

Lecture Report:

Realising a 'Car-Lite' Future

MND Auditorium
28 November 2016



"We have seen all over the world that cities that put people before cars help to create places that are vibrant and people-friendly, much more enjoyable for people to hang around in.

"In Singapore, faced with our land constraints and a growing population, we know it's not possible and not sustainable to keep building more roads for more cars. This will lead to pressure for more infrastructure like highways and carparks that will leave less space for people to enjoy good quality public life.



"It's important for us to look at other modes of mobility so that we can rely less on private cars, and continue to grow as a city while maintaining a good quality of life."

— Chou Mei, Group Director,
Conservation and Urban Design, Urban Redevelopment Authority

The ways in which people move around Singapore are about to undergo transformational change — this was the consensus at CLC's Car-Lite Urban Mobility panel on 28 November.

New directions in urban mobility, from walking, cycling and greater public transport coverage, are well in motion. "These three initiatives — walk, cycle and ride — are our priorities and that's very clear to us," said Kenneth Wong, the Land Transport Authority's Director for Local Planning.



Noting that travel demand is forecast to increase by 50% by 2030, Wong added: "We all know it's not sustainable to meet this demand via road expansion. With demographic changes and an elderly population, there's an emphasis on safer roads and safer streets. We aspire to create a culture where everybody actively walks, cycles and rides public transport, and creating a safe, inclusive environment for all."

Initiatives that have been launched include locating jobs closer to homes and infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling, a substantial expansion of Mass Rapid Transit lines, managing vehicle growth rates and planning for car-lite towns.

A key driver of reducing societal reliance on cars is the freeing up of valuable land for public spaces and more engaged communities, alongside environmental and sustainability imperatives.



“Fundamentally, it’s about a better connection with the adjacent land uses, whether they be residential, commercial or retail...[as well as] an urban environment conducive for people to interact, engage and create meaning in their communities,” said Scott Dunn, Vice President of AECOM, an engineering and consulting firm for infrastructure projects.



Streets that are not clogged up with cars also benefit the private sector. Markham Shaw, Chairman of the Orchard Road Business Association, said: “Developing a car-lite country and modern urban logistics...would take vehicle pressure off the streets and give them back to the people. A happier population means that people will spend more money. In cities that have gone car-lite or have car-free centres, real estate prices in those areas have increased significantly.”

Beyond providing the necessary infrastructure for these initiatives however, the panellists agreed that a mindset change in society and education is vital.



“It’s about understanding the transport needs and challenges that vulnerable users of public spaces (including children and the elderly) face,” said Mizah Rahman, Director of Participate in Design, a non-profit organisation focusing on community-owned spaces and solutions. “We need to have them in the conversation in the planning of our public spaces.”

Through the medium of games and workshops, Participate in Design brings together children, parents and educators to explore topics such as road safety, urban planning and reducing reliance on cars.

Social norms, including formal office attire that may discourage people from cycling to work, may evolve in the years to come. “I’ve been thinking about the way we dress — do we need to be in long-sleeved attire all the time?” asked the LTA’s Wong.



“As the cycling culture grows, we may be dressed in polo t-shirts or something else that facilitates cycling. We could go for meetings and nobody’s ashamed to be in different attire.”

The panel closed with a series of quick-win solutions for car-lite urban mobility. These included education and spreading the active mobility message among the young, the pedestrianisation of major thoroughfares such as Orchard Road, more car-free pilots to demonstrate positive change, as well as building quickly upon successes.

About the Speakers

Panellist:



Kenneth WONG
Director, Local Planning
Land Transport Authority (LTA)

Mr Wong has more than 10 years of experience in the development of Singapore's land transport system as a transport planner. He was previously the Deputy Director of Policy where he contributed towards land transport policy formulation in the 2008 Land Transport Master Plan. Mr Wong has led many LTA planning teams in the development of Singapore's long term and medium term transport infrastructure plans and has conducted various feasibility studies for road and rail projects; one of which is Singapore's 9th expressway, the 12 km Kallang-Paya Lebar Expressway.

Panellist:



Mizah RAHMAN
Director, Co-founder
Participate in Design (P!D)

Mizah is a designer and community organizer who is a strong advocate for a participatory and community-centric approach in the design and planning of cities and neighbourhoods. Mizah's portfolio of participatory-based works has expanded to include neighbourhood planning, public space design, and community art installations; working in partnership with grassroots organisations, educational institutions, civic groups and government agencies. She is currently an Associate Lecturer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, School of Design and Environment.

Panellist:



Scott DUNN
Vice President, AECOM and
Past Council Chair, Urban Land Institute Singapore (ULI)

Mr Dunn directs multidisciplinary teams on the design of mixed-use new communities and high-density master plan developments across Asia, including customizing a sustainability assessment framework tool for Jurong Lake District and the Marina Bay Greater Southern Waterfront district in Singapore, as well as leading the River of Life transformation project in Kuala Lumpur. Mr Dunn's papers, advocating sustainable land development and high dense urban environmental design, have been published in several local and international design magazines and he is highly regarded as a thought leader in the planning community.

Panellist:



CHOU Mei
Group Director, Conservation and Urban Design
Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)

Ms Chou has been with URA since 2000 and has been involved in the planning and shaping of Singapore's city centre. Her portfolio in recent years has included driving and overseeing various projects in the city centre via the integration of land use, urban design and conservation. She received her training in Architecture at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London.

Panellist:



Markham SHAW

Chairman

Orchard Road Business Association (ORBA)

Mark is the Chairman of ORBA, an organisation that seeks to enhance and improve the business environment of Orchard Road, one of the world's most acclaimed shopping, dining and entertainment precincts. He is also the Executive Vice President of The Shaw Organisation Group of Companies. With his engineering background, Mark is actively involved in the Group's real estate development and theatre operations.

Moderator:



Dr Limin HEE

Director, Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC)

At CLC, Dr Hee has oversight of the Centre's research strategies, initiatives and collaborations. Previously, she led the Urban Studies Research and Teaching Group, and was a Principal Investigator at the Centre for Sustainable Asian Cities at the National University of Singapore. Dr Hee was also a co-founder of Transurban, a Research and Design group focused on Eco-Architecture and Urbanism at Harvard University Graduate School of Design. As an Architect, Dr Hee had completed several public projects in Singapore and received several commendations and awards for her work.

About CLC

The Centre for Liveable Cities was set up in 2008 by the Ministry of National Development and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, based on a strategic blueprint developed by Singapore's Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development. Guided by its mission to distil, create and share knowledge on liveable and sustainable cities, the Centre's work spans three main areas - Research, Capability Development, and Knowledge Platforms. The CLC Lecture Series is a platform for urban experts to share their knowledge with other practitioners. For more information, please visit: <http://www.clc.gov.sg>