

Aleida Andrino-Chavez

From: Eileen Harrington
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2010 4:02 PM
To: Aleida Andrino-Chavez
Subject: FW: Attention Traffic and Safety Commission

This needs to be sent to your committee member Ray Anderson. Unfortunately, he doesn't have email so am forwarding to you.

Thanks,
 Eileen

-----Original Message-----

From: Catherine Sutton [mailto:catherine@sonic.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2010 3:53 PM
To: City General Email Box
Subject: Attention Traffic and Safety Commission

February 10, 2010

An open letter to Commissioner Ray Anderson and Albany's Traffic and Safety Commission, February 5, 2010

First of all, thank you all so much for the work you put in for the City of Albany. It is much appreciated. I had the honor of being at the commission meeting in the library on Monday, Jan 25, and made some contributions to the discussion. As I left I felt I that wanted to write to you in depth about what was behind my comments. Please forgive the length.

Albany, like many other cities in the US, has its challenges, but we are small and flexible enough that we are able to take action relatively quickly and I feel proud that our city government is tackling the crisis of climate change and the end of the age of cheap oil with more vigor than most.

Experts tell us (1) we have until 2015 to avert the catastrophic consequences of our way of life, to drastically reduce net greenhouse gases by completely turning around our way of doing things. That includes where we work, what we work at, how we travel, what we buy and where it's made, how we use energy in our homes, what we eat, how and where we produce it ... and that's just the beginning of the list!

We are at a critical juncture in the history of the human race. Some have called it the third major revolution. The first was the dawning of the Age of Agriculture about 10,000 years ago. The second was the Industrial Age about 200 years ago when we discovered the enormous power of fossil fuels and oil. The third, and the one I can feel rising all about me, is the Age of Sustainability. The cheap oil is running out and its use has polluted the planet to the point where our grandchildren won't have a world to live in unless we change what we are doing, and change it now. Many people and many groups are working for that change.

Albany City Government and its commissions need to continue to take a visionary approach and lead the community into this new era with decisive, bold new policies. We are a community with many young families and we have a lot riding on the future. Although it is so easy for all of us to fall into the trap of "business as usual" (and a lot more comfortable!), it's crucial that we all understand that the decisions and choices we make today - about traffic and everything else - need to reflect a strong vision of the cleanest, healthiest, safest, and most stable future possible. Only in this way do we have a chance of reducing our carbon

footprint to the extent that we need to; only then can we continue to look our grandchildren in the eye with a clean conscience.

Given the enormity of what we're facing, to quibble over residential parking permits or street signs is kind of ridiculous, although it is understandable if we don't yet understand how completely things have to change. Some interesting ideas that I have heard put forward recently:

designate some streets off-limits to cars to create safe routes to school for the increasing number of "walking school buses" and children who bike to school; close off the troublesome intersection at Washington and San Pablo to give the local residents some protection from the shenanigans that have been happening around Club Mallard; a pedestrian-only Solano (at least some days of the week) to boost our local businesses while creating a safer and more pleasant shopping experience and a greater sense of community while giving courage to surrounding cities to do something similar.

For models of other cities that have taken bold action we can look at Village Homes in Davis, where the whole (new) development was arranged around a large, natural, car-free area (2); Curitiba, a large city in Brazil, where most of the main shopping street was closed to cars over a single weekend and other businesses clamored to have their section of the street closed after seeing how business boomed in the new, community-oriented shopping area (I have the video, A Convenient Truth, about this city if you would like to borrow it) (3); or Seoul, Korea, where the wholesale removal of a major city freeway to uncover the ancient river that lay buried beneath it caused no significant increase, illogical as it seems, to traffic congestion in the city (4). The website of the award-winning Portland organization, City Repair, is also included in the footnotes below (5).

Geologists (6) see a time fast approaching when oil - that precious commodity that's harder and harder to extract in any quality or quantity and needed for essential transitional technologies - will become so expensive that people, including those with special needs, will be using a variety of low energy alternatives such as electric vehicles, horses, bicycles, tricycles, bicycle rickshaw service, and a robust public transportation system. We might even find after a while that the idea of every household owning a private car seems quaint and antiquated! Small, flexible, family-oriented Albany could be a guiding light to our surrounding communities in this area.

Can you imagine a future where the health, safety and wellbeing of our residents take precedence over the convenience of cars or big business? Community will thrive again. No-one will need to feel isolated or alone because neighbors will look out for one another. Children will be raised by the whole neighborhood. We will produce much of our own food. We will work close to home and even manufacture some of our own essentials.

In this context, beginning to reduce the traffic in Albany - with the aid of residential parking permits which might encourage people who are addicted to their cars to start making their daily trips into the city by bus, bike or BART - is a good start. I do hope that Transition Albany - part of a rapidly growing global grassroots movement to engage ordinary citizens in the planning of a new, low energy society - will soon be in a position to bring good energy and a lot more ideas to the process of retrofitting the city, but this letter is purely my personal opinion.

Donald Shoup, a professor at the UCLA Department of Urban Planning, says, "Getting the price of parking right will do a world of good...it will reduce cruising for parking, it will reduce air pollution, it will make the pedestrian life better...and maybe even slow global warming."

From: Everyone Wants a Spot - Why Free Parking is a Bad Idea (7)

Once again, thank you for taking the time to look into the possibilities with an open mind and for your hard work and dedication to the health and safety of the people of Albany.

Sincerely,

Catherine Sutton
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1.<http://solveclimate.com/blog/20090529/nobel-laureates-co2-emissions-must-peak-2015-avert-climate-ruin>

2.<http://www.villagehomesdavis.org/>

3.<http://www.dismantle.org/curitiba.htm>

4.<http://www.preservenet.com/freeways/FreewaysCheonggye.html>

5.<http://cityrepair.org/about/projects/>

6.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_oil

7.<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/the-cost-of-free-parking/story-e6frg6zo-1111116672363>

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