

# President's Message

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Usually this time of year I like to focus on the state of the chapter. However, the *Utah Planner* will publish its annual “Year in Review” article in the January newsletter, so I am focusing my president’s message on something else that occupies much of my professional life.

It was an interesting career shift for me when six years ago I moved from a focus on land use planning to my current position at Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) where I focus more on transportation planning. Of course, land use and transportation are inextricably linked—which was part of my interest in the change.

Streets help define or inform appropriate land uses and urban design. Think about the street characteristics where ideally you would locate single-family homes versus boutique retail shops versus big box retail. Transportation access also creates market demand for various forms of development. Those are examples of how land use planners can think more about the role of transportation. On the other side, transportation planners haven’t always focused on how land use fits in or furthers the goals of transportation, other than acknowledging that land use drives transportation demand (e.g., “where will traffic be?”). Transportation planners have been largely focused on questions of how to reduce traffic congestion.

Here is why you should keep reading. A new paradigm (yes, really) is emerging to help us think of land use and transportation as part of the *same* system instead of two separate elements. The paradigm is to define the shared success of transportation and land use holistically in the way they together help us interact.

If you think about it, the purpose of a city is to enable interaction—the exchange of goods and services, the ability to meet friends, get educated, be entertained or to shop. The very reason why cities were created, primarily, was to enable interaction. Recently planners have become enamored with forms of development that enable interaction, like mixed-use development, and have been working for a balance of jobs and housing in cities.

The ability to interact is the very concept of “destination accessibility,” a mundane-sounding term for a powerful concept. “Destination access” is the measure of how easy it is for people to interact in a city. In other words, how many places can you get to in a short period of time? Destination accessibility actually gives us a framework for measuring this success—the success of a development, or a transportation improvement, or the net effect of two of those together.

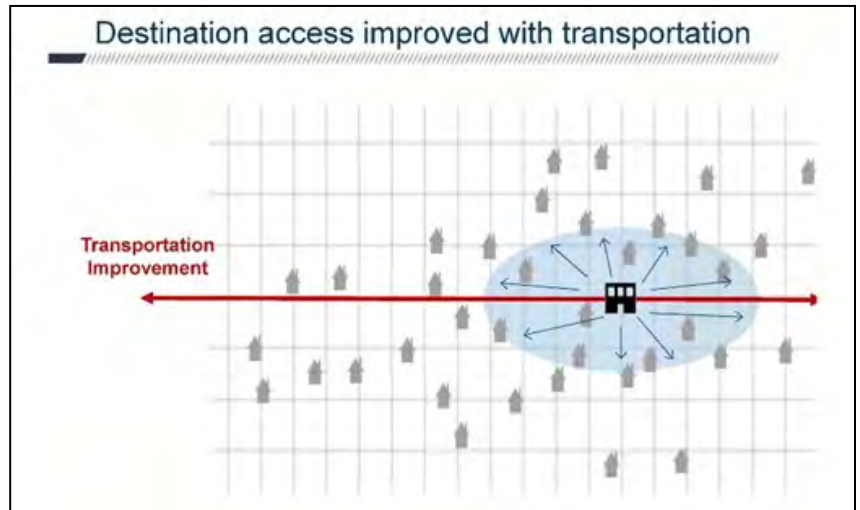
Here is how you do it. Think of an easy travel shed of each household or business in your city. Now think of how many jobs (for the household) or potential patrons (for the business) are within the travel shed. This is destination access. When you run the analysis formally, you do it on average for each part of the city to get the net effect. But anyone can conceptualize improvements in a city using this approach. Now, you improve destination accessibility in three basic ways.

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## ACCESS (continued from previous page)

1. You can grow the travel shed through new connections or better speed on travel routes,

*Within this graphic, this “firm” now has access to more patrons or potential employees*



2. You can improve proximity from homes to destinations, and

*Both these homes and businesses benefit from improved access*



3. You can strategically accomplish both by clustering growth (like TOD does) near speedy transportation connections.

*Some locations are better than others for improving destination access*



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Angela Bergeron, ENR Mountain States

This article may come across only as an "interesting thought" except for the fact that a new focus on the ability to interact—destination accessibility—is getting a significant foothold in state and regional policy-making in Utah. Senate Bill 136, passed by the legislature last year, calls for the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) to revise the system by which UDOT prioritizes transportation projects by including "destination access" as part of the prioritization criteria. The revision is planned to accompany congestion reduction and safety improvements (among other things) as keys to understanding the value of a project. Access to opportunity has also been incorporated as a shared goal among all transportation agencies in Utah's Unified Transportation Plan. WFRC has adopted "access to opportunity" as one of its ten regional goals to substantively shape all plans and work products.

A focus on destination accessibility has interesting policy implications. It means perhaps:

- Prioritizing new transportation connections—helping people get to more destinations—even if congestion relief is minimal,
- Looking at transit-oriented development as a transportation solution,
- Supporting multiple modes of transportation, like walking and bicycling, even if they don't significantly affect traffic congestion, and
- Encouraging proximity between homes and jobs is a transportation objective too!
- Congestion relief still matters because it helps a person reach more destinations, but efforts to relieve congestion are also seen within the lens of where those changes will help increase interaction the most.

I encourage you to explore this concept and learn more. Local governments could use this as a way to decide where a library goes, where a new pedestrian connection might be explored, or where moderately priced housing occurs, to name a few. There are innumerable possibilities for the use of destination accessibility, but all based on this new and simple way of thinking about improving the ability to interact.



# PUBLISH



Little Creek Mountains near Sand Hollow State Park in Washington County, Utah



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