



## Sustainable Transport: Does Anybody Here Know How To <u>Win</u> This Game?

Dr. Barry Wellar

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# Summary of Remarks and Comments on Slides Presented in an Address to the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa February 23, 2007

**Cover.** Whoever said "It's not whether you win or lose, its how you play the game" was very subtle, or perhaps very mellow at the time of the pronouncement. Simply put, how you play the game tends to determine whether you win or lose, and I suggest that only a dolt would not want to win the sustainable transport game. That said, in order to WIN you need to know what you are doing. And that is precisely the condition which leads to the question posed,

Sustainable Transport: Does Anybody Here Know How to Win This Game?

Dr. Barry Wellar, President
Wellar Consulting Inc.
Distinguished Research Fellow
Transport 2000 Canada
wellarb@uottawa.ca



### Sustainable Transport: Does Anybody Here Know How To <u>Win</u> This Game?

Inspiration for Title of Presentation

- 1. Jane and Flannery
- Casey Stengel
- 3. Vince Lombardi



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### Slide 2. Inspiration for the title of the presentation.

Titles for presentations do not magically emerge from the ether, at least not for me. In this case I received inspiration from **Vince Lombardi**, former coach of the Green Bay Packers, who placed emphasis on winning, solely on winning, even if it is just a game of <u>football</u>.

As for **Casey Stengel**, he went from managing the New York Yankees to managing the totally inept New York Mets. During yet another exercise in futility he cried out in exasperation (I improved his grammar and deleted the expletives), 'Does anybody here know how to play this game?" Casey, as the record shows, was bent out of shape about <u>baseball</u>.

The title of my remarks retains the sharp edges of Casey's lament, and the replacement of "play' by "win" reflects Vince's credo about the mindset that separates winners from everybody else. So far so good, as they say, but in the scheme of things both Casey and Vince are bit players in this address to the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa.

Far more significant to this presentation on sustainable transport than either of those two icons of sport are sources of inspiration Number 1. **Jane and Flannery.** They are my granddaughters, and when I think of the transportation mess that every young person in Canada and Ottawa is inheriting, it is clear to me that the time has come to really rattle some cages in Canada in general and in Ottawa in particular. Therefore, let the rattling begin.



## How Long Does it Take To Get It Right?

### Housing for the Future

B. Wellar Ministry of State for Urban Affairs Government of Canada

Kiwanis Club of Ottawa, February 23, 2007

#### Slide 3. How long does it take (to make it right)?

That song title, with a minor bit of fine-tuning in brackets, is made-to-measure for this presentation. *Housing for the Future* was published in 1975. Thirty-two years later, on February 4, 2007, Shelley Page wrote an article in the Ottawa Citizen titled "Honk if you love smog". One paragraph from the 1975 article that was repeated in the Page article points to the inevitability of the serious urban mess awaiting Canadian cities.

I can only shake my head at the feeble attempts in 2007 to address the dysfunctional land use-transportation relationship that was identified 32 years ago, and is no closer to solution now than it was then. And Casey Stengel thought that the Mets were inept. At least a baseball game tends to last only a couple of hours. In Canada we are at 32 years and counting from coast-to-coast, including Ottawa, with no sign that any government anywhere in the country knows how to address the land use-transportation disconnect and achieve sustainable transport practices any time soon.

A second paragraph from the 1975 paper that is repeated in the 2007 Page article deals with the wasteful consumption of fossil fuels to move private motor vehicles. Thirty-two years later Canada is still staggering about in the transportation wilderness, talking the talk on sustainable transport but seemingly obsessed with a severe, world-class case of incurable *automobilitis*.

Indeed, the evidence is abundantly clear that across Canada, and in Ottawa, we have done little to decrease the dependency on private motor vehicles. Moreover, to make matters worse, across Canada and in Ottawa we have actually gone to great lengths to feed the propensity-to-drive habit. In combination, the dependency upon the private motor vehicle in some circumstances, and the propensity to drive in many others, significantly contribute to our country's embarrassing international ranking as Number 1 when it comes to highest level of fossil fuel consumption per capita.



### How Long Does it Take To Get It Right?

"Taking steps towards the end of the automobile era"

> B. Wellar Ottawa Citizen 1975



Kiwanis Club of Ottawa, February 23, 2007



### Slide 4. How long does it take (to make it right)?

The newspaper column "Taking steps towards the end of the automobile era" did not have a lot of company in the popular literature when it was published in late 1975. Today it is possible to find from 100 to 500 or more Canadian newspaper articles <u>per day</u> that earnestly discuss land use and transportation issues identified in the Ottawa Citizen column that was published more 30 years ago.

The point of concern here, however, is not that it has taken three decades for the Canadian public -- governments, corporations (including the media) and citizens -- to seriously contemplate these issues. Indeed, appreciation has been slowly building over the past several decades that changes needed to be made. The sore point, if I can call it that, is the undue length of time that governments, corporations, and citizens are taking to finally make things right by getting on with doing what needs to be done.

Let me pick just two recommendations made three decades ago to illustrate the pertinency of the question, *How long does it take (to make it right)?* 

The 2002 decision by the Government of Ontario to give lane-entry priority to buses was in the 1975 article. It took 27 years for the Government of Ontario to finally get into gear. Good grief, 27 years to implement a nobrainer. Is the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario totally bereft of people who can actually do anything about achieving sustainable transport practices within a reasonable span of time?

As for the breathless excitement in 2007 about enabling buses to change signal lights upon approach, one word in particular comes to mind: Please. That "innovation" was in the 1975 article. More than 30 years later it is still not fully implemented in most Canadian cities, including Ottawa where it appears that those in charge have not finished reading the manual.

I can only wonder what Casey Stengel would have thought of these exercises in slow-wittedness, and we all know what Vince Lombardi would have said. As for the Janes and Flannerys of Ottawa and Canada, you have my sympathy: if the obvious is overwhelming those who are supposed to be taking care of business, whatever will they do when something complicated comes along?



### Fast Forward 32 Years

### Fleming Lecture in Transportation

B. Wellar
Association of American Geographers
Annual Conference
San Francisco
2007

Kiwanis Club of Ottawa, February 23, 2007

## Dr. Barry Wellar



#### Slide 5. Fast forward 32 years.

My next scheduled public presentation of note is the Association of American Geographers Annual Conference in San Francisco in April.

As a result of being named to receive the 2006 Ullman Award for Outstanding Contributions in Transportation, I have been invited to give the 2007 Fleming Lecture in Transportation. The Lecture is hosted by the University of Washington, which is internationally renowned for its theoretical and applied research in the field of transportation.

Clearly, this Lecture is not the place for half-baked notions, timidity, or mundane speculations. On the contrary, the bar is in the raised position for this presentation, but fortunately I am good to go for two reasons. First, and primarily as a result of professional opportunities, I have had occasion since 1975 to monitor and assess the progress of Canada and Ottawa in achieving sustainable transport practices, and best practices in particular. The fact that I was an early participant in the sustainable transport practices field, and have maintained that engagement over the past 30 years, places me in that relatively small group of individuals who can discuss what happened to the ideas and suggestions that they introduced over the years, and what might be happening in the years ahead.

Second, and almost as important, there is the entertainment factor. Canada and Ottawa have been rich sources of information on dysfunctionalities in the transportation domain for decades. The Fleming Lecture is an ideal venue for sharing some of these 'lessons learned', including several of them that influenced the content of this address to the Kiwanis club of Ottawa.

In the remaining slides I introduce a few of the topics that are among those I will be discussing in the Fleming Lecture. Since these slides are based in part on local situations, this may be a good place to thank the City of Ottawa, the former Region of Ottawa-Carleton, former area municipalities, and the National Capital Commission for their contributions to the 1975 documents, and to the body of empirical evidence assembled from 1975 to 2007 that underlies both the slides and the Fleming Lecture.



# Meaning of <u>Win</u> in Sustainable Transport

Principles Are Not Enough

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### Slide 6. Meaning of win in sustainable transport: Principles are not enough.

Sustainable transport principles have been in the literature in detail for at least 30 years, at a general level for 50 years before that, and their origins could likely be traced back more than 150 years to the works of people like John Stuart Mill.

The non-importance of transportation planning principles in this province can be illustrated by the existence and performance of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). This provincial government agency is hardly known for its deep thinkers. Nevertheless, it has been allowed to make decisions for decades about the relative significance of such principles when hearing appeals in regard to land use planning, zoning and related matters.

One part of the problem with the OMB involves the criticisms about the agency that have been piling up in large quantities from various quarters for many years. It appears fair to say that the OMB has, at best, a marginal grasp of why and how to pursue sustainable transport principles through land use planning and zoning decisions. That being the case, why does this agency have anything at all to do with land use or other matters that affect the generation, inducement, diversion or distribution of traffic of any kind.

Which brings me to the second part of the problem with the OMB. Despite a seeming mountain of evidence about the agency's lack of regard for principles, no provincial or municipal government, nor any non-government federation or association, has been willing or able to rein in this prodevelopment outfit. Clearly, if sustainable transport principles are actually regarded as significant, they would not be left within the purview of an agency which seems to be about 30 years or more out of touch when it comes to actually applying sustainable transport principles to current realities.

Moreover, and this observation will surely rattle some cages, but calls for more studies into sustainable transport principles is frequently nothing more than a shallow ruse to avoid actually doing anything. In the interests of winning as opposed to just playing games, let's recognize the truth and cut to the chase. Principles are not enough to create winners, as I am sure Casey and Vince would attest, so let us move on to what creates winners for people like Jane, Flannery, and other young people who are in need of some real movers and shakers to make sustainable transport happen. NOW.



# Meaning of <u>Win</u> in Sustainable Transport

## **Achieving Practices**

**Achieving Practices** 

**Achieving Practices** 



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### Slide 7. Meaning of win in sustainable transport: Achieving practices.

In the language of Casey Stengel and Vince Lombardi, as well as Jane and Flannery, win means getting the job done, finishing the task, doing something and not just talking about doing something, and setting yourself apart from losers.

My assessment of Canada's performance is out there for all to see, and is summarized by two of my recent papers that are at the top of the Google listing that has more than 875,000 hits for the phrase, "Sustainable transport practices in Canada". The top listing is Sustainable Transport Practices in Canada: Exhortation Overwhelms Demonstration, followed by Sustainable Transport Practices Key to Harper Climate Agenda.

A generous interpretation of Canada's sorry situation is that people in general understand the importance of practice in matters involving baseball, football, hockey, piano, and maybe even keyboarding. However, when it comes to transportation, one of the key elements of the country's urban, economic, social, industrial, energy, environmental, health, and security fabric, people in general are inclined to assume the "dog-walker's stance". That is, they look away in the hope that transportation-related problems will somehow resolve themselves.

Well, such a technique might work for pet owners who want to pretend they are not responsible for their dogs' practices. However, in the transportation field that approach hasn't worked in more than 30 years, so "Good luck with that" is the message for those who choose to look away. It won't work, but good luck.

For those who can answer "Yes" or want to answer "Yes" to the question, "Sustainable transport: Is there anybody here who can win this game?", the next several slides illustrate what it will take to move beyond rhetoric and actually make things happen in this domain.



## Sustainable Transport Suggestion: City of Ottawa

Apply a Sustainable Transport Test to

Every Initiative That Generates, Induces
or Distributes Traffic of Any Kind





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### Slide 8. Sustainable transport suggestion: City of Ottawa. Sustainable Transport Test.

Being a winner in achieving sustainable transport practices depends upon having a body of logic to guide and support decision-making. My review of the land use-transportation relationship in Ottawa suggests that since the early 1970s this area has pretty much made things up as it went along. *Ad hoc city*, you might say.

To my knowledge the City of Ottawa does not have a Sustainable Transport Test, and as a result council and staff are making decisions in the same ways they have been made for the past 35 years. As the record shows, however, top-of-the-head and seat-of-the-pants decision-making in the land use-transportation domain is the *modus operandi* of losers.

I suggest that if the City of Ottawa wants to count itself among the winners in achieving sustainable transport practices, then it has **at most a year** to step up to the plate before things start to go even more seriously out of whack. This means developing and applying a robust Sustainable Transport Test to its own initiatives, as well as to any initiatives of the Province of Ontario and Government of Canada that affect the walk, cycle, transit, and private vehicle modes (people and freight) of transport in Ottawa.



## Sustainable Transport Suggestion: City of Ottawa

Publish Annual Report on What City of Ottawa Has Done to Increase Walk, Cycling and Transit Trips, and Decrease Private Motor Vehicle Trips



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### Slide 9. Sustainable transport suggestion: City of Ottawa. Annual Achievement Report.

The essence of achieving sustainable transport practices is to **simultaneously** increase the share of walk, cycle, and transit trips while decreasing the share of private motor vehicle trips. Further, in a related vein, an attribute of good municipal governance is that residents are informed in a timely manner of City of Ottawa achievements.

After decades of spinning its wheels in the transportation field, the time is long overdue for the City of Ottawa to report on what it has done to achieve sustainable transport in practice. I believe that an annual report is the appropriate time frame for this important issue.

I hasten to add that the recent decision by the City of Ottawa to cut funding to Citizens for Safe Cycling is one of those decisions that lends itself to examination through such a report. No doubt many people will want to learn how that decision increased the share of walk, cycle and transit trips while decreasing private motor vehicle trips.



## Sustainable Transport Suggestion: Ottawa Corporations

Publish Annual Reports on What Company X Has Done to Increase Walk, Cycling and Transit Trips, and Decrease Private Motor Vehicle Trips

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### Slide 10. Sustainable transport suggestion: Ottawa corporations. Annual Achievement Report.

This slide represents an invitation and an opportunity for the business sector to show everybody how it is done. It is a lot easier for corporations than governments to implement sustainable transport practices, so take the lead and create that **can do-will do attitude** necessary to achieve sustainable transport practices. You will appeal to the spirits of Casey and Vince, and in the coming years will totally impress Jane, Flannery, and the current younger generation in Ottawa and no doubt across Canada.



### Sustainable Transport Suggestion: Ottawa Residents

Leave Your Cars at Home, Folks Leave Your Cars at Home

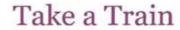




Take a Hike

Ride a Bike









But Leave Your Cars at Home

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### Slide 11. Sustainable transport suggestion: Ottawa residents. Leave your cars at home, folks, leave your cars at home.

The notion that the origins of the transportation mess in Canada and Ottawa is 'somebody else's fault' is just an exercise in denial. This suggestion puts the responsibility for achieving sustainable transport practices squarely where it belongs.

Simply put, looking to governments or corporations to do most of the heavy lifting in this domain is the stuff of fantasy. It has never happened, and there is no sign that it ever will, so move on and do what has to be done.

I hasten to add that we are not talking rocket science here, but are actually working at the level of elementary school functions. As per the text of the slide, you can walk, cycle, and use transit in order to practice sustainable transport. Further, you can actually realize the same outcome by decreasing the number of times your private motor vehicle leaves the driveway. How much simpler can it get when it comes to laying out, and then tabulating, the sustainable transport balance sheet?

It may be instructive to close this segment by putting the role of residents in context, with 1975 as the base year.

On the one hand, the current transportation problem in Ottawa is primarily the result of previous decisions made by area residents. And, on the other hand, the process of achieving sustainable transport practices is primarily the result of present and future decisions made by area residents. Simply put, residents caused the problem and residents are tasked with finding a solution. What could be fairer?

In closing the discussion of Slide 11, it is appropriate to return to the title of the presentation:

### Sustainable Transport: Does Anybody Here Know How to Win This Game?

On behalf of Jane and Flannery and the younger generation, we look forward to learning in the next year or so that Ottawa residents of the adult generation know how to win when it comes to achieving sustainable transport practices.



## Reports by B. Wellar on Sustainable Transport Practices



www.transport2000.ca

www.wellarconsulting.com

www.geomatics.uottawa.ca/releases/t2k.html

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### Slide 12. Websites to access for reports on sustainable transport practices.

The first two websites provide access to and information about the sources of the publications mentioned above. The third website lists a number of newspaper articles in which I discuss various aspects of sustainable transport, including the relationships between sustainable transport, land use planning, and urban development.

#### Acknowledgements.

I wish to thank the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa for inviting me to make this presentation. It is always a pleasure to discuss matters of public importance with members of this esteemed organization.

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