

2015 Advisory Mission Recommendations

This short report sets out a series of conclusions and recommendations for government policy at the national and city levels, prepared by the author upon conclusion of his sixth invited working trip to Taiwan since 2009. This visit was organized in cooperation with the Advanced Public Transport Research Center of National Taiwan University. The views and recommendations set out here are solely those of the author.



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ecoplan international



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A morning in Taipei Traffic

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Introduction ¹

Lyon, 16 February 2015

Dear Friends,

It had been a year and a half since I last worked in Taiwan, the longest separation since I started collaborating with colleagues at the Advanced Public Transport Research Center of National Taiwan University in 2009. For much of this time since my last visit, in addition to my teaching, editorial responsibilities, and advisory work, I have been working on a most challenging new book project under the title “Convergence: General Theory of Transport in Cities”. The book aims to provide a much needed, *consistent* base for policy and investment decisions in this important and fast changing field where ad hoc decision making by unprepared politicians and all too prepared interest groups has all too often prevailed. .

A Different Perspective

This last year has been a period of deep inspection of my decades of hands-on experience in the transport and sustainable development fields in cities around the world. As a result of this ongoing educational process, I find myself this time looking at the issues in Taiwan from this broader perspective.

My keynote address to the *International Forum on Livable City & Eco-Mobility* in Hsinchu on 29 January was the first in a series of international “road tests”, giving me a precious opportunity to present some of the main arguments from the book before expert audiences to seek their critical comments and views.

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My visit this time put me in touch, once again, with a number of the leaders in the field, including mayors, Director Generals of transport and urban policy, distinguished university professors, journalists and experts in the field in the cities of Tainan, Taipei, New Taipei City and Hsinchu -- a splendid range of city sizes and approaches which have helped me to get up to date on the issues and approaches to which they are presently giving attention.

Since I have been visiting Taiwan and meeting with and learning from leaders in the field for more than half a decade, I have been able to develop some not-inconsequential “outsider” perspective on what is going on there. It is against this background that I am pleased to share with you the main findings, conclusions and recommendations that I have to make upon conclusion of this latest visit.

New Mobility in Taiwan – Far from standing still

The transportation planning and policy scene has changed considerably since my first visit back in 2009, at which time the old American car-centric model was being gradually (too gradually) modified through considerable investments in rail and bus transit, though the main beneficiaries of public investment continue to be cars and infrastructure as required in the old model.

In the final section of this report I have pointed out some of the more striking examples of underlying policy changes and projects which are demonstrating in concrete terms that new ways of thinking and doing things are starting to dominate the field.

For those of you who have got to know me over these last years, you know that my point of view is not entirely neutral; I have a concrete point of reference in my work, namely the lessons that have been learned, often at high cost, at the leading edge in *European* cities over the last two decades. The recommendations I propose here for your consideration and are not intended as encouragement for simply copying their approaches. Rather I invite you to reach across the planet, study them from up close and learn from the experience of the best. And then adapt and make them better yet in Taiwan.

Three quick points about what follows before we dig into the details.

First, I must admit that none of the ideas set out here are entirely original to me. Many of my colleagues in Taiwan are already looking into, working with and recommending similar approaches. My hope is that since in this case they come from an external voice, this may help reinforce their cases and their own recommendations. It is important that we all speak with a common voice.

Second, what you have here are strictly *my* outsider conclusions and you will therefor understand that they are based on incomplete information. (But that is perhaps not so bad, since in fact decisions making in the face of incomplete information is what transport and city planning and policy is all about.)

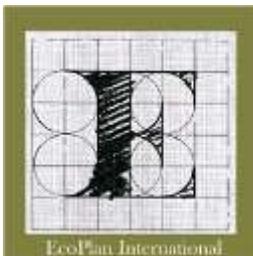
My last proviso is that what follows is hyper concise, and in each case to be fully understandable requires far more information than the few lines that introduce each of these points. For now however please permit me to stick with these short introductions, to get the discussion going. That said, the interested reader may find it comforting to know that I am more than available to go into further details on any of these points if that might help.

The recommendations that follow may appear to be bold to the point of rudeness. Please, they are not intended as such. They represent my best attempt to draw on my experience and vision, and to be useful to the people and cities of Taiwan.

Now on to my recommendations, along with this invitation for your comments, corrections and counsel. My email address and phone number appear below.

I look forward with real interest to hearing from you.

Eric Britton



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2015 Recommendations:

1. Give up on the old American model, once and for all

It is my impression that despite many serious efforts on your part, that you have yet to abandon the American model (basically priority to cars) for the European model (basically , priority to fair and efficient mobility for all, at the price of reducing street space for motorised traffic). To be a bit aggressive, I would say that from an on-street perspective your cities just (a) have not perhaps fully appreciated to what extent that old car-centric model is broke, and (b) that the new one really does work.

Public attention and investments should be refocused on projects and programs which favor more space efficient, cleaner and safer technologies, modes and services. The core of the new transportation philosophy can be reduced to two fundamental steps:

Step One: Make Driving Harder

Step Two: Make Not-Driving Easier

Then, once firmly convinced about the integrity of this approach, the next step is to *consistently adhere to it*. No excuses, no exceptions.

2. Step up partnership with land use and urban design

The transportation planning and policy functions in most parts of the world has been too far held apart from the inseparable, determining, underlying issues of land use and urban design. Spatial organization lies at the heart of the need for movement. Transportation is properly viewed as a public service, and access depends critically on how the city is structured. These co-functions need to be united at both city and national levels.

This will become increasingly important as new city structures emerge – *epicities* of different sizes which spring up around the central agglomeration, with the potential of being more self-contained and thus more appropriate for low-carbon mobility. An historic opportunity not to be missed.

3. Put IT at the core of your transportation strategy

This is something you are already very good at, but if you are going to get the highest performance of all elements of your global mobility system, this technical virtuosity needs to be extended to all elements of the system. For most of the last century “transportation” was essentially seen as some kind of combination of infrastructure and vehicles. It did not take too many decades with the uncontrolled explosion of automobility however for it to be very clear that this approach could take us only so far.

The 21st century presents not only a much more complicated and severe set of challenges, but also is bringing on an entirely new era of putting information technology to work in our sector in many and of the most part unforeseen ways.

There is a test for any transport investment strategy that is proposed for the next several years. If when you analyze it closely you realize that it basically conforms to the 20th century transport and IT model, there is every possibility that your project is not nearly as good as it could and should be.

Taiwan is extremely fortunate to have world level expertise in the necessary fields, and I for one would like to see it were consistently and even radically expanded to projects, services, investments and policy in the transport sector.

4. Civil Society

Taiwan has an exceptional advantage in the form of outstanding university programs and professors who are world level in their fields of expertise and actively lead the contributions of Civil Society or “The Third Force” which is essential to ensure both efficiency and democracy.

We would like to see more high profile activity from NGOs, associations, environmental and neighborhood groups, consultants, bloggers, schools and the media including investigative reporting. More participation and feedback is needed in order to ensure that all the voices are being aired and interest served.

5. Strategic Analysis of Motorised Two Wheelers

A full-fledged strategic analysis and plan is now called for, both at the national and city levels. And it is not too early! M2Ws are often seen by public officials as a problem, right as far as it goes, but things are more complicated than that. The problems are vast and there for all to see. However I see these independently chosen and financed, flexible, space-efficient, cost-effective personal vehicles as a tremendous and as yet poorly understood mobility asset, which if we can get it right open up vast possibilities of better, safer, cleaner, less intrusive, and more harmonious mobility for all. And that not only for younger people and lower income groups, but also increasingly for car owners who are turning increasingly to M2Ws as an affordable and more time efficient mobility option at a time when governments in most cities continue to fail to put the traffic problems into the cage.

If you undertake this initiative with success -- which I cannot doubt will be the result – you are going to make a huge contribution not only to cities and people of Taiwan, but also to cities in other parts of Asian and the world who are facing these same problems and badly in need of your shining examples. But to get there a lot of hard work is required.

6. The “Uber” Revolution

The sudden, striking and entirely unexpected appearance of organizations in the private sector offering new and at times radically different mobility packages needs to be seen not as an unpleasant detail but rather as an extraordinary opportunity to study and bring about a major and much-needed paradigm change from the old broken model. Uber, Lyft, Sidecar, Curb, YongChe, LeCab and a fast growing group of solo and shared ride contenders, as well as more traditional taxi operations starting to rise to the challenge, is the fastest growing new mobility alternative to unsatisfactory taxi or other transport services. This movement deserves close study and careful experimentation.

Moreover, if you take on this challenge you are inevitably going to be impelled to carry out a very substantial rethink of the conventional taxi sector. This is not an easy challenge, but if it was once a matter of choice, it no longer is. You might as well get started on that immediately. You’re ready for it and no sense in waiting around.

7. More safe cycling

Achieved by (a) taking space now allocated to inefficient and toxic motorized traffic, and by (b) creating low speed zones and routes across the city which offer safe havens for cyclists. There is a huge inventory of information and examples of good practices which are immediately available to you, so there is no reason for me to even start to provide references, etc. here.

8. Walk/Bike to School

This is a subset of the above, but is sufficiently important to be made into a recommendation by itself.

For reasons of health and social development it should be a national priority to ensure that every child Taiwan be able to safely walk or bike to school. There is no good reason that such a program cannot be successfully engaged. For every reason that might be advanced arguing that this is not possible here or there, there is an experience-proven response. Again once again there is a huge body of information which is readily available to you which can be put to work to turn this from an idea into policy and reality.

9. Car Free Day Audits

It is my observation that most cities in Taiwan are not getting full value out of the Car Free Days concept. While it is especially gratifying for me to see that you are continuing to hold them in many cities, for the most part I am not seeing the *strategic* importance of the events. Which was my idea from the very beginning.

So it is now time to move to a new way to put your Car Free Days to work. In addition to whatever events organized on that Day, I now recommended that once a year a “New Mobility Audit” be carried out by hosting city governments. The audit will identify in summary terms the status of selected key sustainable transport modes and indicators. And on the Car Free Day the city mayors can provide (a) a concise summary of progress made in the specific target areas over the last year; (b) while at the same time announcing, for example, a small set of specific targets to be set for the year ahead.

10. Gas Prices

No matter what the explanations, justifications and complications might be, this resource needs to be fully and fairly priced to take fully into account the high negative external costs of motorised transport. From the vantage of more efficient and cleaner transport in cities, this should be a clear priority.

Gas prices should include all externalities, meaning that they need to be heavily taxed in order to ensure well-being of the population and the planet. This is an excellent opportunity to devise and start to implement such a strategy since petrol prices have bottomed out in the last months.

Please put this into the central core of your climate, environment, and life quality strategy for all. Without it you simply are not credible.

11. Massive Support for Renewables

One more new partnership.²

In work over the last year on the General Theory of Transport in Cities have become increasingly aware that if we are to be sustainable in our sector, we must shift sharply from our unsustainable traditional reliance on fossil fuels both to (a) high energy-efficiency mobility forms (exergy), and also (b) away from carbon-based systems to different forms of efficient electrical propulsion.

However for this to be meaningful, there needs to be major and massive investments and programs for greatly increased, cost-competitive production from renewables. The transport sector in all its parts should now step forward to become one of the strongest partners and most active supporters of aggressive strategic investment in renewables, for which there are major and as yet unaddressed possibilities in Taiwan.

² I have long been very critical about knee-jerk government support for electric vehicle projects, on the understanding that technology selection and development is something best carried out by the private sector, whereas the goal of government policy should be to provide broad guidelines and specific performance parameters and goals, leaving it to the competence of the private sector to decide what is the technology package that will do this job best. However my position on this has over the last year evolved considerably, as hopefully the above will start to make clear.

12. Join Europe

The leading edge of integrated transport and city planning and practice in the world today is firmly in Europe, and it is my proposal that one of the best ways for cities, institutions and programs in Taiwan to sharpen your policies and practices will be through closer association with the best groups, projects and mobility approaches in Europe. There is an excellent program which could provide the vehicle for such cooperation: EPOMM, the European Platform on Mobility Management, a network of governments, national and local, engaged in Mobility Management.

Given Taiwan's level of excellence in the sector, this could be a most creative partnership. Subsequent to my return to Europe I have taken contact with the people responsible for the EPOMM program and am encouraged by their receptiveness to this idea. So this option is now there for you to pursue, and I very much hope you will do exactly that.

13. Share Transport Conference II

In 2010 a team led by professor Jason Chang and myself worked for several months under the direction and sponsorship of the city of Kaohsiung to organize the first ever International Conference on Share Transport, which was both innovative and highly successful. (Further information on that conference is available on the website created to support it at <http://sharetransport.org/>).

Theme & Objective: Share/Transport is the largely uncharted, rich middle ground of high-impact, low-carbon, available-now mobility options between the long dominant poles of "private transport" (albeit on public roads) and mass transport (scheduled, fixed-route services) at the two extremes. The Third Way of getting around in cities.

The first World Share/Transport Forum assembled a distinguished panel of international experts for a series of presentations, Master Classes and group discussions, examining and inviting contact on leading edge practices and lessons from car/, ride/, bike/, taxi/ and street/sharing projects worldwide.

I strongly recommend that attention be given to organizing a high-level conference to build on the Kaohsiung success in the year ahead. If ever there were a time for such a conference, this is it.

14. Patten Breaks: New Approaches at the Leading Edge

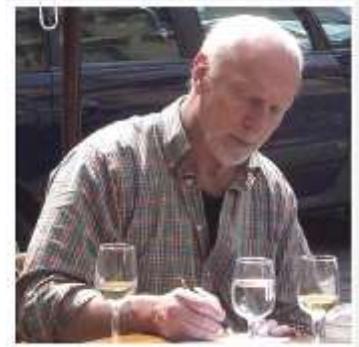
Taiwan is today a hotbed of innovational new mobility activities at the national level and in leading cities around the country. And while I do not have sufficient information or project expertise to provide an inventory of these ongoing activities here, nor is it the object of this advisory report, here are a handful of these shifts that came to my attention during this last visit.

- **TOD:** The shift to a transit-oriented development policy for the next 140 km metro project for Taipei is worth noting. The first phase invested US\$ 20 billion over the past 25 years for 140 kms of system, while ignoring the TOD policy. The new policy signals a major break in the positive linking of city and transport planning as called for here.
- **Carsharing:** Hsinchu City is reportedly looking closely at the Bremen model for study, planning and eventual operations.
- **Tramway:** Kaohsiung is nearing completion of a 16.5 billion TWD circular tramway, signaling a clear break with the previous policy of heavy underground Metro construction, providing a more open system integrated with multiple public space projects.
- **OSK:** Hsinchu has initiated a high profile public space project to provide a quiet, essentially car free environment for pedestrians and cyclists in a busy central zone of one square kilometer.
- **Public bicycle system:** The Taipei City YouBike system, which started on a small scale, has been greatly expanded via a BOT collaboration with local manufacturer Giant Bicycles. By 2014 more than 6000 bikes in service with more than 22 million rentals (more than twice the total for 2013).
- **City Bus Day:** Tainan has now extended the Annual Car Free Day to a monthly Bus Day offering numerous incentives, and during which mayor, city officials and others are invited to travel by bus.
- **Mobility as Service:** Several Taiwanese technology companies and researchers, in conjunction with government, are looking at the possibility of some form of partnership with the Helsinki “Mobility as Service” project currently in process.

When I first came to Taiwan in 2009 policy and investments were still heavily dominated by the old American car-based model. But as you can see even from this brief resume the New Mobility Agenda is well on its way. Now all you have to do is to keep going.

About the author:

Trained as a development economist, Francis Eric Knight Britton is Managing Director of EcoPlan International, an independent advisory network providing strategic counsel for government and business on policy and decision issues involving complex systems, social-technical change and sustainable development. His latest work focuses on the subject of equity, economy and efficiency in city transport, and helping governments to ask the right questions and find practical solutions to mobility, public space and job creation issues. Distinguished Professor of Sustainable Development, Economy and Society at the Institut Supérieur de Gestion in Paris, he is founding editor of the international collaborative journal *World Streets* and the *Journal of World Transport Policy and Practice*. His forthcoming book, “Convergence: Toward a General Theory of Transport in Cities”, is being presented, discussed and critiqued in a series of international conferences, master classes, workshops and media events over 2015.



(More at <http://wp.me/PsKUY-2p7>)

EcoPlan International: An independent advisory network and NGO providing strategic counsel for government and industry in the areas of economic development, sustainable transport and sustainable cities. Publisher of [World Streets: the Politics of Transport in Cities](#).

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