Traffic Gridlock:
A Bad, Mis-Leading Metaphor that Makes for Bad, Mis-Directed Public Policy

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1. Context.

In a previous publication, *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?*, I reported on a study which applied several research procedures to examine media stories and Google search items containing the terms "traffic gridlock" or "gridlock" implying traffic gridlock. The objective was to ascertain whether the media stories and Google items establish that traffic gridlock is a real deal matter, or whether the stories and items contribute to a pile of nonsense. The finding was that 99% of the stories and items belong in the nonsense pile.

The design procedure for examining and classifying popular media stories was as follows.

Table A. Popular Media Stories: Testing, Testing, Testing.

If a Popular Media Item Contains Substantive Answers to the Following Kinds of Questions about Traffic Gridlock, then the Item Is Likely to be in the Real Deal Camp: If it Does Not, then the Item Is Likely to Be in the Pile of Nonsense Camp.

1. What is the meaning of traffic gridlock?
2. How is traffic gridlock defined?
3. How is traffic gridlock measured?
4. What is the process whereby traffic gridlock occurs?
5. What is the established process whereby traffic gridlock is mitigated, resolved, or dissolved as the case may be?
6. What are the full environmental, economic, financial, social, energy, and multi-modal transportation system benefits and costs of solving either chronic or temporary manifestations of so-called traffic gridlock?
7. How do you methodologically measure the full environmental, economic, financial, social, energy, and multi-modal transportation system benefits and costs of solving either chronic or temporary manifestations of so-called traffic gridlock?

Source: Barry Wellar, 2011. *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?* transport-action.ca.Table 2, p. 6.

With regard to the nature of the "testing" represented by these questions, it seemed reasonable to require that popular media stories about traffic gridlock provide answers to questions of consequence in order to warrant being classified as real deal

Based on my experience as university educator, senior civil servant, and consultant, questions 1-7 range from very basic to sophisticated, but all are consequential building blocks towards understanding the concept of traffic gridlock, the implications of traffic gridlock, and the alternative remedies for dealing with traffic gridlock.

Further, in the interests of fairness and/or flexibility, it was emphasized that the questions asked were indicative of the kinds of questions that could be asked to ascertain if a story should be rated as real deal.

That is, persons involved in media stories about traffic gridlock could have their own ideas about questions that "…. are consequential building blocks towards understanding the concept of traffic gridlock, the implications of traffic gridlock, and the alternative remedies for dealing with traffic gridlock", and the examination process was totally open to encountering such questions in media stories.

However, traffic issues are serious matters in many cities, which to my mind means that serious questions need asked in traffic gridlock media stories, and that standard precludes "lob ball" questions which are easily danced around. Readers familiar with setting exams that cut through bafflegab, smoke-and-mirrors, snow jobs, etc., will no doubt readily understand what I have in mind for deciding whether media story questions differing from those in Table A are of real deal or pile of nonsense calibre.

As for the Google searches, the same set of questions used to examine and classify popular media stories was also used.

Table B. Items Obtained from Google Searches: Testing, Testing, Testing.

If a Google Search Item Contains Substantive Answers to the Following Kinds of Questions about Traffic Gridlock, then the Item Is Likely in the Real Deal Camp: If it Does Not, then the Item Is Likely in the Pile of Nonsense Camp.

1. What is the meaning of traffic gridlock?
2. How is traffic gridlock defined?
3. How is gridlock measured?
4. What is the process whereby traffic gridlock occurs?
5. What is the established process whereby traffic gridlock is mitigated, resolved, or dissolved as the case may be?
6. What are the full environmental, economic, financial, social, energy, and multi-modal transportation system benefits and costs of solving either chronic or temporary manifestations of so-called traffic gridlock?
7. How do you methodologically measure the full environmental, economic, financial, social, energy, and multi-modal transportation system benefits and costs of solving either chronic or temporary manifestations of so-called traffic gridlock?

Source: Barry Wellar, 2011. *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?* transport-action.ca.Table 3, p. 8.

The explanation for using the same questions to classify media stories and Google search items was given on page 8 of the original report. It is repeated here for completeness.

> "Following standard research practice, and in particular having regard for the consistency of research questions as a means of achieving consistency and comparability of research answers, the questions used to test popular media items are repeated in Table 3 as the means used to test items that appear as Google search results."

2. Overview of Background Study Findings

Many, many hundreds of popular news items from Canadian, U.S, and other sources containing the term traffic gridlock were examined. As a general rule the stories did not address question 1, much less questions 2-7. The conclusion drawn was that in the absence of real deal evidence, it appears accurate to say that references to traffic gridlock in this body of literature are little more than word-dropping exercises, and invariably amount to a pile of nonsense.

Further, between this writing and early August, 2011 when *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?* was posted on various websites, no communications have been received in response to the request that I be informed of any media story misrepresentation(s) or oversight(s). Further, direct communications with media people such as journalists did not yield a single case of evidence associated with a media story involving traffic gridlock.

It therefore appears to say that even though the term "traffic gridlock" continues to be frequently used in media stories, it remains the case that minimal or no evidence is presented in the stories to justify the use of the term, and questions 1-7 remain unanswered.

As for the Google searches, a number of keywords were used to identify items that might be related to "traffic gridlock", and to then systematically filter the results to assist in classifying the items as real deal or nonsense contributions to the literature on "traffic gridlock".

Again, and consistent with the examination of media stories, real deal contributions are those which provide answers to questions 1-7 presented above, or to similar kinds of analytical questions.

Several sets of keywords were used to structure the searches and organize the results in *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?* As can be discerned by brief inspection of the lists below, the keywords progress from singular to combinatorial, separate to relational, descriptive to explanative, and in the process become increasingly incisive in terms of identifying items that are likely to make a real deal contribution to the literature on traffic gridlock.

- Keyword set 1. "grid"; "street grid"; "street grid plan"; "grid street plan"; "street grid density"; "lock"; "lock in"; "freeze"; "confine"; lock out"' "imprison" (Table 4, p.9);

- Keyword set 2. "gridlock", "traffic gridlock", "road gridlock", "highway gridlock", "intersection gridlock", "street grid density", "vehicular gridlock", "intersection gridlock law", "road network gridlock", "highway network gridlock", "intersection network gridlock" (Table 5, p.14);
- Keyword set 3. "cause of gridlock"; "cause of traffic gridlock"; "gridlock study"; "traffic gridlock study"; "measuring gridlock"; "measuring traffic gridlock"; "evidence of gridlock"; "evidence of traffic gridlock"; "evidence of intersection gridlock"; "evidence of vehicular gridlock"; evidence of vehicle gridlock"; "evidence of road gridlock"; "evidence of roadway gridlock"; "evidence of highway gridlock" (Table 6, p.15).

The results of the search from a real deal point of view were not pretty. Actually, they were ugly given the number times the terms appears relative to its validity.

Table C. Contrasting the Results Obtained from Google Searches When Research Modifiers Are Added to Assist in Answering the Question, Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?

Initial Search Results	Results Using a Research Modifier
"traffic gridlock" (326,000)	"*cause* of traffic gridlock"(1,700)
	"traffic gridlock *study*" (5)
	"evidence of traffic gridlock" (2)
	"*measuring* traffic gridlock" (0)
"road gridlock" (15, 800)	"*evidence* of road gridlock" (0)
"highway gridlock" 11,100)	"evidence of highway gridlock" (0)
"intersection gridlock" (3,250)	"evidence of intersection gridlock"(2)
"street grid density" (1,170)	"street grid density study" (0)
"vehicular gridlock" (874)	"evidence of vehicular gridlock" (0)
	"vehicular gridlock evidence" (0)
"road network gridlock" (8)	"evidence of road gridlock" (2)
	"road gridlock evidence" (0)

Source: Barry Wellar, 2011. *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?* transport-action.ca.Table 7, p. 18.

Two comments from the original report are sufficient to summarize the contributions which media stories and items identified in Google searches made to the question, "Traffic gridlock: the real deal or a pile of nonsense?"

- "… when the 326,000 results obtained for "traffic gridlock" drop to 2 results when "evidence" is added, and to 0 results when "measuring" is added, it appears fair to say that from a substantive perspective it is highly likely that an exceedingly large proportion of those 326,000 results are more nonsense than real deal." (p. 18)

- "And, a similar interpretation may be applied to all the other traffic gridlock-related search phrases which undergo huge drops in numbers of results when modified by such real deal terms as cause, study, measure, and evidence." (p 18)

On the one hand, then, the original research found that "traffic gridlock" received numerous mentions in media stories and Google items, and that the mentions very often included fatalistic, Armageddon-like laments or predictions about the current or future going-to-hell-in-a–handcart state of motor vehicle traffic. On the other hand, however, these laments and predictions are rarely if ever accompanied by evidence of the occurrence of actual traffic gridlock events.

This is a puzzlement to say the least, and in this report I explore one possible explanation, and the associated implication for public policy. That is, traffic gridlock" is a bad, mis-leading metaphor which has been accepted and promulgated by some parties as a truth for which no proof exists and none is needed. And, the associated cause-effect relationship is that a bad, mis-leading metaphor is a bad, mis-directed basis for setting public policy.

3. "Traffic Gridlock": A Bad, Mis-Leading Metaphor?

The original report suggests that there are a number of possible explanations to account for the frequent use of "traffic gridlock" in media stories and Google items about motor vehicle traffic issues, problems, concerns, etc. I am grateful to the journalists and members of various list serves who provided feedback on how to approach the explanation task.

However, I am especially indebted to, Dr. William Garrison, Professor Emeritus of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Emeritus Research Engineer in the Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Based on his comments, and bearing in mind that this is not a funded research project, I use the start-with-the-obvious approach in exploring the apparent mis-match between the high levels of popularity which "traffic gridlock" enjoys and the apparent absence of substantive evidence to justify that popularity.

As shown by the results from the initial investigations, the popularity of "traffic gridlock" has little or nothing to do with methodologically-based research. Rather, it appears fair to say, the appeal of "traffic gridlock" lies in its appeal as a figure of speech which can be construed to mean whatever the user of the term wishes.

The figure of speech which is discussed in this report that of ***metaphor***, and in particular the use of the word "gridlock" to characterize a traffic situation, state or condition. That is, traffic is in gridlock, or is gridlocked, and gridlock means whatever it is construed to mean by the user of the metaphor.

The original report contains several schematics demonstrating what traffic gridlock means in real-world terms as opposed to figure of speech terms. In this report I add

a graphic (Figure B) to visually illustrate what traffic gridlock means in operational terms, and to create a graphic foundation to establish that "traffic gridlock" is a bad, mis-leading metaphor when it comes to describing or representing the actual state of motor vehicle traffic.

But first, I want to introduce another metaphor to assist in establishing beyond a shadow of a doubt that "traffic gridlock" is a bad, mis-leading metaphor.

The new metaphor is "traffic blockage", and anyone who has experienced or knows someone who has experienced such blockages as artery blockage, bowel blockage, colon blockage, ear blockage, heart blockage, intestinal blockage, nasal blockage, sewer blockage, sinus blockage, and other kinds of blockages will readily appreciate where I am going with the traffic blockage metaphor..

That is, there are degrees of blockage, ranging from minimal to completely plugged. At the lower end of the scale blockage may amount to little more than a minor irritation or inconvenience, but at the upper end it can be a totally miserable, life-threatening, insufferable, etc., condition that requires significant adjustments or corrections being made to maintain the entity under duress.

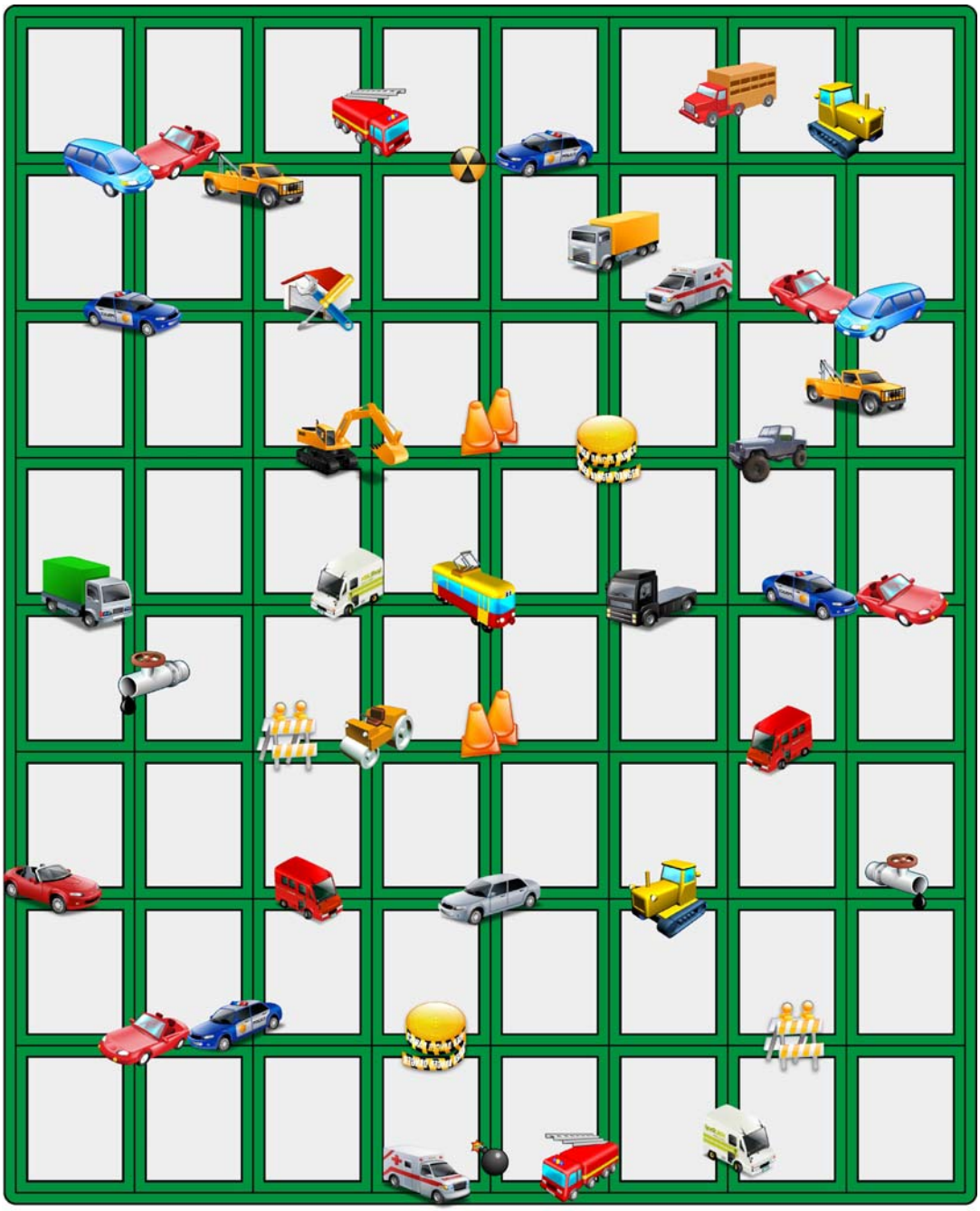
Figure A is an illustration of vehicle traffic blockage. As shown, a number of street segments and intersections are obstructed. Consequently, motorized vehicle traffic cannot move in a free flow fashion down those specific streets or through those specific intersections due to such incidents as stalled vehicles, police issuing citations, sanitation trucks on their pick-up routes, delivery trucks stopping for drop-offs, signal lights out of commission, etc.

However, all the vehicles on all the other streets can move about relatively freely on the remainder of the street grid, and many of the vehicles on obstructed streets can reverse directions and/or turn left or right to get out of their current situations and can also use the remainder of the grid.

The same line of argument holds for intersections which may be obstructed in whole or in part due to collisions, stalled vehicles, fire or police situations, left-turning vehicles, demonstrations, large volumes of pedestrians, parades, etc. The timeworn response has been that if full or near-full blockage occurs at one intersection, vehicles are routed through other less-obstructed intersections.

The two preceding paragraphs, and variations of Figure A with more or fewer obstructions at a given point in time, let us say an hour, not only describe and portray the daily motor vehicle traffic situation in many cities in the modern, urbanized world, they describe a relationship that has been building in numerous cities over many decades. Namely, traffic congestion tends to be part-and-parcel of the urbanization process.

Figure A. Graphic Illustration of Traffic Incidents Causing Blockages of an Urban Traffic Grid



Legend

Green = Streets with unobstructed vehicle traffic flow
Icons = Incidents obstructing vehicle traffic flow
Grey in black border = City block

Icons represent different traffic incidents such as: Collision; Slow-moving city road-work vehicle; Stopped delivery truck; Stopped sanitation vehicle; Vehicle pulled over by traffic police; Signal light malfunction; Construction site; OWS demonstration; Vehicle with flat tire; Funeral procession; Visiting dignitary procession

That is, urban areas are by definition congested places, congested streets are part of the overall urban congestion scene, traffic volumes and flows peak and ebb as part of the larger urban dynamic, and traffic blockages occur with hourly, daily, weekly, and seasonal patterns. At the lower end of the blockage scale, the disruptions or obstructions often amount to little more than momentary bouts of irritation on trips to work or shopping centres, and brief media stories that are of little consequence to most viewers, listeners, or readers. All part of life in the city.

And, also part of life in the city, are traffic situations which are deemed to be at the extreme upper end of the blockage scale involving severely acute or acutely severe traffic congestion situations of apparently doom-like proportions. Word bites used in media stories, press releases, and other statements to portray or construe these traffic situations include snarled, jammed, chaos, bumper-to-bumper, and brought to a standstill, as well as the metaphor of interest in this report, gridlock.

However, and as outlined above, traffic blockage from minimal to extreme and all levels in between is just part of the larger matter of traffic congestion in general, and traffic congestion in general is just part of the matter of urban congestion in general. In this report of limited scope, therefore, consideration of congestion concepts is limited to using them as context for the metaphors of traffic blockage and traffic gridlock, and the larger matter of congestion *per se* is set aside.

Further, there is a very substantive reason for not venturing into the congestion sphere in this report. Simply put, and has been documented over the past century, traffic congestion is a complex transportation concept with significant engineering, economic, geographic, social, planning, political, environmental, technological, and other implications.

With all due respect to the complexity matter, therefore, it is emphasized that this report is <u>not</u> about traffic congestion *per se*. Rather, my focus is two metaphors, traffic blockage and traffic gridlock. And, to be specific, the intent of the report is to use the traffic blockage metaphor as a means to discredit and dismiss the traffic gridlock metaphor which I believe erroneously distorts understanding the role of motor vehicle congestion in urban places, and obscures/confounds the appropriate ways and means of considering and addressing urban motor vehicle congestion.

For purposes of illustration, 43 incidents of different kinds of traffic blockage involving intersections and streets are presented in the illustrative grid, and here is the kicker. Even if the 43 incidents, or 59 incidents or 71 incidents for that matter, occurred simultaneously during the peak hour of incoming or outgoing or any other kind of traffic flow, the grid in Figure A would not be locked. That is, many and perhaps most of the vehicles could go forwards, backwards, or sideways with little more than a minor amount of inconvenience.

As shown by Figure A, then, traffic blockage is a good metaphor because it represents actual, observed motor vehicle traffic events in cities around the world, and the phenomenon of traffic blockage is similar to other kinds of blockages

experienced by people on an everyday basis. Further, this is a standalone metaphor that requires minimal if any interpretation. As evidence in this regard, discussions reveal that children in elementary school who walk or ride bicycles know full well what obstructions and blockages affecting walk traffic and cycling traffic mean in real world terms. Presumably adults are no less astute when it comes to understanding blockages of motor vehicle traffic.

With traffic blockage as the (good) metaphor of context, we now move on to the metaphor of primary interest,"traffic gridlock",

Figure B is based on the same street grid as Figure A, but instead of bits and pieces of motor vehicle traffic blockage here and there, what we now have is a situation wherein numerous intersections and street segments inside the perimeter of the grid are obstructed to the degree and extent that traffic is totally locked in or it is totally locked out of much of the grid. As a result, motor vehicle traffic in this area (inside the perimeter streets and intersections) cannot move forwards, cannot move backwards, and cannot move sideways. Traffic is gridlocked. Or, to re-phrase, it is paralyzed.

Which leads to the question, "Could traffic blockage ever become a traffic gridlock event, and thereby justify use of the traffic gridlock metaphor to describe traffic blockage that renders a grid or a non-trivial portion of a grid paralyzed?"

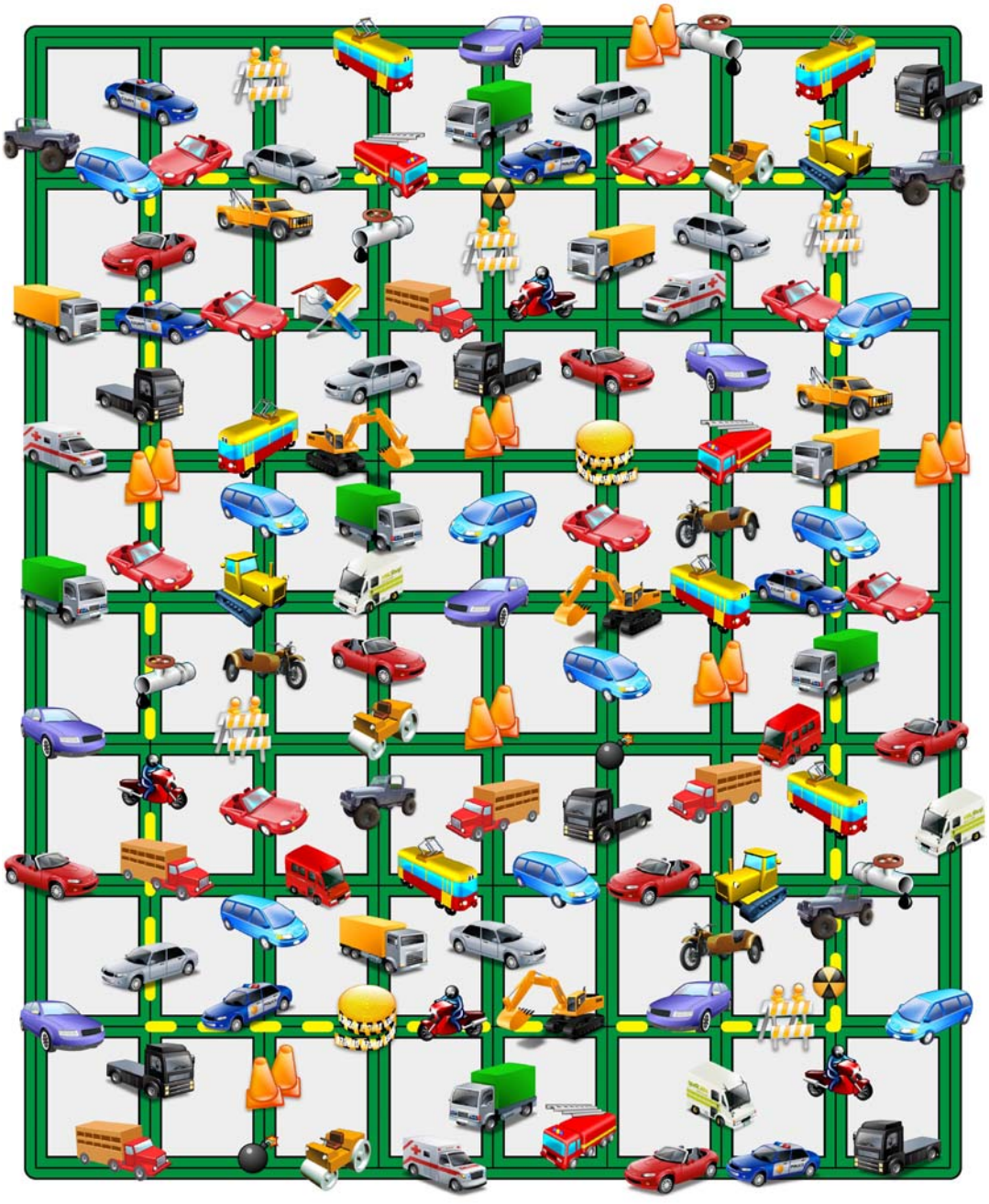
The answer is, "Of course, but, and this is a huge but, the likelihood of ever witnessing such an event based on the record to date is about the same as witnessing a flying pig".

By way of brief explanation, to get from Figure A to Figure B requires that every street segment is plugged and every intersection is totally obstructed at the same time so that motor vehicle traffic is precluded from entering, moving within, or leaving the gridlocked zone. At the risk of entering into the domain of extreme hyperbole, what I believe it would take to reach such a state might be appropriately described as a raging epidemic of incidents occurring not just in short order, but originating from the centre of the gridlocked area and moving rapidly, systematically, and relentlessly outwards in a street-after-street and intersection-after-intersection fashion.

As to the likelihood of that happening, and hence the flying pig metaphor, widespread searches and solicitations -- including a request that the City of Ottawa ask the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to provide evidence to support its assertion of traffic gridlock in Canadian cities -- have been totally unsuccessful to date. (Note: Communications on the City of Ottawa-FCM traffic gridlock matter are included in Appendix A.)

That is, no evidence has been located or received which establishes that a traffic blockage situation in Canada has ever amounted to a traffic gridlock situation covering even as few as a dozen city blocks.

Figure B. Graphic Illustration of Traffic Incidents Causing Urban Traffic Gridlock



Legend

Green = Streets with unobstructed vehicle traffic flow
Icons = Incidents obstructing vehicle traffic flow
Grey in black border = City block
Dashed yellow line = Gridlocked area

Icons represent different traffic incidents such as: Collision; Slow-moving city road-work vehicle; Stopped delivery truck; Stopped sanitation vehicle; Vehicle pulled over by traffic police; Signal light malfunction; Construction site; OWS demonstration; Vehicle with flat tire; Funeral procession; Visiting dignitary procession

In the previous report, *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?* I did not refer to the metaphor aspect. However, upon reflection it appears that the choice of the word ***Nonsense*** may have been prescient.

Long story short, not only has no evidence been located or provided to establish that a non-trivial traffic gridlock event has occurred anywhere in Canada, but no evidence has been found which demonstrates that any Canadian media story or Canadian-based Google result defines traffic gridlock in structural or functional terms.

As illustrated by the flying pig example, metaphors can entertain, capture the imagination, etc., and frequently serve a provocative, productive, and often fun purpose.

However, when a metaphor such as "traffic gridlock" is repeatedly used in all seriousness for political, planning, engineering, media reporting, and other public interest purposes, but upon critical examination comes off at best as a pile of nonsense which deliberately or inadvertently distorts or misconstrues reality, it appears fair to conclude that the metaphor is bad and mis-leading.

At best.

4. "Traffic Gridlock": A Bad, Mis-Leading Metaphor that Makes for Bad, Mis-Directed Public Policy

It is possible that although "traffic gridlock" is a bad, mis-leading metaphor, it could be the basis of good public policy.

However, recalling my experiences of seven years in the Government of Canada, 30 years as a professor engaged in public policy teaching and research, and more than 40 years of engagement in civic affairs as a community activist, I have no idea whatsoever how a bad, mis-leading metaphor like "traffic gridlock" could logically yield good public policy.

Moreover, I have no precedents to follow, since I have never encountered even a single claim by any government at any level in Canada that it had achieved good, public policy on the basis of a bad, mis-leading metaphor.

Accepting that I could be in error, second opinions were sought, and this was done by communications with former and current policy advisors and transportation planners and traffic engineers in Canada and the U.S. Their unanimous response was that good public policy is based as a general rule on high-quality information which is derived from substantive research studies, and making a public policy decision on the basis of a bad metaphor is a recipe for an outcome ranging between boondoggle and disaster. To a person, they commented that they would never use or consider using a bad metaphor as the foundation of a public policy formation process.

After due consideration, I do not find any reason to pursue this matter. I believe on the basis of the evidence which I have compiled that "traffic gridlock" is a bad mis-directed metaphor that must of necessity make for bad, mis-leading policy, end of story. Keeping an open mind however, I invite being corrected by anyone who has substantive evidence to the contrary.

5. Conclusion

In a previous publication, *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?,* I reported on a study which applied several research procedures to examine media stories and Google search items containing the terms "traffic gridlock" or "gridlock" implying traffic gridlock. The objective was to ascertain whether the media stories and Google items establish that traffic gridlock is a real deal matter, or whether the stories and items contribute to a pile of nonsense. The finding was that 99% of the stories and items belong in the nonsense pile.

Upon publication of that report a number of questions and suggestions arose, including my own. In particular, I wondered, How was it that so many elected officials, journalists, professional planners and engineers, and numerous others make statements based on what unequivocally appears to be a nonsensical concept, notion, construct, whatever? And, I also wondered, How could so many of them seem to earnestly use a nonsensical concept, notion, construct, whatever, in association with public transport/traffic policy, and/or the quest for public funds for road network expansions, modifications, etc.?

While contemplating the preparation of a research project proposal to investigate those and other related questions, an exchange of communications with Prof. William Garrison raised the possibility that the root of the problem which I was investigating could be metaphorical in nature. That is, "traffic gridlock" may be a bad, mis-leading metaphor which, if accepted at face value could be the basis of flawed media stories and Google search items, and could also be the basis of mis-directed public policies.

This report explores that possibility, and for context and evaluative purposes the good metaphor "traffic blockage" is introduced to graphically demonstrate that 'traffic gridlock" is a bad, mis-leading metaphor for a variety of reasons.

The report is then concluded by discussing the implications of basing a public policy decision on a bad, mis-leading metaphor. Based on my experience as a policy advisor, researcher, and consultant, the implications are totally negative, a position which is shared by an informal panel of policy advisors, transportation planners, and traffic engineers. The panel is in unanimous agreement that advocating or acting on the basis of a bad, mis-leading metaphor such as "traffic gridlock" is a sure-fire recipe for promoting or achieving a bad, mis-directed public policy.

I therefore close the report by suggesting that the validity of the title of the report has been established, and by posing a question for possible future reference.

That is, in the absence of substantive evidence which counters the design and findings of *Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense?* and *Traffic Gridlock: A Bad, Mis-Leading Metaphor that Makes for Bad, Mis-Directed Public Policy,* what should thinking, concerned citizens make of an elected official, journalist, professional planner, professional engineer, developer, or other shaper of our cities who uses a bad, mis-leading metaphor as the basis of his or her position on an important public policy matter?

Appendix A.

Request that Mayor and Councillors, City of Ottawa, make an inquiry to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities regarding use of the phrase "traffic gridlock" in a letter sent by the Federation to the Editor, *Ottawa Citizen*

Mayor and Councillors, October 26, 2011
City of Ottawa

Re: Smarter spending (editorial, *Ottawa Citizen*, Oct. 19) and Infrastructure lacking (letter, *Ottawa Citizen*, Oct. 21)

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

In my opinion the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) erred in its letter responding to the *Citizen* editorial, and I suggest that the organization needs to re-think a significant part of the argument that is being put forward to obtain increased funding for infrastructure purposes.

I believe it is generally accepted that many Canadian municipalities are in grim financial and physical condition due to existing and impending infrastructure failures, no bone of contention there. However, I suggest that using so-called "traffic gridlock" to make the case about the transportation component is an unfortunate choice by the Federation.

In the first place, much of the current, motor vehicle traffic situation was created by municipal councils that approved car-oriented regional shopping centres, and round after round of low-density housing sprawl, and were then obliged to spend large amounts of money year after year on road-building schemes to accommodate the spawned traffic.

After decades of road-building, however, the chickens are coming home to roost as more of the road network deteriorates, and councils scratch to find the money to cover the ever-growing repair bills.

And, to compound the problem, some local governments are digging themselves into deeper financial holes by continuing to budget for new road network expansions and extensions while delaying repairs to their existing networks.

Second, the report "Traffic Gridlock: The Real Deal or a Pile of Nonsense" concludes that more than 99% of the references to "traffic gridlock" in the media and in materials obtained via Google searches have no basis in evidence. transport-action.ca/dc/Wellar_TrafficGridlock

Moreover, and this is why mentioning traffic gridlock by FCM is such a poor bargaining ploy, any evidence of actual traffic gridlock at the national scale -- motor vehicle traffic grinds to a complete stop over multiple-block areas for hours at a time on a daily basis in numerous Canadian cities -- is undeniable confirmation of poor urban management over many years by municipal and provincial governments wherever so-called traffic gridlock events occur.

I hasten to add that if FCM does in fact have traffic gridlock evidence to counter my research findings and/or statements in this letter, your assistance in obtaining access to the evidence would be most appreciated.

And, on the other hand, if the claim by FCM is not supported by substantive evidence, may I suggest that Council send a communication to the Federation and propose that the faulty "traffic gridlock" notion be replaced by an argument which is consistent with the *Citizen* editorial call for clearer thinking and more informed choices about how public monies are spent for what purposes.

Barry Wellar
890 Ridley Blvd.
Ottawa, ON K2A 3P5

E-mail confirmation that the letter of October 26, 2011 from B. Wellar was received by the Clerk's Office, City of Ottawa and that notification was sent to Mayor and Members of Council on October 27, 2011.

From: Whelan, Dawn [mailto:Dawn.Whelan@ottawa.ca]
Sent: October 27, 2011 11:48 AM
To: =City Council
Cc: wellarb@uottawa.ca; Donnelly, Leslie; O'Connor, M. Rick; Piamonte, Vickie
Subject: FW: Letter to Mayor and Councillors
Importance: High

Mayor and Members of Council,

Please find attached correspondence received from Mr. Barry Wellar, with respect to "**Smarter spending (editorial, *Ottawa Citizen*, Oct. 19) and Infrastructure lacking (letter, *Ottawa Citizen*, Oct. 21".**

Dawn Whelan
A/Program Manager
Council and Standing Committees Unit
and Council Coordinator
City of Ottawa
Telephone: 580-2424, Ext. 21837
Facsimile: 580-9609
E-mail: dawn.whelan@ottawa.ca
Mail Code: 01-71

From: Bird, Dan [mailto:Dan.Bird@ottawa.ca] **On Behalf Of** Taylor, Mark
Sent: October 27, 2011 4:16 PM
To: wellarb@uottawa.ca
Subject: FW: Letter to Mayor and Councillors
Importance: High

Hi Mr. Wellar,

Dawn Whelan forwarded your e-mail to our office. I have given it to Councillor Mark Taylor for his review and reply. I expect he will reply to you within two weeks.

Regards,

Dan Bird
Special Assistant to the Councillor
Office of Councillor Mark Taylor, Bay Ward
Daniel.Bird@Ottawa.ca
BayWardLive.ca
Phone 613.580.2477 Fax 613.580.2517 Ext. 26844
Address 110 Laurier Avenue West Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

From: Barry Wellar [mailto:wellarb@uottawa.ca]
Sent: October 27, 2011 4:47 PM
To: 'Taylor, Mark'
Subject: RE: Letter to Mayor and Councillors

Thank you, Mr. Bird.

I do not know which member(s) of council is/are the City of Ottawa delegate(s) to FCM but, should council consider proceeding with a communication to FCM

expressing my concerns, Mr. Taylor may wish to inform council and the delegate(s) that I have been involved in FCM matters as far back as the 1970s, and my current interest is of a positive nature, that is, to suggest how FCM might improve the case that it is appears to be making in an attempt to persuade the federal government to give proper regard to the role that local governments play in the national economy.

Dr. Barry Wellar, MCIP
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University of Ottawa
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Reply from City of Ottawa Councillor Mark Taylor regarding Request that Mayor and Councillors, City of Ottawa, make an inquiry to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities regarding use of the phrase "traffic gridlock" in a letter sent by the Federation to the Editor, *Ottawa Citizen.*

From: Bird, Dan [mailto:Dan.Bird@ottawa.ca] On Behalf Of Taylor, Mark
Sent: November 15, 2011 4:39 PM
To: wellarb@uottawa.ca
Subject: FW: Letter to Mayor and Councillors
Importance: High

Dear Mr. Wellar,

Thank you for e-mailing me your response to Federation of Canadian Municipalities Ottawa President Berry Vrbanovic's letter to the Ottawa Citizen. I am pleased to respond.

The 2012 City of Ottawa Draft Budget makes significant investments both in road repairs and in transit, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Knowing your keen interest in municipal affairs, I am sure you have reviewed the draft budget and I look forward to talking about it with you at Committee.

Once again, thank you for your e-mail.

Sincerely,

Mark Taylor
Ottawa City Councillor, Bay Ward

Comment on reply from Councillor Taylor. My communication is all about "traffic gridlock", and the letter is devoid of any reference to the matter of concern. Reminds

me of the days when I gave zeroes (0's) to students whose answers on exams had nothing to do with the questions asked.

STATUS OF FILE

As of the completion date of this report, November 27, 2011, the letter of October 26, 2011 has not been responded to by the mayor, council, or the transportation committee, City of Ottawa, or the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

About the Author

Barry Wellar is Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa, Distinguished Research Fellow, Transport Action Canada, Policy and Research Advisor, Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods, and Principal, Wellar Consulting Inc. He is a Registered Professional Planner (RPP) in Ontario, and a Member of the Canadian Institute of Planners (MCIP).

He has appeared as an expert witness before the Ontario Municipal Board, and has been retained as an expert witness in civil actions involving transportation safety and associated standard of care issues in Ontario and Saskatchewan. Dr. Wellar is the author of more than 150 papers in the transportation domain, and has received the Anderson Medal and the Ullman Award for his internationally recognized achievements in applied transportation research, and the Horwood Award for his research and leadership in the field of urban and regional information systems.

Recent projects and associated publications include: **Methodologies for Identifying and Ranking Sustainable Transport Practices in Urban Regions** which was undertaken for Transport Canada; **Transportation: Inspiring a Sustainability Action Agenda** which was presented at the 2011 Sustainable Community Summit: Identifying Barriers and Providing Solutions organized by Yasir Naqvi, MPP, Ottawa Centre, ynaqvi.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org; and **Thoughts about a New Generation of U.S. Spatial Adjustments and the Implications for Canada and the Algoma Region,** seminar on U.S. Geography, Department of Geography & Geology, Algoma University, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Fall Semester, 2011.

Information about Dr. Wellar's academic, research, public service, community service, and consulting activities and productions can be found at various websites, including wellarconsulting.com, transport2000.ca, slideshare.net, urbanneighbourhoods.ca, urisa.org, and http://www.geomatics.uottawa.ca/

In addition, a Google search for "B. Wellar" and "Barry Wellar" yields a number of results.