

TECH FOR TRANSIT: DESIGNING A FUTURE SYSTEM^o

A Study by Latitude^o

In Collaboration with Next American City

Tech for Transit: Designing a Future System is one installment of Latitude 42s, an ongoing series of open innovation studies which Latitude, an international research consultancy, publishes in the spirit of knowledge-sharing and opportunity discovery.

Latitude^o

42^o

FUTURE CITIES

WE ASKED DRIVERS IN BOSTON AND SAN FRANCISCO TO GIVE UP THEIR CARS FOR ONE WEEK. INSTEAD, THEY HAD TO RELY ON OTHER FORMS OF TRANSIT TO GET AROUND...



In late 2010, Latitude° asked 18 participants (10 from Boston, 8 from San Francisco) not to use their cars for one week. The vast majority of participants had ranked cars as their most necessary form of transportation, with the remainder using their cars at least weekly.

During the study week, participants were permitted to use public transit, walk, bike, ride-share—anything but drive a vehicle.

They completed surveys about their attitudes and experiences prior to, during, and after the car-free week. They also contributed to online group discussions with other participants and chronicled their experiences photographically when possible. Participants were men and women ranging in age from 24-51. Approximately 3 in 4 participants owned smartphones.

*Not all participants are pictured above.

PLACES OF STUDY:

42° / 21' : BOSTON

37° / 47' : SAN FRANCISCO

METHOD OF STUDY:

DEPRIVATION



OUR QUESTIONS

1. How can new technologies improve not only transit but also our larger experience of cities?
2. How can information access encourage people to make more sustainable transit choices?
3. Can tech help transit make us feel more connected to each other—and what lessons can businesses in other industries apply?

INSIGHT^o INFORMATION CAN EQUALIZE TRANSIT CHOICES



"Real-time and personalized transit information has the ability to make public transit a more flexible, equitable, and enjoyable experience, thus minimizing the perceived experience gap between car ownership and other modes of transit typically thought less convenient or accessible by would-be users."

—Marina Miloslavsky, Senior Research Analyst

Photo by kamshots on Flickr

Autonomy Matters More than Ownership

More than two-thirds of participants cited convenience, control, and flexibility—not comfort or status, as the chief benefits of car ownership. After their car-free week, more than four-fifths felt car ownership was not essential, particularly if they could have access to car-sharing or ride-sharing services.

Improving Perceptions of Alternative Transit

Location-aware, on-the-go mobile access to alternative transit options (e.g., buses, bike-sharing) would allow for up-to-the-minute comparisons of means, routes, and costs—extending the choice and convenience otherwise limited to car ownership to car-free transit as well. As a result, such tools can help raise the profile of alternative transit modes, symmetrizing them with more conventional or better-accepted ways of getting around.

INSIGHT^o


LOSE A CAR, GAIN A COMMUNITY

Rediscovering the Community—and Oneself

By a two-to-one margin, participants felt more integrated into their communities than they had expected to before the car-free week, and two-thirds found that new transit routes exposed them to new experiences, such as local events, public art projects, or previously unvisited shops and local businesses.

Individuals, Together

The personal value of shared offline situations—even everyday ones like riding the same subway car or walking the same sidewalk—can be enhanced by online tools, whether these tools are strictly informational (such as an app with details about events along a given route) or highly interactive (such as interactive digital displays in public spaces). Similar tools could even enrich otherwise isolating car rides.



“During my car-free week I realized that if you live in a city and drive back and forth from work every day, you are missing out on the richness of your community.” — Mark V., San Francisco

INSIGHT^o

ALTERNATIVE TRANSIT IS GOOD FOR ME AND WE

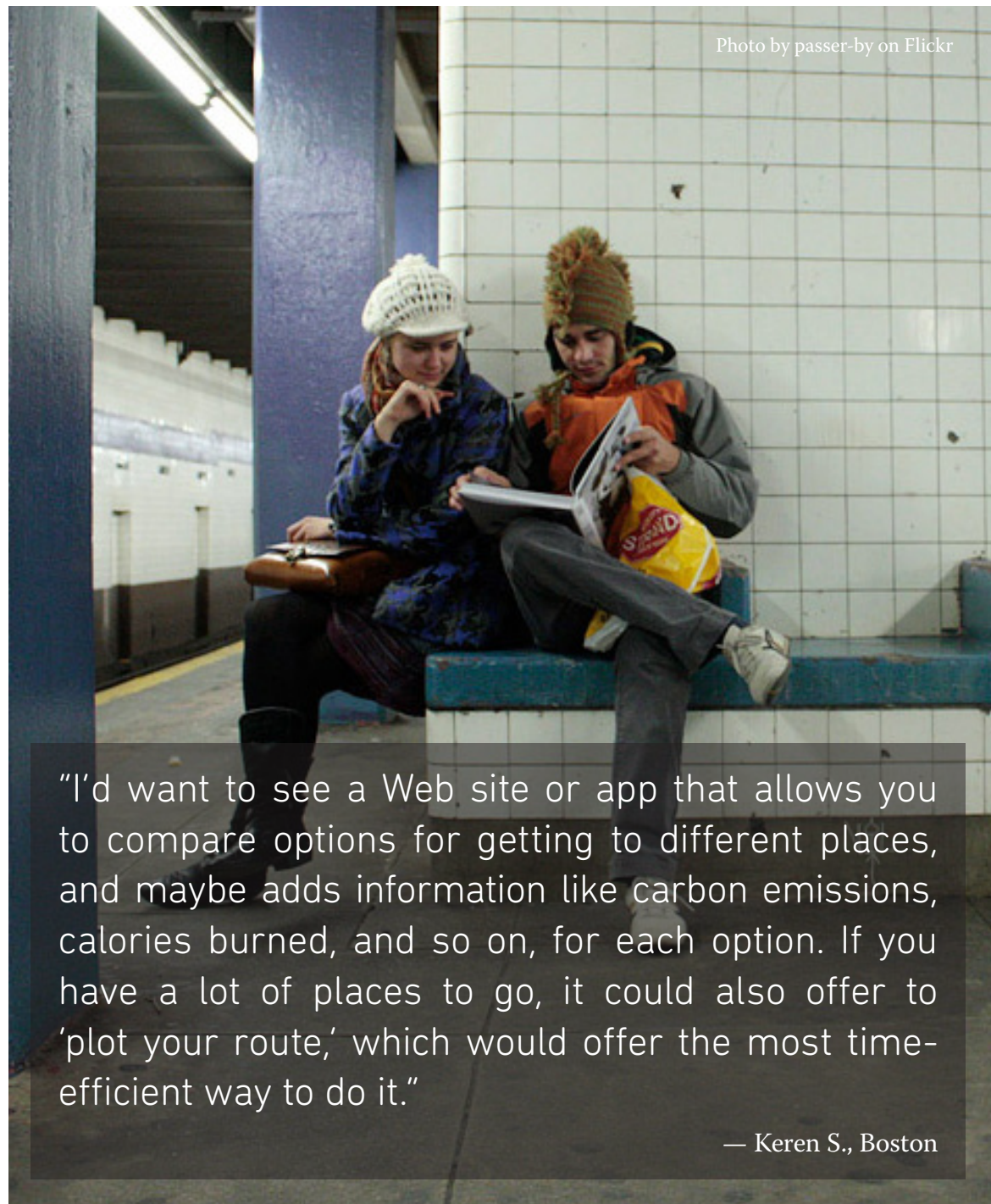
Fulfilling Multiple Aspirations

Participants cited the top benefits of adopting a car-free lifestyle as being good for the environment, their budgets, and their health. Similar combinations of both personal and altruistic motives promise to drive users' choices across a growing range of industries.

Expanding Identities

Today's climate of readily accessible information, supported by convenient lifestyle technologies like smartphones, encourages individuals to explore different aspects of their own (and others') preferences and values. Product and service providers seeking a strong foothold should appeal to users' sense of themselves as multi-dimensional, characterized by various—and sometimes competing—traits, interests, goals, and identities.

Photo by passer-by on Flickr



"I'd want to see a Web site or app that allows you to compare options for getting to different places, and maybe adds information like carbon emissions, calories burned, and so on, for each option. If you have a lot of places to go, it could also offer to 'plot your route,' which would offer the most time-efficient way to do it."

— Keren S., Boston

OPPORTUNITIES IN TECH & TRANSIT^o

“Readily accessible information, thanks largely to mobile, is becoming the great democratizer of products and services. People no longer need to consider themselves singularly as a “car person” or “health nut,” but rather as an individual with complex, changing, and even contradictory needs. This challenges businesses to offer new levels of transparency and to consider partnering with competitors. The result is an opportunity to engender a new and deeper, if decentralized, form of brand loyalty.” —Neela Sakaria, SVP of Latitude

Photo by Fabio Venni on Flickr

ENABLE ASPIRATIONS: MAKE IT EASY TO BE GOOD

Participants used an average of five different modes of transportation during their car-free week, underscoring the importance of choice—and an integrated array of options—to the modern city-dweller. Sustainability shouldn't be “all or nothing”:

- **IN TRANSIT:** Apps can make spontaneous experimentation with transit options fun, and can reward small sustainable choices (e.g, 4 bike rides this week vs. 1 car ride = 20 points).
- **MORE BROADLY:** Encourage incremental change. By providing in-the moment information, businesses can enable people to engage new identities, experiences, and values (e.g., being healthy, good for the environment, etc.) at little to no commitment or cost.

THINK BEYOND YOURSELF: CHANGE COMPETITORS INTO PARTNERS

People aren't interested in boundaries. They want one-stop, mobile information shops so they can make more informed decisions on-the-go.

- **IN TRANSIT:** Government and private entities should collaborate on an integrated information system, enabling users to choose among multiple options (bus vs. car-sharing vs. train) by comparing schedules, cost, availability, and convenience.
- **MORE BROADLY:** Partner within and across industries. While this may require sharing competitive information, the end-goal is to create a more comprehensive information resource. In short, business should aim to make it easy for people to choose their services only some of the time.

ENRICH THE JOURNEY: LEVERAGE ALL THAT'S LOCAL

The majority of participants found car-free transit exposed them to new experiences, with more than two-thirds saying it changed their shopping habits. Changing one routine often affects another.

- **IN TRANSIT:** Dispatches about local or route-specific stores, public resources, promotions, and events, can help turn the ride into a journey.
- **MORE BROADLY:** Online tools can make offline experiences more enjoyable by connecting people and enlivening routines. Local data can also increase convenience, boost local economies, and foster positive opportunities for community discovery and a greater sense of connection to the places where we live.

A FEW FORWARD-THINKING IDEAS FROM PARTICIPANTS°



Photo by Jenene Chesbrough on Flickr

ENABLE ASPIRATIONS: MAKE IT EASY TO BE GOOD

"It doesn't have to be all or nothing. You can plan a few days a week to go car-free, and you get the benefits like time to exercise or read while reducing your environmental impact. I think we get caught up in one method and not motivated to alter it." —[Janna C., Boston](#)

THINK BEYOND YOURSELF: CHANGE COMPETITORS INTO PARTNERS

"I'd like a 'how-to-get-there-using-alt-transit transit-app or web site. Plug in where you have to be when, and detailed parameters on what you will and won't do, and have it crunch through train, subway, the patchwork of urban and suburban bus services, biking, walking, local taxi service numbers and fees, Zipcar and other car-share options, and so on—and give you a list of options, including when they'll get you there and how much they'll cost."

—[Jean M., Boston](#)

ENRICH THE JOURNEY: LEVERAGE ALL THAT'S LOCAL

"A really simple phone app that would tell you the fastest way to your destination using any and all public transportation options. If there are any special events (arts, music, food), special deals (shopping sales, coupons, happy hours) along the route, the app could tell you."

—[Mark V., San Francisco](#)

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This study was prepared by:

Latitude^o

Latitude is an international research consultancy exploring how new information and communications technologies can enhance human experiences. Amidst a landscape of profound technological change, they consistently deliver next-generation insights and assist organizations in discovering and developing new opportunities.

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In Collaboration with



Next American City is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, dedicated to promoting socially and environmentally sustainable economic growth in America's cities and examining how and why our built environment, economy, society and culture are changing. They achieve this goal through the publication of their quarterly magazine and interactive website, their emerging leaders program, events across the country, and advocacy on issues central to the future of cities. <http://www.americancity.org>

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