DRIVING THE FUTURE: PODCAR CITIES AND SMART MOBILITY INNOVATIONS

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This edition of the Podcar City Chronicle celebrates the evolution of sustainable urban transport through Podcar technologies, student-led innovation programs, and transformative leadership. From personal mobility experiences to global academic initiatives and groundbreaking ATN projects, the journey toward smarter, greener mobility is accelerating worldwide.

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PODCAR CITY
Mobility For All

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A JOURNEY IN A PODCAR FROM A PODCAR CITY

The Morning Commute

Today I look forward to socializing with friends at a suburb 50 km (31 miles) away. Love any excuse to journey in a Podcar! I step out of my apartment and opt to take the moving walkway (also known as a travelator, walkalator, auto walk) to the Podcar station. It will only take 10 minutes to walk on the main non-moving pedestrian track. But my knee joints are a little fragile today. The moving walkway is at the entrance of my apartment and links other residences in the neighborhood. "Good morning, Ma'am" greets Jacob, the walkway guide with the friendly face (and just so you know, he's human).

He is one of many guides along the moving track who help, support, answer questions, assist those with disabilities and guide everyone with online facilitation if needed. I call him my earth angel and I am gratified that the town council has provided such valuable employment in this way. Along the non-moving track, I see joggers, walkers and those heading for work. Cycling trishaws are back in business offering another transportation choice (and yes more employment opportunities here). No motorized vehicles are allowed on this people track and cyclists have their own lane.

Boarding the Podcar

I reach my station in less than 5 minutes and decide to take a solo Meditation pod and pay for that, costs a little more than the General Pod. The Meditation Pod can take up to 4 people but I pay a small premium

for the solo journey. It would take 30 minutes to my destination, just enough time for calming meditation music and commentary which I choose from the Pod screen. There are a few options of Podcars offering public and privatized mobility. The Meeting Podcar where a work meeting can take place in the pod on the way to the office location. The General Podcar for commuters heading to the main city centre. A few kids with their families scramble into The Tourist Podcar for a fun ride. School kids and teachers find their way into the School Pod. The station is busy but no one seems to be rushing. Perhaps it is because they all know they do not have to deal with driving, traffic jams and where-to-park the car stresses.

Because the Podcar is elevated, I get to enjoy the views of the urban regenerated suburb with its rooftop gardens, vertical forest buildings powered by solar and wind turbines. Edible gardens on the ground that were once roads, highways and car parks provide free plant food to anyone needing some and are constantly nurtured by volunteers and gardeners (yes, more employment). Rewilded natural landscapes with lush tree cover and waterfalls soothe the eyes and provide even more necessary oxygen. I am delighted to see the equatorial Flame of the Forest in glorious full bloom. Everywhere bougainvilleas in kaleidoscopic brilliance light up the landscape – it's like a moving Van Goghesque masterpiece. Squirrels, tree shrews, rabbits, birds (just saw two hornbills fly past!) are also part of this world. Water fountains and waterfalls are everywhere. My pod passes this smart cityscape with its integration of eco-friendly architecture within an urban environment powered by renewable energy – solar, wind, hydrogen, geothermal and more.

Arriving and Unwinding

I reach my destination and stop by the recycling center to drop off a few things I don't need. Later my friends and I go vegan food shopping and stop by the 'Back to Earth" plot where we do a little planting – always good to feel the earth in your hands. After a thoroughly enjoyable time I bid my friends goodbye and decide to take the Cafe Pod for my return journey and a snack and drink along the way. When I arrive home, I grab a trolley for my groceries and use the moving walkway to my apartment. Life is good.

All some futuristic dream? No, "Personal Rapid Transit" (PRT) systems are already happening around the world in various transitional stages of sustainable green mobility.

Please visit Podcarcity.org to read the entire article. Column: Jennifer Rodrigo: A day in life of a Podcar City.

Jennifer Rodrigo

Journalist | Kuala Lumpur

STUDENTS FOR FUTURE MOBILITY

SFFM – A Podcar City Program for academics

The PCC organization is launching a program for academic students. We have named it Students for Future Mobility (SFFM)

Students For Future Mobility is a global program by Podcar City offering a platform for students to tackle real-world public mobility (transportation) issues and showcase their innovative skills, creativity, and knowledge while engaging with peers and experts in the field.

The program provides the opportunity for students to design their own urban mobility future using advanced software and planning techniques. The aim is to create something substantially better in all aspects – energy, materials, economy, capacity, safety, personal mobility, architecture.

The yearly programs (2026 to 2030) are supported by international academic institutions, agencies and other organizations. Awards and prizes are presented in the first half of the year. There are expected to be 10 teams or more each year with about three teams of the first 6 months of 2026.

Each category has three levels – Professional, Undergraduate and Master level prizes. The judges use their experience, expertise and discretionary criteria in deciding on the winners. All cash prizes are after taxes, if applicable. At least one person in your team must register as a member of Podcar City.

Students working together is of great important because it builds crucial social and communication skills, improves critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, fosters empathy and an appreciation for diverse perspectives, and enhances learning through deeper engagement and shared understanding. Collaborative work prepares students for real-world scenarios by teaching them how to divide tasks, manage conflicts, and achieve common goals, ultimately boosting confidence and academic success.

Support and Mentorship

SFFM provides comprehensive support and mentorship to student teams in the following areas:
• Urban Design, Engineering, and Development: Training areas are selected collaboratively with student teams and cities, focusing on transit hubs, stations, or other key locations for visualization and application.

Simulation Software:

Students have access to professional simulation technologies such as SUMO and Podaris, enabling them to model innovative solutions based on urban ridership data and transportation modes.

4D Modeling:

Selected teams receive 4D models to facilitate visual dialogue and inspire innovation. These models support creative simulations and stakeholder outreach.

Expert Guidance:

Students benefit from mentorship by experienced professionals in architecture, urban planning, mobility, energy (including solar), and related fields. Business community experts also provide guidance to ensure each team's success.

Project Delivery and Stakeholder Engagement

All student work is reviewed to ensure quality before presentation to city officials and local stakeholders. SFFM mentors assist with final presentations, leveraging their experience in urban development, infrastructure, and public policy. Previous Teams and Success Stories Since 2017, teams from various universities and regions have participated in the program, receiving mentorship and guidance from Podcar City team members.

Notable projects include studies conducted by Southern Illinois University (for Ithaca, NY), Perth Harbor (by Ms. Arnafara Najnin), and San Jose State University.

Funding and Sponsorship SFFM offers special funding for teams and assists in securing sponsorship for necessary materials. Support is available for projects in urban planning, engineering, social impact, and development.

How to Participate

To join the program, students must form teams of 2–4 members and submit their proposals according to the guidelines provided on the Podcar City website. Selected teams will receive mentorship, access to simulation tools, and opportunities to present their work to stakeholders.

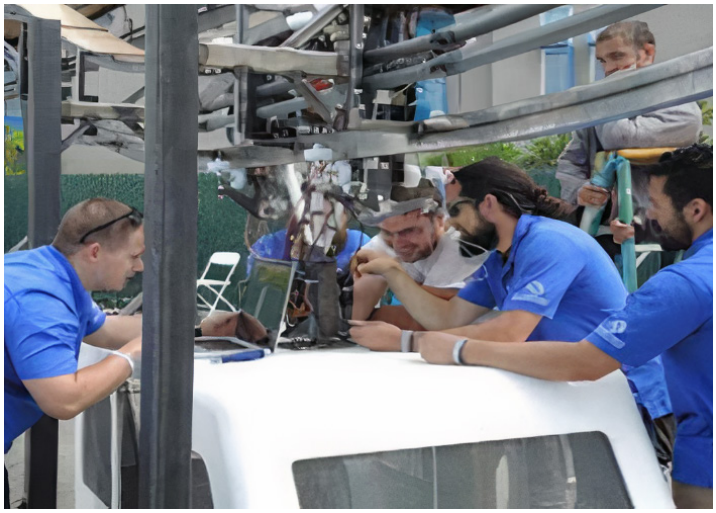

Photo Credit: Ron Swenson @solarskyways

Enhanced Knowledge Retention:

Students who engage in collaborative learning retain information longer and understand concepts more deeply than those studying individually.

Advanced Problem-Solving:

Teamwork cultivates critical thinking and higher-level problem-solving skills by encouraging diverse perspectives and creative dialogue.

Strengthened Communication and Leadership:
Working in teams builds essential communication and leadership abilities, preparing students to coordinate effectively and contribute meaningfully in real-world professional environments.

Swyft Cities provides innovative transportation solutions with cost-effective, efficient, sustainable mobility for real estate projects ranging from small and simple to large and complex.

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SWIFT CITIES©

Roots at Google

Google needed to find a way to better connect their campuses and allow for more dense, multi-use development.

Transportation solutions of all types were reviewed, but none solved the district-level connectivity problem. The team engaged Holmes Solutions to advance their innovative, emerging technology.

Prototypes demonstrated effectiveness, low cost, modular construction and sustainability. Development continued, creating the transportation technology known as Whoosh®.

Today, Swyft Cities is the sole licensee of Whoosh® Transportation Technology in North America and other designated geographies. Swyft Cities spun out of Google to commercialize these systems for the world and is developing proprietary control systems to help supercharge Whoosh functionality.

Working with an expanding network of partners, Swyft Cities brings a seasoned team with extensive experience delivering large-scale infrastructure and urban mobility projects.

Connect with Swyft Cities and be part of building a legacy:

https://swyftcities.com/

This Month's Speaker Highlight

MR. GERALD MCDOWELL

Executive Director: Atlanta Airport Communities Improvement Districts (AACIDS)

Under McDowell's leadersip, AACIDs successfully secured over $50 million in grants and project funding. McDowell manages the operational and developmental aspects of both Airport West and Airport South CIDs, overseeing a budget of $3.7 million. His leadership abilities have been lauded by numerous organizations, including the 2015 South Fulton Chamber Award, 2016 ABL Award, 2018-2024 Notable Georgian by Georgia Trend, 2019 graduate of Leadership Atlanta, the inaugural CID Professional Excellence Award 2020, 2022-2023 Georgia 500, and 2023-2024 Georgia Titan 100.

Christer Lindstrom met Mr. McDowell (Zoom) and Christer asked about the development of the new Innovative ATN system at Atlanta Airport, an initiative from Mr. McDowell and the AACIDS organization.

McDowell

We want to show that this (ATN) is real technology delivering meaningful service to our community.

First Question - What are you hoping to get out of the first system?

Well, we are aiming for two things:

1. For MARTA, to evaluate the ATN technology for a future system and a deeper understanding of how this technology is possible for good use for the people of Atlanta.

2. For the general public, we want to be able to show that this is a real technology that can provide a good service for our community and all people here in the city.

Are you happy with the process so far?

Yes. After the Request for Proposals (RFP) we got seven proposals. After internal deliberation we chose the Glydways technology solution (a ATN type 2 technology) and started the implementation work. We decided to have the system operable at the end of 2026. We have had weekly meetings and the project has moved forward well, with many discussions and hard questions.

What were the hardest obstacles?

It was definitely the introduction of new technology, unfamiliar to many participants. The conversation was sometimes “Is it for real?” coupled with a few hard conversations during the project.

You are coming to the Podcar City Workshop in February. What are your expectations?

Yes, I will be both attending and contributing - I look forward to meet with colleagues, cities and other communities.

The PCC is starting several youth projects under the Students for Future Mobility Innovation Hub at the February workshop. What is: A - your advice to young people regarding mobility, and B - the role of yourself in the future?

My advice is to have high schools encourage STEM education in transportation technology for future mobility. Both high school students and college students are critical for our future and the skilled workforce is needed for us here and elsewhere also.

My own role is to support MARTA for our communities and I see a five-year future ahead with ATN market technology as an important part of the future of mobility in Atlanta.

Thank you Gerald, and we look forward to meet you at the Podcar City Meetings soon!

The empire strikes back! Return of the oil industry

CHRISTER LINDSTRÖM

Christer is the founder of Podcar City, a global advocate for sustainable mobility, fostering innovation through youth programs, workshop conferences and partnerships advancing automated and climate-friendly transport solutions worldwide.

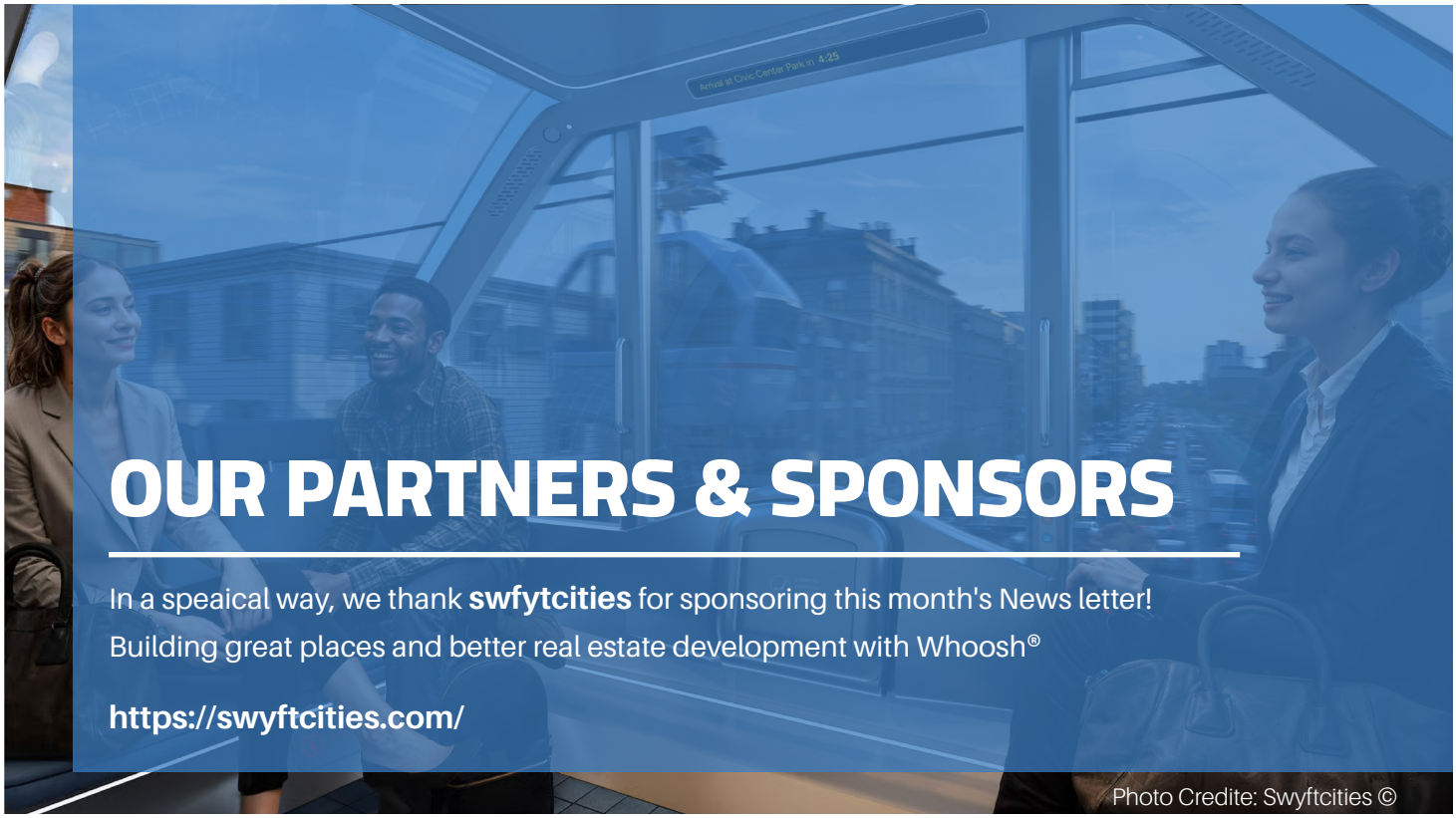
So, you have a big oil company - and one day you realize that your main resource is dangerous, unpopular and drying up. Now what?

Well hopefully you think a bit deeper and realize that you are not at all running an oil company. You are running a mobility company. Your main product is the service to make people go from one place to another. Instead of providing a problematic product you could actually switch your main product into a 100% service and get profit from a small income per trip from petrol per mile. You can provide a Podcar System and get the same profit from each mile travelled. You provide the infrastructure, the solar energy on top and get a few dollars from each trip. Bingo.

The current oil industry is the perfect provider for a massive change of mobility from dangerous fossil and battery solutions to shared solar technology. It is an eternal revenue model with no risk of drying up your earth resource behind. You are saving the planet and at the same time getting profits and people happy. It is time for the return of the oil industry and to see themselves as a mobility industry!

Christer Lindström

CEO 4Dialog and Podcar City Innovation Hub



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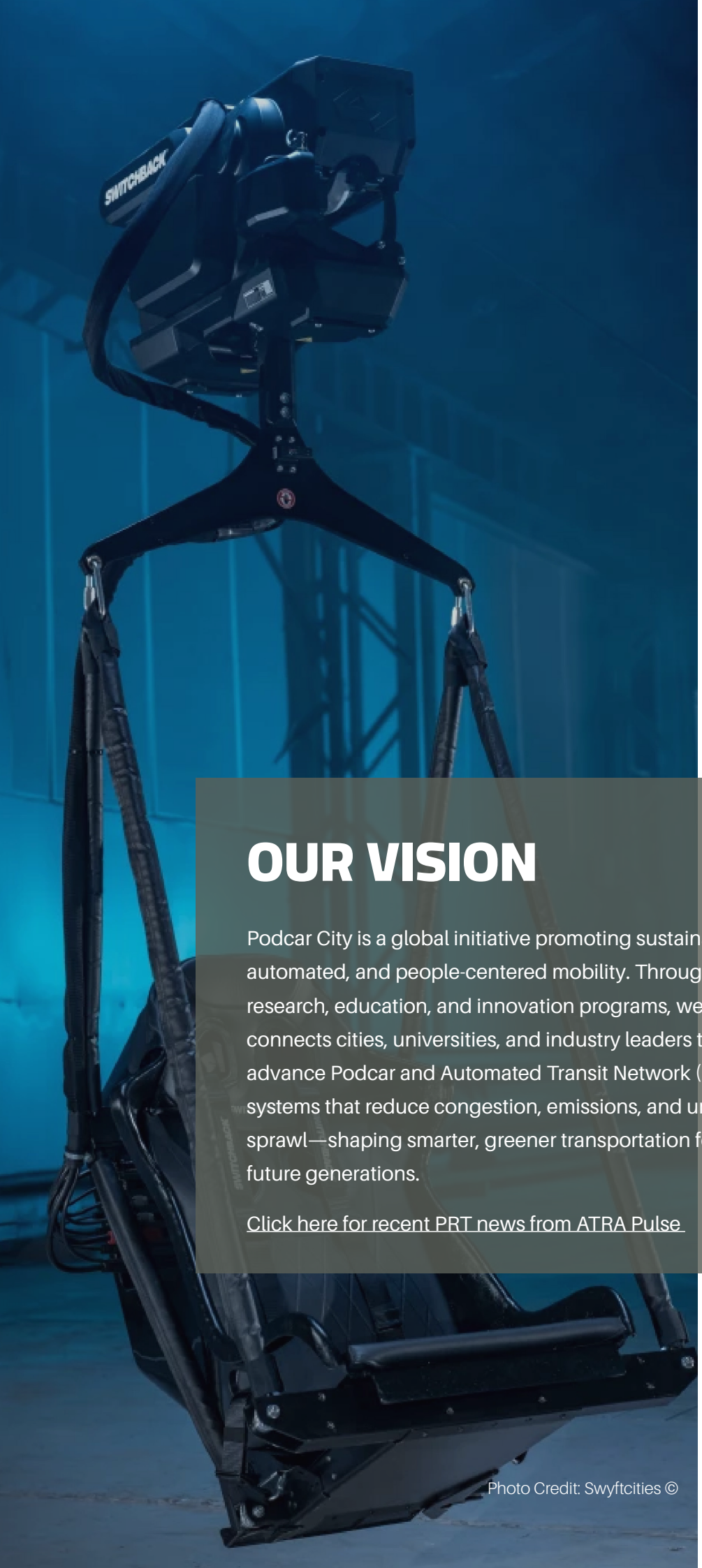

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WEBSITE

www.podcarcity.org

CONTACT

Phone: +46 735 459 179

+1 (408) 332-5375

Email: info@podcarcity.org

ADDRESS

147 South River Street, Suite 207
Santa Cruz, CA 95061, P.O.BOX 7080

OUR VISION

Podcar City is a global initiative promoting sustainable, automated, and people-centered mobility. Through research, education, and innovation programs, we connects cities, universities, and industry leaders to advance Podcar and Automated Transit Network (ATN) systems that reduce congestion, emissions, and urban sprawl—shaping smarter, greener transportation for future generations.

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