URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING:
POLICY & PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY
11.540, Fall 2020
Friday 2:00-5:00 PM

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Course Purpose
This course seeks to explore the full meaning of the term Sustainable Mobility and through that process develop an approach to transportation planning that responds to contemporary mobility needs and values, with an emphasis on transport justice. The course examines transportation policymaking and planning, its relationship to social and environmental justice and its relationship to the realities of politics, governance structures and institutional behavior. Inevitably, we will discuss planning and policymaking in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which brings an unprecedented level of uncertainty and complexity to the policy context. We will ask and try to answer the fundamental question: how can planners and policymakers participate in crafting a Sustainability Response to COVID-19? We will also address the relationship of the transportation sector to Climate Change, and explore the tension between the legitimate focus on the pandemic and the need to address Climate Change as the existential threat to life as we know it.

Through the lens of history and current events, we will explore how attitudes and behaviors are influenced, and how change happens. We will examine the tensions and potential synergies among traditional transportation policy values of individual mobility, system efficiency, and business alliances with those of environmentalism and communitarian values and long-term
economic growth. Special emphasis will be placed on interpreting sustainability in the context of Livable Communities, both because that is where sustainability is actually experienced, and as a mechanism for building the political will to improve sustainability. The course will be taught through a Boston-oriented lens, which in my experience is not limiting but enlightening.

Class Structure
Each class meeting will include a lecture and an interactive discussion of the readings and at least one lecture. **Active participation in class discussion is an essential component of this class.** We all learn from one another. Class discussion will integrate lectures, readings and assignments. Guest lecturers are chosen for their expertise and relevance to the course.

The classes are organized thematically in a manner that (hopefully) fits into a logical progression toward the ultimate goal: to advance our understanding of Sustainable Mobility and fit that understanding into a framework for contemporary, justice-oriented transportation planning and policy making.

Conducting the class online is a (hopefully temporary) reality that we need to collectively embrace. We will strive to make our interactions and discussions vibrant, engaging and unfettered by the artificiality of a virtual classroom experience. This is a journey we will navigate together in a collegial and collaborative experience.

Readings
Students are expected to come to class having read the required readings and to participate actively in class discussions. **There are three categories of readings.**

**Weekly Readings** *are an essential part of the course.* They inform weekly discussion and interaction and, together with their respective Reading Responses, comprise an important (40%) component of your grade. These readings may be supplemented by occasional additions (usually recent news articles). You are expected to look at and be familiar with the assigned readings before each class; use your judgment about where to read in detail and where to skim.

**Assignment Readings** are meant to be read as a way to inform or illuminate the Assignments.

**Omnibus Readings** should be read at your own pace. Those that are marked “optional” are just that – they are here for your reading pleasure at your convenience during this class or at some other time, or never at all.

**Please note:** I reserve the right to replace readings currently listed on the syllabus, or remove or add readings, in order to ensure that we are moving forward together in a manner that best sustains the momentum of the class. That does not mean you should expect wholesale
changes, but please do not be surprised at the occasional departure from what is listed in the syllabus. Very little in life is perfectly linear.

**Reading Responses**
You are required to submit a brief one-or-two-paragraph response to the readings each week by **3:00 PM Thursday. Please submit on the Canvass site in pdf format.** The responses are not meant to be formal, but instead to help you engage with the class material and to help inform the class discussion. You should not spend more than 30 minutes each week on your Reading Response. Responses will count toward class participation. In your Response you should feel free to submit a question that you would like to discuss in class about the readings.

**Walking Tour:** bowing to the realities of the moment we will unfortunately forego our traditional walking tours. In their place, we will offer one or two videos for your viewing pleasure. Watch at your leisure & bring your own popcorn.

**Attendance and Participation**
Students are expected to attend all classes and meaningfully contribute to class discussions. **See Reading Responses, above,** outlining specific requirements regarding class readings. Walking tours are optional unless I inform you otherwise. Attendance and the quality of class participation (including Reading Responses) will be 40% of the final grade.

**Office Hours**
I will conduct zoom-based office hours (1) on Tuesday afternoons from 3pm-5pm, and (2) by appointment. I will also make myself available for a period of time after each class in the event students wish a one-on-one chat.

**Current Events**
“All politics is local” as the late House Speaker Tip O’Neil used to say, and it is very important to follow one’s locality intensely. You are encouraged to read the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe* and *Commonwealth Magazine* https://commonwealthmagazine.org. I also encourage you to check out websites for local transportation advocacy groups, including TransitMatters which is a technical advocacy group that is known for using data to influence progressive transit-oriented policies. [http://transitmatters.org](http://transitmatters.org)

**Course Materials**
All required course readings will be distributed via Canvass.
Academic Integrity
It goes without saying (even though I’m about to say it) that plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated, and that anyone caught cheating on an assignment will be reported in line with recognized university procedures. Of course, discussing, sharing and exchanging ideas and insights with your classmates is encouraged and is a key part to the learning experience of this course – even when it comes to individual assignments. However, when preparing your individual submissions please be honest with yourself and the other students: use your own words, give appropriate credit to the ideas of others, and always cite your sources.

Assignments
The Assignments are focused on planning challenge and opportunity of the moment: revitalizing urban transit and encouraging a safer, more health-resilient public realm. Specifically with respect to transit, the task is to identify policies and interventions that have the goal of increasing transit mode share by ten percent every five (5) years over the next twenty (20) years. “Transit” for purposes of this exercise includes all bus, subway, trolley and intercity (commuter) rail operated by the MBTA.

You should read through the Assignment Readings before beginning the first Assignment.

Each Assignment will build upon the other. However, you are free to change your opinion or emphasis or recommendations during the process of moving from Assignment to Assignment, based on your (potentially) changing views as the course proceeds.

1. The first assignment asks you to draft a detailed outline of a plan to revitalize urban transit and encourage a safer, more health-resilient public realm, as described above. You have the choice of being a planner working for the Boston Transportation Department or the MBTA. Once you make this choice you will stay with it through Assignments 2 and 3. Your outline will make an initial attempt to identify policies and interventions (short-term measures and longer term capital investments) that achieve the stated objectives. You should take into account proposed policies and interventions that your agency has direct control over as well as policies and interventions that another agency has control over, and you should consider and identify where funding will come from (e.g. existing federal or state programs, shifting existing funding, new funding from new sources). You should identify the stakeholders (federal, state, city, community, advocacy groups, business community, residents and impacted commuters [all modes]) who will need to support your proposal. The outline should be ~3 pages.

2. For the second assignment, you will develop your Assignment 1 outline (taking into account any feedback received) into a “rich outline” – a significantly more developed narrative that begins to detail each element of your plan. This rich outline is the document that begins to
flesh out the details of your proposals, demonstrating that you have thought through and can explain the full range of issues your boss will want to thoughtfully consider, including their efficacy, cost, funding viability, impacts on each mode and proposals to mitigate negative impacts, likelihood to gain necessary stakeholder and political support, impacts of any alterations to MBTA service plans, uses of and synergies among various transport modes, and potential or likely impacts on a broad spectrum of residents and stakeholders.

3. The **third assignment** is the final recommendation memo which should be a well-reasoned and fully developed memorandum to either the Mayor of Boston or the Chairman of the MBTA Board (depending on the choice you made in Assignment 1), making the case for a set of policies and interventions that help the city move toward a “new normal”. This memo may include graphics, illustrations, and other aides to making the case for the policies and interventions you propose. You should identify the broad range of stakeholders impacted by your recommendations and include recommendations regarding how to generate political will and develop consensus or buy-in among the various stakeholders. A realistic timeline for implementation, taking into account factors such as necessary or advisable public processes, applicable federal, state or local regulatory approvals, securing funding, and (if applicable) the design, construction and implementation of certain interventions, should be included in this memo.

We will have **Review Sessions** following submission of each Assignment, and students will be asked to lead presentation and discussion explaining/defending what they submitted.

**Assignments**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>In-Class Discussion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td>September 30, 4pm</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment 1</strong> – Draft a detailed outline of a plan to revitalize urban transit and encouraging a safer, more health-resilient public realm, as described in more detail above.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 13, 4pm</td>
<td>October 16</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment 2</strong> – Develop your Assignment 1 outline (taking into account any feedback received) into a “rich outline” according to the instructions above.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 27, 4pm</td>
<td>October 30</td>
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Assignment 3 –
Draft a Final recommendation Memorandum following the instructions above.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The following readings and resources are meant to inform or illuminate the Assignments. You should use them to leverage other materials that may help you develop your thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. MBTA Quarterly Ridership Updates</td>
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<td>5. <a href="https://www.massdottracker.com/wp/?p=2879">https://www.massdottracker.com/wp/?p=2879</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Transit Center, “Five Recommendations to Power a Fair Recovery” <a href="https://transitcenter.org/five-recommendations-for-better-bus-service-to-power-a-fair-recovery-in-nyc/">https://transitcenter.org/five-recommendations-for-better-bus-service-to-power-a-fair-recovery-in-nyc/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. National Association of State Transportation Officials (NACTO) COVID-19 Response Center <a href="https://nacto.org/program/covid19/">https://nacto.org/program/covid19/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. TransitMatters Mobility Hub Initiative <a href="http://transitmatters.org/mobility-hubs">http://transitmatters.org/mobility-hubs</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Institute for Transportation &amp; Development Policy (ITDP), various publications <a href="https://www.itdp.org/publications/">https://www.itdp.org/publications/</a></td>
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Omnibus Readings. The following Omnibus Readings help inform the course themes. Most are designated “optional”; the 8 that are not so designated are strongly recommended.

1. History of Urban Transportation Planning (Weiner)
2. Lewis and Sprague. Federal Transportation Policy and the Role of Metropolitan Planning Organizations in California. Chapters 1 and 3.
9. [optional]
13. Congestion in the Commonwealth: Report to the Governor 2019
   [optional]
**Week 1: September 25 - Introduction**

Mutual introductions. Overview of syllabus; course expectations; review of the “run of class”.

Thumbnail Histories: US Transportation History & History of Boston (with a Transportation perspective).

“Sustainable Mobility”: a working definition.

We will be asking whether the elements that comprise Sustainable Mobility have continued relevance, force, vitality and resonance in a time when we seek to recover from the impacts of a global pandemic. We will introduce the challenge of crafting a Sustainability Response to COVID-19.

**Introductory Assignment:** Write (1) a short (one-page max) description of yourself, your interests and background in transportation and/or the environment (please include a digital photo of yourself.), and (2) provide a short definition of Sustainable Mobility as you understand the term today, and a brief statement of its importance. **Upload pdf to Canvass by 4pm, Wednesday September 30.**

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**Week 2: October 2 –The Entwined Tragedies of the Concrete & Green Commons; The Role of Public Transportation**

**Readings:**

Week 3: October 9 - Planning Fundamentals: 4-Step Model or 19 Steps? The Notion of Access

Readings:
1. Meyer, M. and Miller, E. “Urban Transportation Planning” Chapter 1 (pp. 1-45); Chapter 2; Chapter 3, Sections 3.0 and 3. (pp. 1-26).
5. Wachs, Martin, “When Planners Lie With Numbers”.

Assignment 1: Due October 13, 4pm.

Week 4: October 16 - Baumol’s Cost Disease; Agglomeration Effects
Assignment 1 In-class Review & Discussion

Readings
**Week 5: October 23 – Climate & Automobility**

**Readings:**

**Assignment 2: Due Tuesday October 27, 4pm.**

**Week 6: October 30 – Cognitive Barriers to Change; Funding Transportation; Taxing vs. Pricing**

**Assignment 2 In-class Review & Discussion**

**Readings:**

Week 7: November 6 – How Change Happens (or not).
Tony Seba video
JFK Rice University

Readings:
10. Fulton, Mason and Meroux, UC Davis and ITDP, “Three Revolutions in Urban Transportation”.

**Week 8: November 13 – Transport Justice Part 1**

Readings:

**Week 9: November 20 – Transport Justice Part 2**

Readings:
1. Dickens, Charles, “Monseigneur in Town”, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), Part 2, Chapter VII.

**Friday, November 27: Thanksgiving Break**

**Assignment 3: Due Tuesday December 1, 4pm.**
Week 10: December 4 - Transport Justice Part 3
Assignment 3: In Class Review and Discussion

Readings: