, this little community right now is no longer safe for our kids to ride their bikes to school. We'd like to have that back. We understand that that's important. That's part of our value set that somehow disappeared in the short-term day-to-day choices we're making about getting goods to market. And so, we've given up something that's very important to us in terms of community in order to have a short-term solution. And this takes a lot of patience. Finding these right frames, finding solutions for people over time, staying in the dialogue, when maybe you think, "Oh, for God's sake, just build something." It takes a lot of patience and I can't state that enough because I really think you have to have that patience if you're going to have a long-term sustainable choice.

This is an example of facts versus frames for me that I think people always get a little uptight about because I think we feel very safe in our cars and I think we think that cars are good things for us. Auto accidents account for 43.000 deaths every year in this country. 117 every day, 5 deaths every hour, a death every 12 minutes. If this was any other thing, we would up in arms. Last year in the United States, 117 people died of West Nile Virus, mostly elderly, and now there's this huge push about protecting yourself against West Nile and all the things we need to do and are we going to start using real strong pesticides again in order to kill these mosquitoes carrying the West Nile Virus. Where's the response to an epidemic? There's no response to an epidemic because we love what auto traffic- what auto travel is like. We have a frame that says, "I'm safe in my car, I'm protected, it doesn't matter what's going on around me," so we are ignoring this number. And actually, many people that work in the field of traffic safety, highway safety in particular, have told me, "Well, that's a pretty acceptable number when you think about how many people are actually in their cars." I find it a grossly unacceptable number. And again, why is it not? Because we think about it these frames that we've chosen.

So, reshaping the language of the transportation is part of our charge. Transportation, as I said earlier is really a part of your community design, so if you're going to have it be that, you must reframe the conversation. They're not just about transportation, it's not just about getting from point "A" to point "B." It's about personal health. Talk to the people over at the Center for Disease Control, if you want to talk about obesity, and the way we've done our community design and the role that auto- cars

and drive-thru dining and all of those things that we've designed around being in our cars, has done to health in this country. If you think obesity's an issue just on it's own, the growth curve in obesity aligned with the age curve in this country, and the increased incidence of diabetes is going to have a tremendous impact on livability, life and the cost of medical care in this country.

It's about community vitality. It's about societal vitality. Being able to meet and greet and learn and have a diverse community and expand the horizons of people. And frankly, ultimately it's about fairness and access. People are out of touch with the effective individual choices, but our language and our decision to be- (to) have that dialogue, to be in that dialogue to reframe and choose frames together, can change that and bring that back.

Here's another example that I think can help us out with this- which is a scenario planning approach, or ways of looking at the future. There are very good tools available, there's something called MetroQuest out of Vancouver, B.C., Envision Sustainable Tools which is a regional tool. There's mini-community level tools, CommunityViz and others, which help you to sort of see the choices relative to what you're thinking about and what that will look like in your community. I think we need to do more with this, I think we need to make our robust- our databases more robust and shared so that the G.I.S., the shared systems can talk to each other, and we need to make sure the tools are capturing this opportunity. Tools don't draw conclusions, and we have to walk away from the expert tool system because it- again, this goes back to the engineer with the perfect design that nobody in the community wants, a strong enough section of the city doesn't want- if the tools themselves draw the conclusion, you're walking away again from the community values.

Expand beyond the typical players.

Make use of these tools. You have a great opportunity here; you've got a university.

Create expansiveness and balance by adding youth and seniors. Create exploratory partnerships that test these scenarios. One of the things I like the best is a conversation that's going on between the Museums of Science and Industry and people doing scenario planning relative to sustainable communities and transportation. Why not? That's a great match-up. Let's do some things together. Imax Theaters- I'd love to see a future Moscow picture in an Imax Theater, where people could go in and really experience that. And magnet learning schools are really getting very excited about helping with the future. How exciting is that? Those kids are the future, so put it in their hands, get them excited about it. Share your learning aggressively back with the community. As you're learning, as you're getting engaged; websites, it's very important. I'm a big advocate of theatre ads. We have to address the marketing machine in this country. If we want people to think differently, we have to step up and say "it's okay for us to market good ideas." You know, if you can market- what do they call it? Coca-Cola Zero, you can market good ideas. I think it's okay. And the future does belong to everyone, so they need to be informed about it.

We need to be honest about the role of policy and politicians. Again, I said I don't think we really created an opportunity for politicians to have political will and I get really discouraged when people say, "Well, the politicians in our community don't have political will." Well, why not? Who do they work for? There are vested interests,

there's a huge past investment. The infrastructure that currently exists to support cars, I can actually cause a lot of pain in a room full of engineers by suggesting that we need to reconstruct a road, even if it's the absolute right thing to do, because it's so hard to walk away from that investment. It's a marketing machine that's working against change. Auto manufacturers are doing work with a lot of these folks, I know I understand their situation. They're doing what they can within a framework that measures whether they get to survive as a company, not on a hundred-year or thirty-year or even a ten-year basis, but on a quarterly basis. So how far out and how quickly are they going to change without the public pulling them to do it?

So, we all resist change, even when it's good for us. I mean, if it's somebody else's idea. So that's, again, why we need to get back to the idea of people. The more people who participate and the more it's part of their change, the better it will be.

Here are other things that are hard for politicians. It's a complex environment. It is a hugely complex environment now, when you start talking about choices related to infrastructure, growth, sustainability, the environment- there's so many things to think about, and it's very easy to do nothing, rather than risk making a mistake. We have to help politicians and policy makers move beyond that. The reframe of political will, which is, it has to come from the people. And the role of policy makers now and into the future begins- needs to start now.

So, here's my suggestion that relates to land use planning and transportation and a lot of other decision making. This is something- don't ask me where I've seen this word, because I haven't. It's just my idea and I think it would be great. I think we need to start thinking about beyond- within and beyond governing councils, so they're within the context of the existing decision-making bodies. I'm not suggesting we create another government model. But, we pull from the existing decision-making bodies. But we charge this group with focusing on, deliberating on, the tough questions that relate to sustainable development, transportation, infrastructure, community growth, diversity, all of these things.

We balance participation and appointment process. I think you need to think about how people get on these kinds of governing councils. Maybe it's people pulled from existing bodies, whether it's city council, or a chamber body- different organizations, some of them are pulled from that, and then some are probably appointed from the political- from the people at will. And then you have to bind the governance of this group not to some other charter, but to the vision that's created in the community for a sustainable future. SO what they are the most responsible to is this collaborative and shared vision.

Here's one of the things that Bill McDunn is very fond of pointing out to us, is that design is the first signal of human intention. What you really intend to do shows up in the way you design whatever it is you're about- whether it's a chair, or a city, or a community, or a company. These things: sprawl, blight, pollution- stepping back like Seattle is having to say, "How did we ever get here?" They don't happen to us because we have a plan, they happen to us because we have no plan for something else.

Design community and regional quality, and gin commitment to that vision, and you will get a quality community.

Thanks.