WORTH READING

Straphanger

In his newly published book, Straphanger, Taras Grescoe offers examples of flourishing public transportation systems as part of a broader critique of automobile dependency. A blend of urban history, investigative journalism, and travelogue, Straphanger examines the personalities and politics behind public transportation systems in a dozen different cities from around the world. Grescoe’s case studies are grounded in a broader set of observations of the environmental costs associated with car-centric living. As Grescoe notes, “This book is, in part, the story of a bad idea: the notion that our metropolises should be shaped by the needs of cars, rather than people.” (17).

Among the transit success stories from which Grescoe draws inspiration is New York City’s subway system. Grescoe also celebrates the high rates of bike-utilization in Copenhagen, the uplifting design of the Moscow Metro system, and the astounding passenger volumes carried by Bogota’s Transmilenio bus rapid transit system.

Although he traces the ways that transit engenders vibrant urban places, Grescoe’s case studies are not “best practices.” He also documents how even successful systems are nonetheless challenged by obstacles to expansion, as well as the continuing rise of traffic congestion. Grescoe also offers case studies of transportation disaster stories such as Phoenix, which he describes alternatively as a “nightmare” and a “car-dependent, transit-resistant suburbia.” Overall, though, Grescoe is optimistic about the capacity of transit investments to provide a high quality of urban life. In Los Angeles, for example, Grescoe sees the city’s high densities, diverse demographics, and legacy of urban rail as key assets making possible the city’s transformation into a transit-oriented metropolis.

Link: http://www.harpercollins.ca/books/Straphanger-Grescoe-Taras?isbn=9781554686247

TOD ONLINE RESOURCES

The following is a list of agencies, non-profit organizations and businesses that maintain useful information on TOD both nationally and within the region. The Land Use Law Center will continue to add resources to this list, which is also available on the newsletter’s website at http://www.law.pace.edu/landuse/todline/.

Center for Transit-Oriented Development – www.ctod.org
Metropolitan Transportation Authority – http://www.mta.info/
Reconnecting America – http://reconnectingamerica.org/what-we-do/what-is-tod/
Regional Plan Association – http://www.rpa.org/
TODNews.com – http://todnews.com/
Tri-State Transportation Campaign – http://www.tstc.org/issues/tod/