

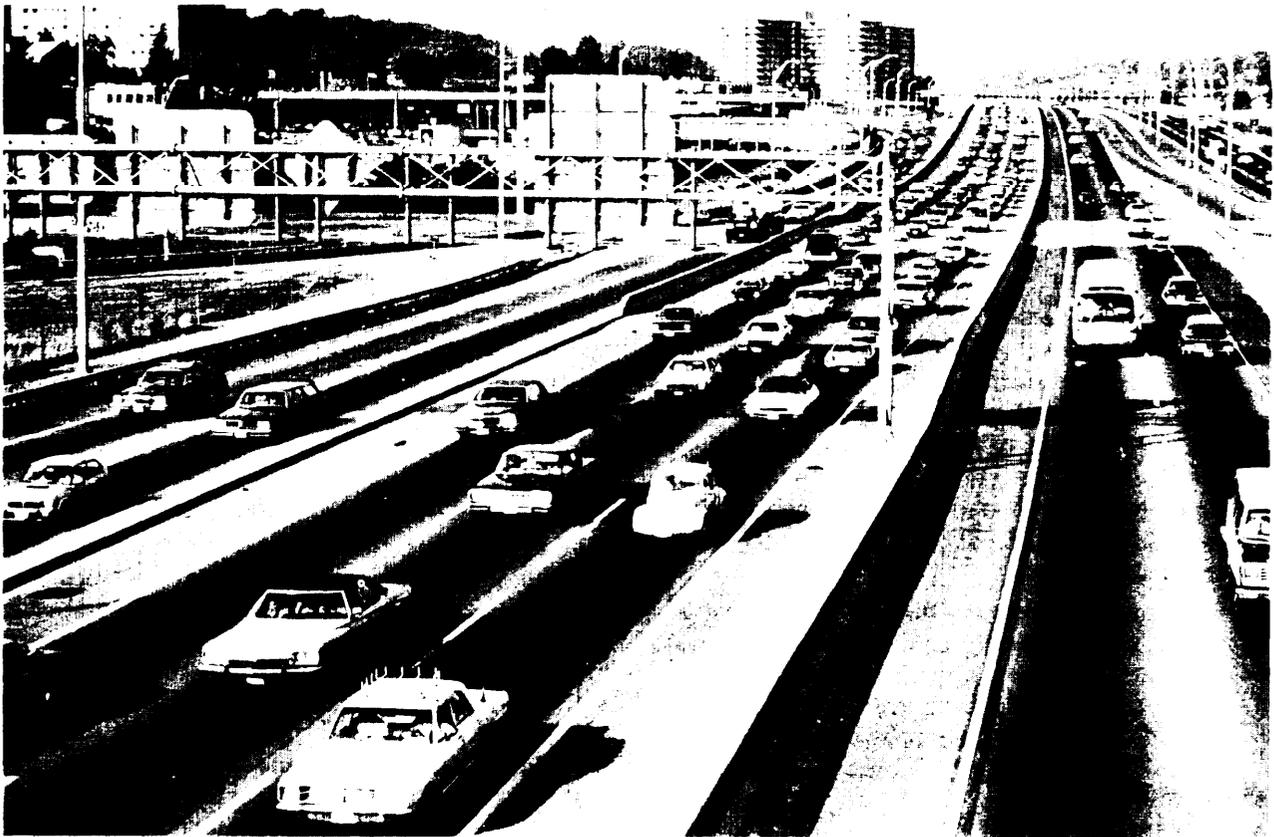
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Mobility, as viewed by the respondents, is an indicator of American freedom and independence and a right of the whole citizenry, rather than the privilege of a few. For most people, mobility seems to mean the ability to go where you want, when you want—usually by automobile. The desirable attributes of a personal transportation system most often cited by respondents were convenience, proximity, accessibility, physical comfort, cleanliness, privacy, and safety from crime.

Because mobility is viewed as a right, the participants primarily discussed measures to ensure that it could be enjoyed by all, especially those individuals who might not have adequate mobility now or in the future. A variety of solutions were proposed—such as transportation “stamps” (the equivalent of food stamps) and increased public transportation and paratransit services.

To increase access to jobs, homes, recreation, and services, a multifaceted approach was broadly supported. Such an approach should in-

corporate, but not be limited to, the development of additional transportation modes, improved use of existing modes and services, im-



*Photo credit Sylvia Johnson 1979*

Homeward bound commuters at the beginning of the rush hour on Shirley Highway, Northern Virginia (note bus and carpool lanes)

plementation of varied and flexible work schedules, and changes in current land use development patterns.

Many people felt that the “psychology of mobility” should be closely examined in order to understand the relationship of mobility to people’s lives, and, ultimately, to develop better ways to meet these human requirements. At the same time, the “psychology of automobility” should be addressed to determine driver and occupant attitudes and behavior. In the opinion of the respondents, this could lead to the development of appropriate improvements in existing cars and their usage, and eventually, to development of better modes and transportation systems for the future.

The vast majority of the respondents viewed cost as the major constraint to automobility. At the household level, this includes purchase price, maintenance, repair, taxes, parking insurance, and fuel. At the national level, the concern about cost centered primarily on road repair and maintenance. Congestion was also considered a potential constraint on auto travel and a major irritant, particularly in urban areas during peak commuting hours, in their estimation.

Energy, safety, and environmental problems were viewed as short-term difficulties that could be rectified through technological and institutional changes. The “energy crisis” was seen as a political dilemma, rather than a true resource shortage. To offset a supply shortage, whether the cause is political or natural, a number of actions should be taken, among them deregulation of fuel prices, development of alternative fuels and more fuel-efficient modes, and gas rationing (in the case of severe shortage). Participants indicated that no tradeoffs are necessary or wanted in the attainment of national energy and environmental goals.

While automobile use controls were thought to be a potential multipurpose solution by the respondents (i. e., to reduce congestion, pollution, and fuel use), such controls were not generally endorsed because they were viewed as a limitation on mobility. Because the automobile provides over 90 percent of today’s personal transportation, to reduce automobility was perceived as a reduction in mobility—a highly undesirable consequence, according to the participants.

While respondents expressed concern about death, injury, and property damage due to traffic accidents, these problems were not viewed as a constraint to automobility. Instead, they were considered hazardous byproducts of car travel. To reduce accidents, the primary necessity is driver improvement, said the respondents. This should involve a major national effort to eradicate drunken driving, and stricter, more uniform enforcement of traffic laws and lower speed limits.

The barriers to innovation and problem solving are institutional, not technological, they claimed. To the participants, the credibility of Government and industry is weak. The public, according to the respondents, doesn’t know what or whom to believe. More information with wide public distribution is desired. Additionally, the respondents viewed the Federal Government as inept and cumbersome. It enacts too much legislation which it is then unable to enforce. It ignores the potential of local initiative in relieving societal difficulties, they complained.

Profit, almost to the exclusion of societal well-being, motivates the automobile industry, many respondents charged. The industry has not done enough to eliminate the adverse impacts of its products and is sluggish in innovation. It is manipulative of the public through advertising and the Government through extensive, high-pressured lobbying. A greater play of free market forces might alleviate some of these institutional difficulties, the respondents said.

The automobile is almost the sole mode of personal transportation in the United States today, they noted. Mass transportation accounts for less than 2 percent of national travel, and therefore, is considered neither a viable alternative nor a sufficient complement to the existing personal transportation system. Because of problems arising from an essentially one-mode system (i. e., what happens when the car breaks down?), energy and environmental concerns, and spiraling congestion, participants stressed the need for a multimodal system with well-coordinated intermodal connections for the future. No one mode should dominate the system, they said, and system components should be energy efficient, nonpolluting, safer, more durable, less costly (financially and socially), and quieter than today’s vehicles.