

Parking Policy: Urban & Suburban Considerations

Presentation to the
Lyon Park Auto 2nd International Meeting
Lyon
16 November 2006

Parking Policy: Urban & Suburban Considerations



Wendell Cox
Visiting Professor, Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers, Paris
Principal, Demographia (Wendell Cox Consultancy), St. Louis (USA)

DEMOGRAPHIA

www.demographia.com
www.rentalcartours.net
www.publicpurpose.com

It is a pleasure to be here in Lyon and to have the opportunity to share some thoughts with you. Lyon is a special place. I have been to nearly all of the large urban areas of the high-income world, and Lyon is among the best, a well-kept secret. I believe that Lyon is the most European of urban areas and deserves to be on every tourist's itinerary.

Further, Lyon has one of the best public transport systems in the world and you are justly proud of that.

I am a late addition to the program and may not have completely understood what was expected of me. This presentation might be thought of as a transition between the present session, on core cities and the next session, on suburban areas. I want to talk about parking and policies throughout the entire urban area, core and suburban. I do not have a formally prepared slide show, but will use a few slides to illustrate some important points. The cover slide is one of my favorites, because it illustrates one of my principal points, the important role of the suburbs in modern urban areas. I often show this slide because most people have never seen this part of Paris (Cover Illustration).

The Focus: My focus will be on the broader policy context. What is it that we are trying to do with transport and parking policy? My view is that the ultimate objective is economic --- that our policies should seek to promote the maximum in economic growth, which is the only reliable way to propagate affluence and reduce poverty. Mobility, of which parking is an integral part, is crucial to this economic growth. Remy Prud'homme and Chong Wong Lee of the University of Paris XII have published research that clearly shows the connection. They have found that the economic production --- the value of goods and services produced in an urban area --- increases as the number of jobs that are accessible increases. If, for example, mobility can be increased so that, overall, 10 percent more jobs can be reached in 30 minutes, then economic production can be expected to increase two percent (Figure 1). This is the reward for making a metropolitan area --- a labor market --- more efficient. As we consider parking and transport policy, it is useful to ensure that we are focusing on the most important issues and that our assumptions are reasonable.



Figure 1

The Urban Core: I agree with those who have noted the potential for improving the environment of the urban core by transport and parking policy. Underground car parks are generally far more pleasing to the urban environment and you in Lyon have been international leaders in the development of such facilities. The idea of establishing peripheral parking lots from which people travel by public transport to the urban core also makes theoretical sense. I have been less than impressed by developments of this sort, but the potential remains.

I also agree with those who are skeptical about London style congestion charges. On the morning that the London congestion charge was implemented, *The Daily Telegraph* published my opinion article raising questions about the program that remain important today. While there is no doubt but that traffic levels have been improved inside London's small congestion charging zone, there remains considerable dispute about the economic impacts.

However, more important the extent of success or failure in London is the transferability of the concept. London is an ideal environment for the congestion charge. This is because there is a strong trend of growth in central London. Among the world's largest central business districts, only London is growing. This is, in part, due to the inexplicable situation of London having emerged as Europe's financial center, at the same time as the United Kingdom has remained outside the Euro zone. Other large central business districts are either stagnant or losing jobs. This can be seen in Tokyo's Yamanote Loop, the Osaka Loop and New York's Manhattan. In Paris, the stark evidence is the loss of 195,000 jobs in arrondissements I through XII between 1990 and 1999. Urban areas without growing central business districts are likely to find that congestion charging provides just another incentive for businesses to leave, whether for the suburbs, Eastern Europe or Bangalore.

One of the principal justifications for limiting parking in core areas is to encourage public transport use. In the end, this might be accomplished through incentives and improved public transport service. Disincentives and punitive measures could have the opposite effect. It might be possible to force a few more people onto public transport by methods that make it more difficult to commute by car. However, ultimately, such policies could lead to the exit of companies, while those impacted by the punitive policies seek employment outside the urban core. We must always remember that people have choices. If the choice of the urban core is less attractive than the suburbs or exurbs, the urban core is likely to suffer.

The Suburbs: This brings me to the suburbs. We live in a suburban world. Throughout the high-income world, nearly all growth has been in the suburbs for at least 40 years. Among the metropolitan areas of Western Europe with more than 1,000,000 population, approximately 115 percent of population growth has been suburban since 1965 --- that is to say that the central cities have lost population (Figure 2).¹

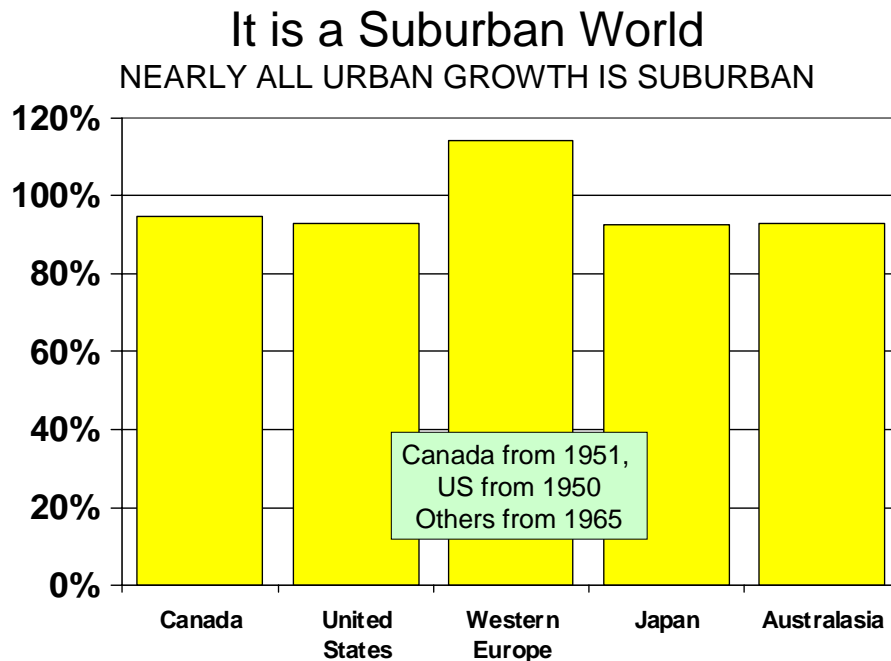


Figure 2

Suburbanization is well illustrated in an INSEE map of the Paris urban showing urbanization as of 1999. The small yellow core is the approximately 100 square kilometers of the ville de Paris. Surrounding it are the darker colors of suburban expansion that account for more than 2,600 square miles of continuous urbanization (Figure 3). The extent of suburbanization is illustrated by the fact that more than 80 percent of the population now lives in the suburbs of Paris, which also contain nearly 70 percent of the employment. Again, it is a suburban world.

¹ <http://www.demographia.com/db-highmetro.htm>.

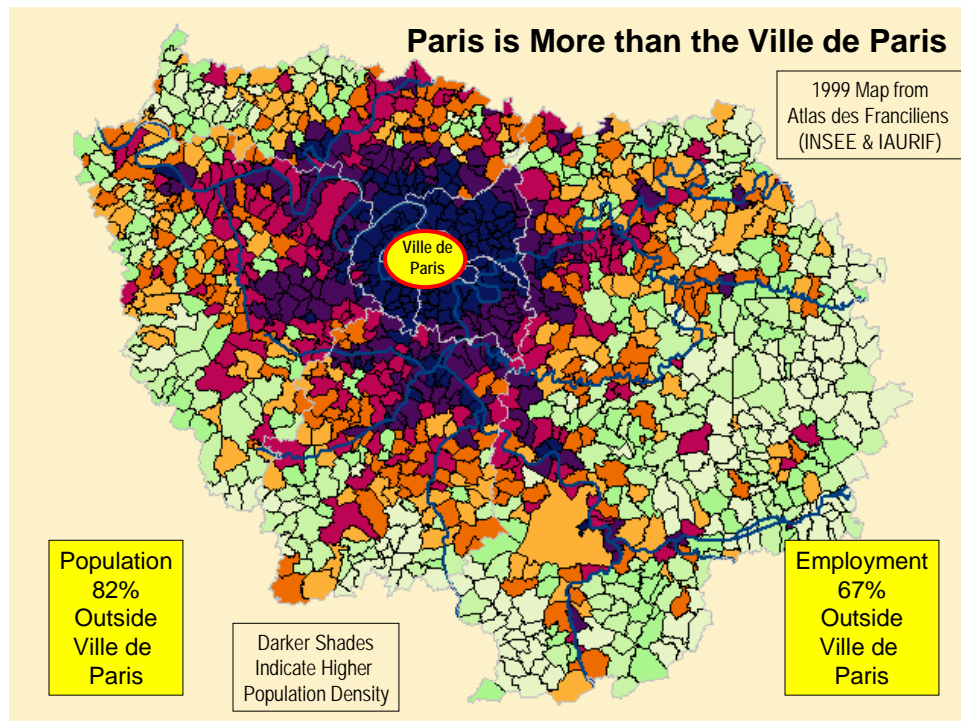


Figure 3

Since the 1960s, the ville de Paris has lost 700,000 people, while the suburbs have gained more than 2,500,000 people (Figure 4). The same situation will be found elsewhere. Today's program included a case study on Barcelona. Over the past 40 years, the core city of Barcelona has lost 150,000 people, while its suburbs have gained more than 1,600,000 people (Figure 5). Today, the city of Barcelona represents only 40 percent of the metropolitan population. The situation is similar here in Lyon. Over the past 40 years, the ville de Lyon has lost 90,000 people, while the suburbs have gained more than 400,000 people (Figure 6). Today, approximately one-third of the population of the Lyon urban area lives in the ville de Lyon.

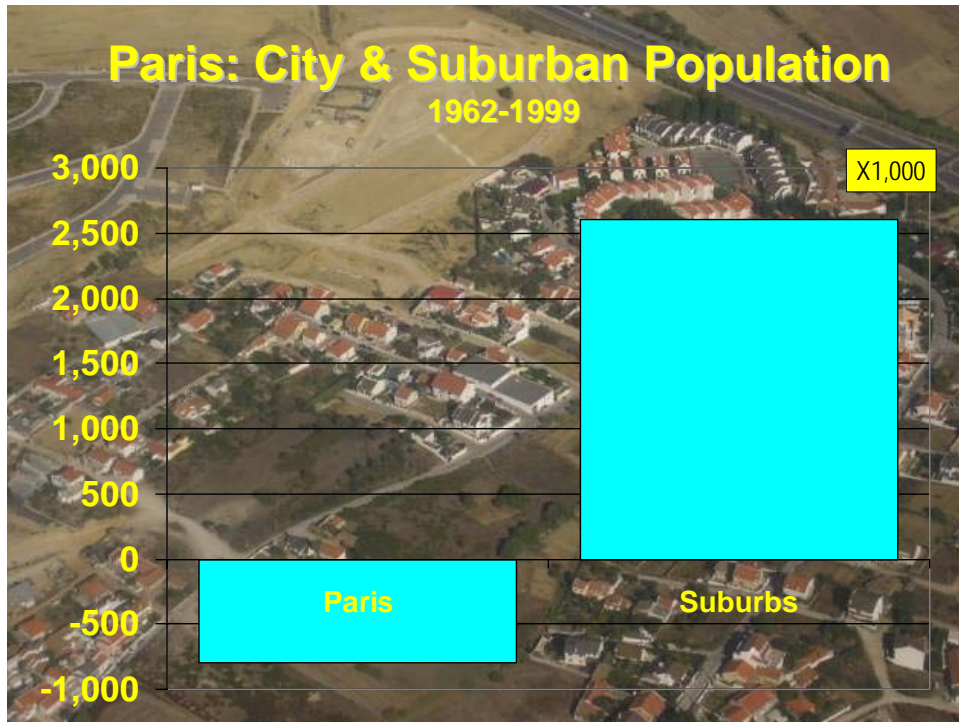


Figure 4

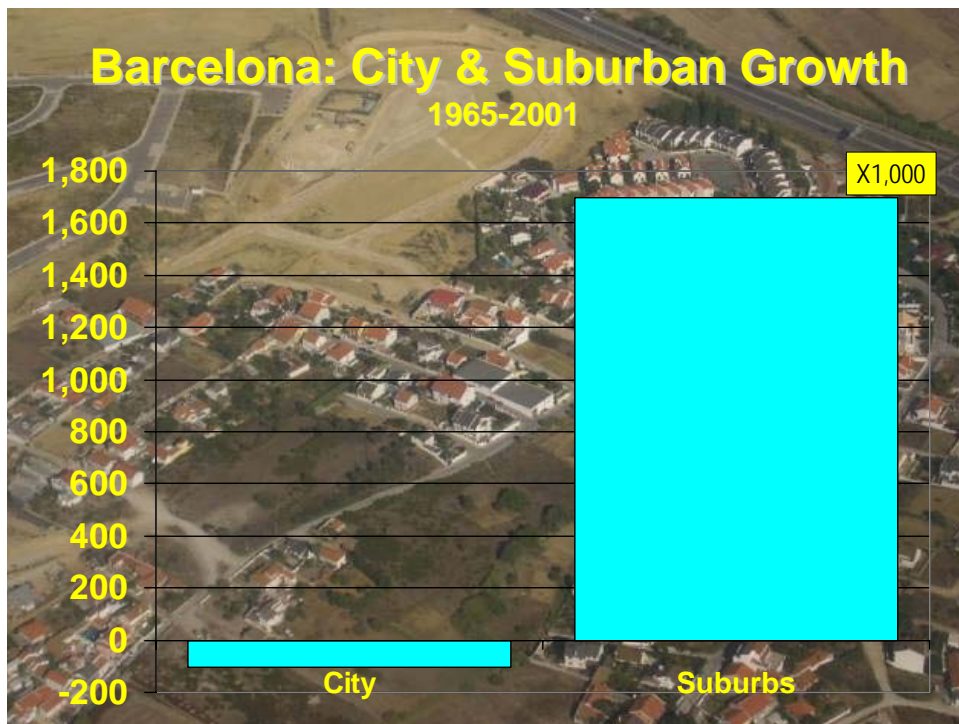


Figure 5

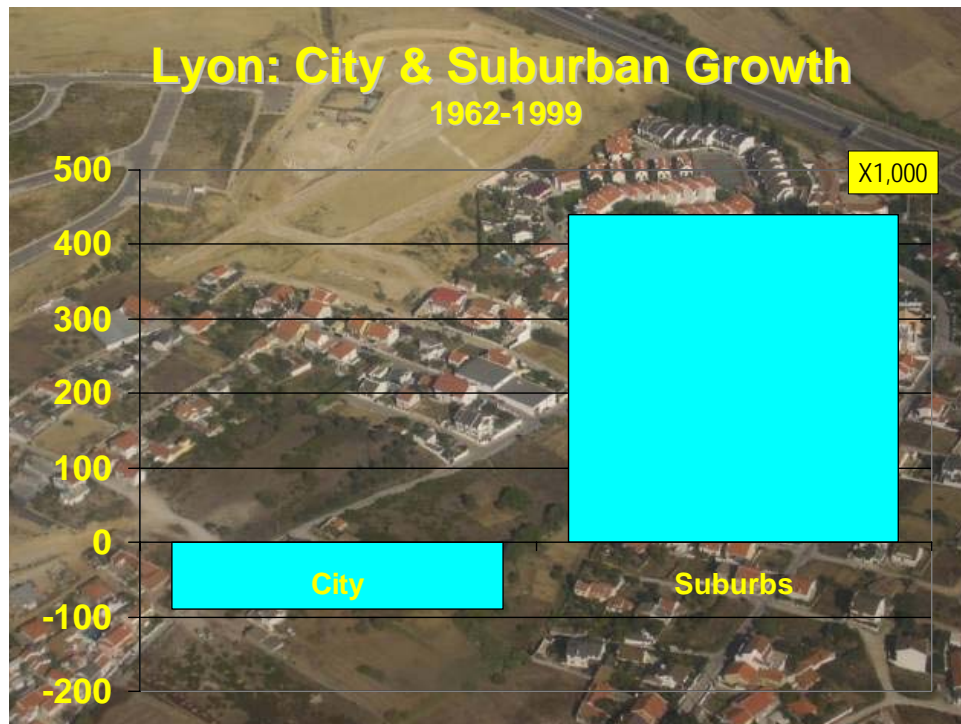


Figure 6

The differences in densities, and urban form, are substantial. In the ville de Lyon, the population density is nearly 10,000 per square kilometer. In the suburbs, with two-thirds of the population, the density is closer to 500 per square kilometer. All of this is to say that there are substantial differences between the core cities and the suburbs. This means that both parking and transport policies must also be different.

In the core city, public transport is often an alternative to the automobile. This is especially true in the ville de Lyon. Most trips can be made quite conveniently by public transport. If I lived in the ville de Lyon, I would probably be on public transport every day, as I am when I live in Paris.

However, things are much different in the suburbs. Paris provides an example. Approximately 65 percent of travel oriented to the ville de Paris --- travel within and to the ville de Paris --- is on public transport. Yet, in the Petite and Grande Couronne, the car is dominant, accounting for 85 percent of travel. Further, this suburban demand is dominant, representing 70 percent of the travel in the Paris area. It may be surprising that 70 percent of the travel in the Paris urban area never reaches the ville de Paris (Figure 7).

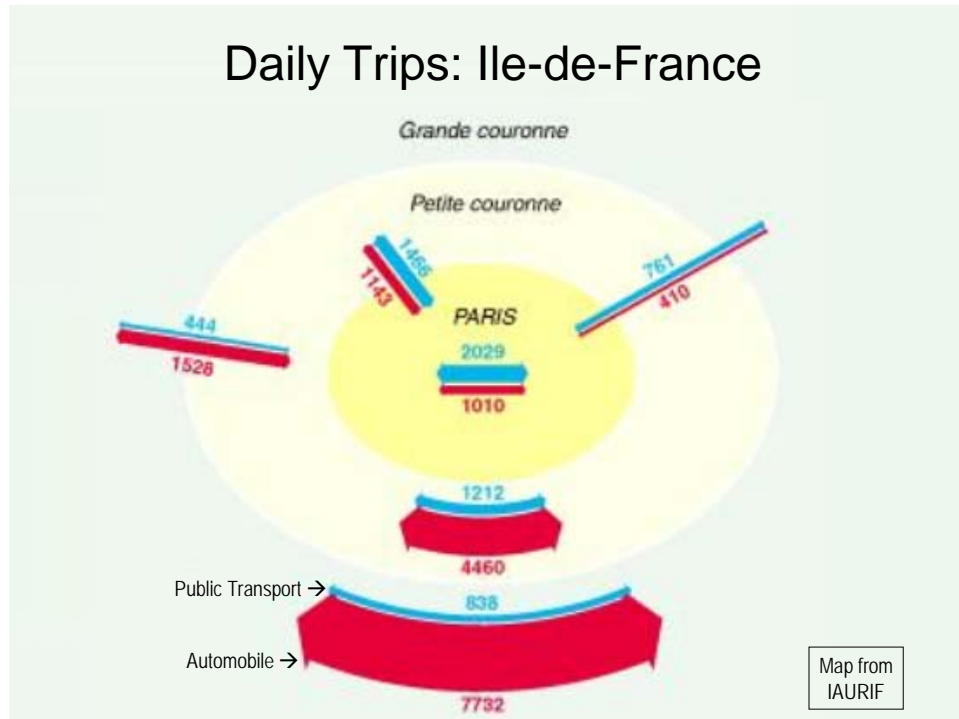


Figure 7

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the core areas are not the destination of most work trips. According to the UTP Millennium Cities Database, only 15 percent of Lyon urban area employment is in the Lyon central business district. Approximately 20 percent of Paris area employment is in the central business district (Arrondissements I to XII).

The automobile is dominant because most suburban trips require a car --- there is no viable public transport option. For example, there is research that shows that even in the Paris area new towns with RER (regional metro) service, the car provides superior mobility. It has been estimated that within one hour, 84 percent of the jobs in the Ile-de-France can be reached by car, and only 41 percent by public transport² (Figure 8). It is not enough to simply be “near” public transport. The “nearby” public transport needs to provide access to where the customer needs to go. Often, especially in suburban areas, this is not the case.

² Calculated from Vincent Fouchier and Sylvain Michelin, "Isochrones autour des villes nouvelles aux heures de pointe," March 1999, available at http://www.villesnouvelles.equipement.gouv.fr/base/presg/P4_Bilan/3_Mobil/2_Isoch-Tx/Isoch.html.

Employment Access by Transit Less

PARIS NEW TOWNS: ONE HOUR JOURNEY

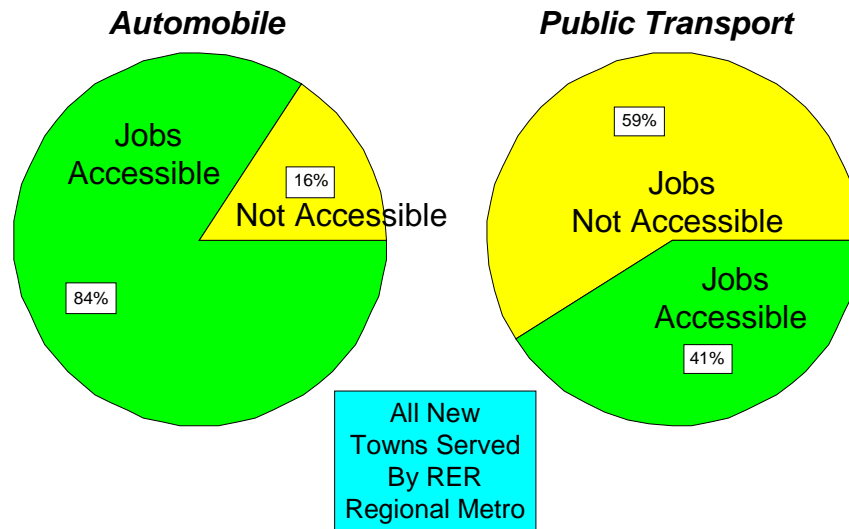


Figure 8

This does not mean that it is impossible. However, to provide an automobile competitive public transport system throughout an urban area would be a difficult task. I have designed such a system for the Portland, Oregon area. It would require an 800-meter grid of Metro lines, with service frequencies of one minute (Figure 9). The annual cost would exceed the total annual person income of the Portland area. Obviously, no urban area will be able to afford such a public transport system. Public transport can compete with the car, as it does in the ville de Lyon, in highly dense core areas. However, it is another matter in the suburbs.

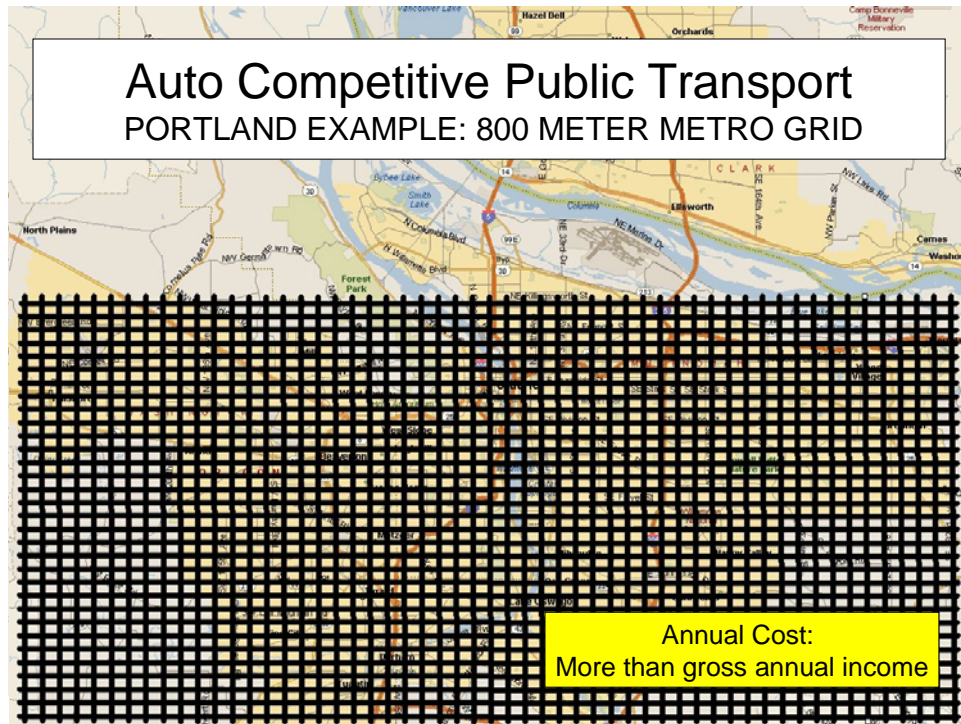


Figure 9

The large urban areas of Japan, with their superior public transport market shares, illustrate the problem of linking public transport and parking policies. Tokyo-Yokohama and Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto each have public transport market shares of approximately 60 percent --- more than double that of the Paris area. Nagoya's public transport market share is similar to that of Paris. In the Japanese metropolitan area, people tend to purchase or rent residential parking spaces separately from their rental units or homes. Yet, despite this disincentive and the high level of public transport service, *all* of the new demand for travel in all three metropolitan areas since 1990 has been automobile.

Thus, while parking policy can be useful in encouraging public transport use where there is automobile competitive public transport, such as in and to the urban core. In the suburbs, the automobile is not a matter of choice; it is a matter of necessity. It is not financially feasible to change this. Parking policy cannot be an effective tool for transferring demand to public transport services that do not exist.

Conclusion: Thus, we return to the focus of overall policy. Parking and transport policy requires a delicate balance. We must be careful to understand what we are trying to do and what are the consequences. If we drive people away, we will drive business, economic growth and job creation away. It is important to recognize that different policies are required for different areas. We must further recognize that core and suburban environments are vastly different.

It is not parking policy, nor public transport policy that is important. What is important is job creation and economic growth and the better life that they make possible for all people. In the final analysis, this is the test of both parking and transport policy.