

URP 610: Transit, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Planning and Practice

Fall 2023

Instructor: Joe Grengs (grengs@umich.edu)

Expanding and encouraging active transportation through public transit, bicycles, and walking is an essential component of any plan to mitigate the damage of climate change, promote public health, and help make cities more livable and environmentally sustainable. These modes of travel provide a wider range of options for people who have few, enabling access to essential destinations like stores, medical clinics, and childcare centers. The United States lags behind in implementing active transportation because of its historical dependence on the automobile. Recent trends, however, indicate that communities want more options than automobile travel. The success or failure of active transportation initiatives depends largely on effective planning and public policy. This course focuses on the policy and practice of helping communities embrace and implement active modes of travel. The focus is on U.S. circumstances but is informed by innovations elsewhere. In contrast to the automobile, these travel modes share important challenges: they are highly dependent on local land-use environments and work best in high density; they are not well understood by the public and their elected officials; they often face political opposition; they challenge the status quo of who ought to have the right to urban space; and each is strengthened by working in tandem with the others. The course will help you understand challenges like these so that you can work with communities to support transit, bicycles, and walking as part of a larger effort to create healthier and more sustainable cities.

Learning Goals:

- Explain the effect of federal, regional, and local laws and institutional frameworks that govern various modes of travel.
- Analyze and interpret innovative examples.
- Critically analyze strengths and weaknesses of contemporary plans.
- Apply principles and concepts to formulate reform and promote change.
- Argue a position on current controversial initiatives faced by planners and policy makers.
- Compare policy approaches among various parts of the world.
- Demonstrate effective public speaking and visual and written communications about active transportation issues.

Course Requirements:

Course assignments may include: Analysis of current controversy as covered in news outlets; Photo essay of local active transportation conditions; Written evaluation of plans; Short quizzes on readings and discussions; and Case-study paper.