

TAMING THE HIGHWAY THROUGH TOWN

Laurence Qamar, AIA, Partner
Lennertz Coyle & Associates

Presented at CNU 2000: The Politics of Place

JUNE 16, 2000, 3:00 PM

I. INTRODUCTION

When historic highways pass through town centers, conflicts and benefits arise. The inherent conflicts are between the pedestrian needs of the local main street and the automobile needs of the regional arterial.

Hamlets, villages, neighborhoods, towns, cities and metropolises have always generated out of the crossing of regional trade routes. Today state highways running through small towns are the economic lifeline, the Main Street of the community.

Challenge the conventional policy that the primary function of state roads is to only serve regional mobility. The function of state roads should be to serve the towns and cities, which they connect. To accomplish this the highway should not by-pass the town. It should enter the town and become a part of the town.

CONFLICTS

Local Community vs. Regional Mobility; Pedestrian vs. Auto; Main Street vs. Highway

BENEFITS

Regional Commerce; Local Retail; Economic Vitality; Lifeline to region

We are exploring strategies for resolving these conflicts, while maintaining the benefits.

II. TRADITIONAL TOWNS AT THE CROSSROADS

- Main and Main Town
- River Town, Railroad Town, Seaport Town
- The Townless Highway/The Highwayless Town

III. TRAFFIC ENGINEERED TOWNS

(A brief history of by-passing the “100% Corner”)

- One-way Couplet Town, By-pass Town, Strip Town, Shopping Center, Mall, Edge City

CONGRESS
FOR THE
NEW
URBANISM

Bio: Not available.

IV. TRANSECT

- The highway is not a continuous tube, detached from the town through which it passes. The function and character of the highway transforms as it passes from the edge to the center back to the edge of the town.
- Country – Gateway - Main Street – Gateway - Country

THE HIGHWAY TRANSECT FROM TOWN CENTER TO EDGE

| CENTER | EDGE |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Urban | Rural |
| Slow Speed | Fast Speed |
| Pedestrian Oriented | Auto Oriented |
| Smaller Blocks | Larger Block |
| Main Street | Regional Road |
| Narrower Lanes | Wider Lanes |
| In-lane Biking | Biking Lanes |
| Parallel Routes | Main Routes |
| Street Network | Functional Classification |
| Dispersed Traffic | Concentrated Traffic |
| Frequent Street Access | Limited Street Access |
| On-street Parking | No On-street Parking |
| Small Curb Radii | Large Curb Radii |

V. RULES OF RETAIL

- Parking Up-Front, Easy Access, Easy Visibility. Main street retail must have on-street parking. The center of commerce is the crossing of regional routes. The center of town is the center of commerce. Traffic and/or density generate commerce.

VI. TRANSPORTATION / LAND USE STRATEGIES

- Parallel Routes, not by-passes; The Highway-less Town, and Town-less Highway; Street Networks, not Functional Classification; Prioritize Town Centers over Suburban Strips - (STA); Highway Corridor studies to establish Town Centers; Limit commercial zoning to the Town Center; Maximize Local Access to the Main Street