

CONTESTING THE SPACES OF THE AUTOMOBILE: THE POLITICS OF
MOBILITY AND THE SPRAWL DEBATE IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

by

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Under the Direction of Dr. Andrew Herod

ABSTRACT

Atlanta has become a focal point in the national political debate over sprawl and how American cities should grow. At the center of this debate is the automobile. In this research I explore how discourses about sprawl and transportation policy have been constructed and contested in Atlanta, who has engaged in this process, and how such a discourse has shaped the urban landscape. I argue that to grasp fully the implications of the sprawl debate and the competing visions that undergird it, mobility and how mobility relates to spatial configuration must be understood. The automobile requires a certain kind of spatial organization, one that is incongruent with other forms of mobility when it fully dominates everyday life. To contest sprawl, then, is to also contest the automobile politically. Seeking to contest sprawl means questioning the inevitability of a "car culture" and unpacking the values and ideologies which structure different conceptualizations of mobility and how space should be configured. This means that struggles over urban space and how cities should grow are more than simply place-based conflicts such as central city versus suburb or older suburb versus newer suburb. Struggles over urban space are also about how that space should be configured and arranged, and certain configurations and arrangements include certain mobilities. These configurations of space also represent certain values and ideologies about how cities should grow. Consequently, through an examination of various actors' mobility visions and how they are contested to produce urban space, this dissertation seeks to inform the wider sprawl debate.

INDEX WORDS: Sprawl, Mobility, Urban Geography, Transportation, Atlanta

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BA. The Louisiana State University, 1995

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2002

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my family for their support throughout this project. My father, Russell Henderson, taught me to think critically about my surroundings, and my mother, Mary Louis Battalora encourage me to explore the world. My brothers Aaron and Jonathan have continually nagged me to finish, but always knew I would. I would also like to thank my friends who put up with my bantering yet eventually came to look forward to my perspective. In Athens I must acknowledge the people in BikeAthens, a non-profit multi-modal transportation advocacy organization that focuses on reducing automobile dependency. These are people who understand that good ideas need to be put to practice and not just talked about.

I would like to express appreciation to my Ph.D. advisor, Andy Herod, for his advice and support, and for exposing me to the geographical literature on how spaces are produced. I thank my committee –Steve Holloway, Deborah Martin, Kevin DaLuca and Arnie Fleischman –for enriching my research. I also thank the Department of Geography for providing a comfortable and stimulating environment for learning and teaching. Thanks also to the Carl Vinson Institute for funding part of this research, and to my friends in the US Department of Transportation who compelled me to quit complaining and start doing.

Finally, I thank Norma Wood for believing in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
 CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 The Geography of Mobility	4
1.3 Contribution to Wider Geographical Knowledge	8
1.4 The Geography of Sprawl and Automobility in Atlanta.....	12
1.5 The Plan of the Dissertation.....	20
2 AUTOMOBILITY AND THE POLITICS OF POSSIBILITIES.....	24
2.1 Purpose of Chapter.....	24
2.2 Transportation and the Logic of Capital	25
2.3 Automobility and the Logic of American Capitalism.....	31
2.4 Representations of Automobile Hegemony	40
2.5 Negotiating and Challenging Automobile Hegemony.....	49
3 CONTESTING AUTOMOBILITY IN ATLANTA.....	54
3.1 Purpose of Chapter.....	54
3.2 The Clean Air Act, ISTEA, and Challenges to Automobile Hegemony	55
3.3 Vision 2020.....	61

3.4 Defenders of Automobility	74
3.5 The Political Economy of Ozone	87
3.6 Mobility and Contesting Space	107
4 THE METRO GROWTH MACHINE MOBILITY VISION	111
4.1 Purpose of Chapter	111
4.2 Growth Machines and Mobility	112
4.3 Who is Atlanta's Growth Machine?	118
4.4 Motivation of Metro Growth Machine	123
4.5 MATI and the Creation of GRTA	136
4.6 Negotiating Automobile Hegemony	143
5 CHALLENGING AUTOMOBILE HEGEMONY	146
5.1 Purpose of Chapter	146
5.2 The Accessible Mobility Vision	147
5.3 The Ethical Mobility Vision	162
5.4 Accessible-Ethical Mobility Coalition: Circumventing Criticisms of	171
Capitalism	
5.5 The New Urban Bourgeoisie Mobility Vision	174
5.6 A Shared Vision	188
6 DEFENDING AUTOMOBILE HEGEMONY	195
6.1 Essentializing Sprawl	195
6.2 Who Advocates Full Automobility?	197
6.3 A Shared Vision of Full Automobility	212
6.4 The Rhetoric of Defending Automobile Hegemony and Sprawl	219

7 SECESSIONIST AUTOMOBILITY VISIONS.....	229
7.1 Purpose of Chapter.....	229
7.2 Automobility and Secession	229
7.3 Racialized Automobility	233
7.4 Malthusian Automobility	243
7.5 Secessionist Automobility Visions: Cherokee County	250
7.6 Secessionist Automobility as a Barrier to Change.....	258
8 CONTESTING THE SPACES OF THE AUTOMOBILE IN ATLANTA:	260
A CASE STUDY OF THE NORTHERN ARC DEBATE	
8.1 Purpose of Chapter.....	260
8.2 The Northern Arc.....	261
8.3 The Spaces of the Arc: Atlanta's Baltimore.....	265
8.4 Negotiating the Spaces of the Arc	273
8.5 Contesting the Spaces of the Arc.....	282
8.6 The Spaces of Congestion: Retrofitting Atlanta	286
8.7 Contesting the Spaces of Recentralization.....	299
9 CONCLUSIONS.....	310
9.1 Summary of Findings and Conclusions	310
9.2 Policy Implications	321
9.3 Future Research Directions.....	324
APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY.....	328
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWEES.....	335
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	337

REFERENCES341

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1.1 The Geography of Atlanta's Sprawl.....	13
3.1 The Geography of the Outer Perimeter.....	76
3.2 The Atlanta Non-Attainment Area.....	91
3.3 Grandfathered Road Projects	96
4.1 Atlanta's "Favored Quarter"	121
8.1 The Geography of the Northern Arc	262
8.2 Congestion at Perimeter Center	291

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the last decade "sprawl" has emerged as a contentious issue in debates about urban growth in the United States. Broadly speaking, sprawl is an urban form that is associated with congestion, political fragmentation, smog, and a discontinuous pattern of low-density development centered on widespread automobile dependency (Burchell et. al., 1998). Anthony Downs (1994) has argued that sprawl is part of an urban vision in the US that includes ownership of single detached homes on spacious lots, low-rise dispersed workplaces in park-like settings with abundant free parking, localized government control over land-use policy, and a built environment segregated by race and class. Realization of this vision, he suggests, requires low-density settlement and access to unfettered use of an automobile, for only the automobile can provide the mobility and access that makes sprawl as a development pattern convenient, practical, and, arguably, possible. Consequently, contestation of the identified environmental and social problems attributed to sprawl (such as pollution, social inequity, school crowding, loss of farmland, global warming, and disparity in job access) ultimately leads to a contestation of the automobile and its spaces. It is within this context that this dissertation focuses on how the automobile and its spaces are axiomatic to the sprawl debate and broader debates over how cities should grow in the contemporary US

My motivation for focusing on the automobile here is because transportation serves as a significant catalyst for how a city grows. A specific urban form such as sprawl is enabled by a specific transportation system. In that light, Atlanta, Georgia provides a good case study of how the sprawl debate is at its core a debate over the automobile and its spaces. Atlanta is a city that experienced most of its growth concomitant with the rise and diffusion of the automobile, and its debate over sprawl has been fomented by air pollution from widespread automobile use. Indeed, in 1998 federal transportation funds were withheld from metropolitan Atlanta because of a failure to meet air quality goals set by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Federal transportation policy, linked to clean air regulations, required that urban transportation systems meet cleaner air goals, and Atlanta's regional leadership failed to meet that requirement. This withholding of funds was a national precedent, thereby placing Atlanta squarely in the middle of the sprawl debate and, more pointedly, debates over the automobile. Consequently, Atlanta has become simultaneously the national poster-child of sprawl yet also a national model of how to solve problems associated with sprawl. In particular, Atlanta has become a test case for the political possibilities and limits of implementing public policies for mitigating the problems of automobiles. This dualism as poster-child of sprawl and as a model of problem solving makes Atlanta a very important example for other metropolitan areas across the US facing the same debates about the automobile and sprawl. According to the US Census Bureau (2001a), more than 80% of the US population lives in a metropolitan area, meaning that sprawl is an issue facing the vast majority of Americans. Fifty-five percent of Americans reside in the

40 largest metropolitan areas in the US, all of which face the same debates as Atlanta, albeit to varying degrees of intensity.

In this research I ask what processes have led to Atlanta becoming a national model for the sprawl debate and I identify and explain the relevance of competing discourses on sprawl. By discourses I mean specific representations, practices, ideologies, and values that produce meaning and legitimize specific material processes. Understanding discourses reveals connections between power, knowledge, and how the landscape is physically produced and transformed. I ask how discourses about sprawl and transportation policy have been constructed and contested in Atlanta, who has engaged in this process, and how such discourses have shaped the urban landscape. I want both to describe what elevated this debate to the level of a "crisis" and, more importantly, I want to explore "how" transportation policy is shaped and urban space produced. What are the power relations that produce Atlanta's urban space and transport system? How do different actors in Atlanta's transportation debate promote competing visions of how Atlanta should grow, and what values and ideologies inform those visions?

As should now be evident, I take the position that there can be no objective (or "factual") narrative of Atlanta's sprawl debate or the role of the automobile. Instead, there are multiple discourses and competing viewpoints. Indeed, Fulton et al. (2001, p. 3) remarked that sprawl is an elusive term in which attempting to define it is analogous to the Supreme Court ruling on pornography – people know when they see it. For that reason, I have sought to avoid determining whose story is more "legitimate" and have instead approached the debate from the perspective of deconstructing the competing

positions and visions that are vocalized in Atlanta. My findings illustrate that competing conceptualizations of mobility are at the heart of Atlanta's sprawl debate. Although "mobility" is a general term which includes all types of territorial movements, I use the term here to specify movement within the city (such as commuting or shopping) and not in terms of migration or changes in socio-economic status (see Johnston, et al., 2000 for the different uses of the term mobility). I will deploy a definition of mobility that is inclusive of actual movement but also one that considers the spatial organization required for different types of movement. It is these competing conceptualizations of mobility that I want to explore and analyze. In doing so, I hope to contribute to wider understandings in urban geography of how urban space is produced and contested.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will elaborate on how I use and expand the concept of mobility, and I will discuss the problems associated with the automobile and its spaces, including a review of the more salient socio-spatial quandries intertwined with automobiles and their spaces. I will conclude with an outline of the plan for the dissertation and will briefly summarize the competing visions of mobility I have identified in the sprawl debate in Atlanta.

1.2 The Geography of Mobility

Mobility is one of the most contentious aspects of the sprawl debate. Of course, geographers have long distinguished "mobility" from "accessibility" in discussing transportation and urbanization. Hanson (1995) suggests that accessibility refers to the number of opportunities to enter particular activity sites that are available within a certain distance and travel time. Mobility, on the other hand, refers to the ability to move

between these activity sites. The literature on travel behavior and mobility says that the organization of the built environment, or of urban space, is central to mobility (Ewing & Haliyur, 1994; Frank & Pivo, 1994; Cervero & Gorham, 1995; Handy, 1996; 1,000 Friends, 1997). For example, the ability to walk as a form of mobility is contingent upon the adequacy of pedestrian infrastructure (assuming an individual is physically able to walk). Many opportunities are accessible by walking as long as there are good sidewalks and there is an ability to cross the streets safely. Hence, someone living in a compact, mixed-use urban configuration with sidewalks can "access" a nearby bookstore by walking, and then walk to a coffee shop and grocery store. However, if there are no sidewalks, or if the street is six-lanes wide with high-speed traffic and no safe crosswalk, pedestrian mobility is significantly impeded. If a person lived at the end of a cul-de-sac in a subdivision with no sidewalks and lived two miles from the nearest bookstore, that person would likely drive to the bookstore, the coffee shop, and grocery store – the ability to move between those places, that is to say their mobility, is made possible by the provision of an adequate road network, ample space for convenient parking, and enough road space to minimize congestion.

In these two examples, individuals have "accessed" the same activity sites (bookstore, coffee shop, grocery) but with a quite different pattern of movement, using very different infrastructures and spatial configurations. In effect, they have very different types of "mobility." Mobility, as an ability to overcome space, then, is dependent upon the infrastructure and spatial configurations that enable access. How space is configured matters when thinking about mobility. A healthy, physically able adult pedestrian has very little real "mobility," it is argued, if the landscape lacks

pedestrian spaces, safe crossings of roads, or if there are no opportunities within reasonable walking distance. Equally, an individual using an automobile in a low-density, dispersed landscape with only roads has less mobility if there is congestion, parking is scarce, or gas prices increase.

It should be noted that mobility is more than the consequence of the spatial separation of land uses or the mode used to overcome spatial distance. It is also a measure of the degree of spatial and temporal distance across space. Hence, the distance traveled by the person who drove in the above example was much greater than the distance traveled by the pedestrian. However, both of them might have achieved their access within a similar amount of time. The pedestrian may have taken five minutes to walk to nearby stores, while the driver made a five-minute trip on a four-lane highway. They achieved the same ends within a similar time budget, but over radically different distances and by radically different modes of transport with different infrastructure requirements and different spatial configurations. Thus, we can say that mobility connects places in space and time, but in quite different ways, based upon the kind of mobility utilized.

Mobility, as a spatial and temporal relation, is produced, consumed, and contested. It is not simply getting into a car or bus and moving, but is the cumulative effect of power relations. Just as critical geographers inquire into the terrain of power relations of production and consumption, an insertion of an understanding of how power relates to mobility will help us understand the political, social, and economic processes that produce urban space. Mobility, as both a produced commodity and an item of consumption, has embedded social relations. In many ways, understanding these

embedded social relations is analogous to the contribution of geographical thought to understanding the social relations of tennis shoes produced in developing countries and exported to the US for consumption, or housing in segregated cities, or the consumption of exclusive spaces in gentrified cities – that is to say, it is necessary to ask who decided what types of mobility are appropriate, why certain mobility visions are favored over others, and who gets access to these mobilities. A person's auto-mobility hinges on factors such as the affordability of gasoline, automobiles, and their upkeep, just as a pedestrian's mobility is contingent upon health, physical ability, age, and the ability to pay for a pair of walking shoes or endure walking around with inferior shoes or barefoot. Mobility is an articulation of social relations, values, and social power. Furthermore, there is a geography of mobility that should be of critical concern to anyone seeking to understand how cities are produced and contested, and the implications this has on the sprawl debate.

This, then, is the broad ambit of what I plan to explore in this dissertation with regard to understanding Atlanta's growth and the production of its built environment. Specifically, I have conducted an analysis of the socio-political discourses about mobility. Bundled into these socio-political discourses on mobility are competing organizational structures of space that are the product of class, race, and power relationships. I want to argue that conceptualizing mobility as a socio-spatial relationship enables us to see that the transportation component of the sprawl debate is more than a quantification of congestion, density, or pollution levels; and mobility is more than simply distance traveled and number of trips. Mobility is a manifestation of competing ideologies and values reflecting competing discourses about sprawl. These competing

ideologies and values result in substantially different normative visions about how urban space should be used and who should use it. In the context of this dissertation, these discourses and their specific visions for urban space can be understood as "mobility visions."¹

1.3 Contribution to Wider Geographical Knowledge

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1991, p. 84) theorized that space is a social relationship that is at once the precondition and the result of social structures. Space is produced by social relations and it produces social structures. The character and nature of produced space reflects the dominant modes of production and social relations within a given society and this produced space, in turn, influences these social structures. Geographers such as Harvey (1982; 1989), Smith (1990), and Herod (1991) have utilized this theoretical framework to show how socially produced space is contested. Although the dominant mode of production, capitalism, has a set of social relations that have produced distinctive spaces reflecting its own needs, the physical manifestation of space is not entirely determined by the whims of capital itself. A more accurate assessment argues that space is produced from the outcomes of struggles within capital and between capital and labor, or other social movements such as ecological or civil rights movements.

¹ In the context of this dissertation, a "vision" contains specific, concrete outcomes. For example, while everyone might claim the desire for a clean environment or social justice, these nebulous concepts can mean different things to different people based on their ideologies and values. A vision would spell out what a particular discourse sees as specific outcomes necessary to have a cleaner environment or social justice. My objectives in this dissertation, then, are to identify for the reader the competing mobility visions in Atlanta's sprawl debate, and to explore how these visions interact to produce urban space. I also use the term "vision" because, as I will show in subsequent chapters, Atlanta's sprawl debate partially centered on a public planning process known as "Vision 2020." Hence, the term has wide usage and recognition in Atlanta.

For example, capital is constantly shaping and reshaping landscapes in its search for lower wages, but the struggles over social justice in the workplace and community vitality do have an impact on how space is produced (Cox and Mair, 1988; Smith, 1990; Herod, 1991). Hence, locality and place-based struggles must be understood when reading the landscape and understanding it as a manifestation of struggle.

Placed-based struggles figure into most debates over how cities should grow, and within urban studies a literature about how space is produced is derived from understanding conflicts over place. For example, Logan and Molotch (1987) frame placed-based struggles as a contest between the use-value of place and the exchange-value of place. People have a humanistic attachment to place, and identify with their neighborhood, ecosystem or region for reasons beyond economics and property values. These use-values come into direct conflict with conceptualizing neighborhoods, ecosystems, and regions as having exchange-values that supercede cultural attachment, the construction of identity and sense of place, and ideological conceptualizations of how land should be used and who should be able to use it.

Cox and Mair (1988) extend this theoretical understanding of growth politics to local dependency theory. There is interdependency between various actors in local growth debates. Businesses, real estate interests, politicians, unions, and neighborhood and environmental interests may struggle over a spatial vision for a place, but also suspend conflicts in order to compete with other places. Local county governments may compete with neighboring counties for a new shopping center, and workers, landed elites, and politicians may jointly pursue the development. In an era of increased globalization, even neighborhood and environmental advocates might suspend conflict over locality in

order to attract jobs. Taking this theory a step further, local dependency can be observed in metropolitan-scale debates over where future growth should occur, and in the most simplistic terms, as a competition between suburbs and central cities for economic growth (see Rusk, 1995; Orfield, 1997).

In metropolitan Atlanta, my interviews with key stakeholders in the sprawl debate touched on competition between localities within the metropolitan area. One faction in the sprawl debate perceives the emerging anti-sprawl movement as being anti-suburban and hence frames the debate as central city versus suburbs (Interviewees #17; # 26; # 42). In turn, many critics of sprawl are emphatic that "urban" and "suburban" should not be conflated with "sprawl." Rusk (1995) points out that while sprawl characterized suburban development since World War Two, there were suburbs before sprawl. Also, many central cities, such as Houston and Jacksonville, have a landscape described as sprawling within their city limits. One interviewee pointed out that metropolitan New York is a "sprawling" city but it is not technically sprawl in the dense part, which included the five boroughs and older suburbs (Interviewee # 11). Considering mobility in the context I outlined in the previous section may shed light on how concern over sprawl is not simply place-based.

Thinking in terms of mobility visions adds to our understanding of urban growth conflicts such as the one in Atlanta. This is not intended to belittle or dismiss the important role place-based motivations have in the sprawl debate, but thinking in terms of mobility visions reveals that the contestation of urban spaces is also about how space should be configured and organized – across all space. While locality and place do matter, so does how that locality or place is organized, and, specifically, how it is

organized around mobility. Moreover, values, ideology, and politics undergird the rationale that key stakeholders have in contesting Atlanta's urban space and its mobility. While place-based conflict and local dependency debates thread the contestation over where growth occurs, the sprawl debate is, I argue, as much about *how* space – in any place – is organized around mobility.

In analyzing the major stakeholders in Atlanta's sprawl debate and their arguments, I identify competing discourses on mobility that can be attributed to an overall worldview about how cities should grow. An ethnography of the politics of transportation and urban development in Atlanta allows for an analysis of these competing visions of mobility. By ethnography I refer to a methodology of intensive interviews and participant observation supplemented by archival research. Interviews in particular allow the researcher to get at the underlying rationale of complex, ongoing processes, and not just their material effects (Schoenberger, 1991).

At this point it is appropriate to note that the study of discourses of mobility in Atlanta's sprawl debate required an approach of interviewing and observing "elites," and not the general public. By "elites" I do not mean the exclusively wealthy per se, but those with intimate knowledge, engagement, and passion about the sprawl debate. (It turns out, however, that many of these people do come from elite positions of power and wealth.) There are those of modest means who are nevertheless elite in the knowledge they hold. For example, grassroots activists, journalists, and government planners are considered "elite" because they hold a unique knowledge of the mechanics and politics of the sprawl debate. Hence, my emphasis from the outset is on the mobility visions held by the people who either make decisions about how space is configured, or who actively

engage in negotiating or challenging how space is produced. An elaboration of why sprawl and automobiles are contested is thus in order before continuing.

1.4 The Geography of Sprawl and Automobility in Atlanta

Between 1990 and 2000, Atlanta was one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the U.S (US Census, 2001b). The Atlanta metropolitan statistical area (MSA) grew from 2.9 million to 4.1 million inhabitants, a rate of over 40%. The region added as many people as live in all of metropolitan New Orleans. Atlanta rose as a leading job growth center and as a node in the global telecommunications and air travel network. Much of the growth was attributed to the relocation and expansion of national corporations to the region (Hartshorn and Fiji, 1996). Atlanta's growth, however, is not necessarily a problem. Rather, it is *how* Atlanta grew that is of great concern.

Figure 1.1 shows the geography of Atlanta's sprawl. As of 2001, the Atlanta MSA included 20 counties and an area containing 6,126 square miles, which stretched some 50 miles in all directions from the city's downtown. In geographical terms, the Atlanta MSA is larger than Connecticut. Satellite imagery taken by NASA shows 50 acres of trees were cleared daily in the 20-county metropolitan area during the late 1990's (Seabrook, 1999a). Atlanta increased its population 60% between 1982 and 1997 yet increased its urbanized land area by 80%, revealing that households increasingly consumed more space per capita (Fulton et al., 2001). During this period, metropolitan Atlanta had the largest absolute increase of any urbanized area in the US, with 571,000 acres or 892 square miles of new developed land. All of this new growth occurred

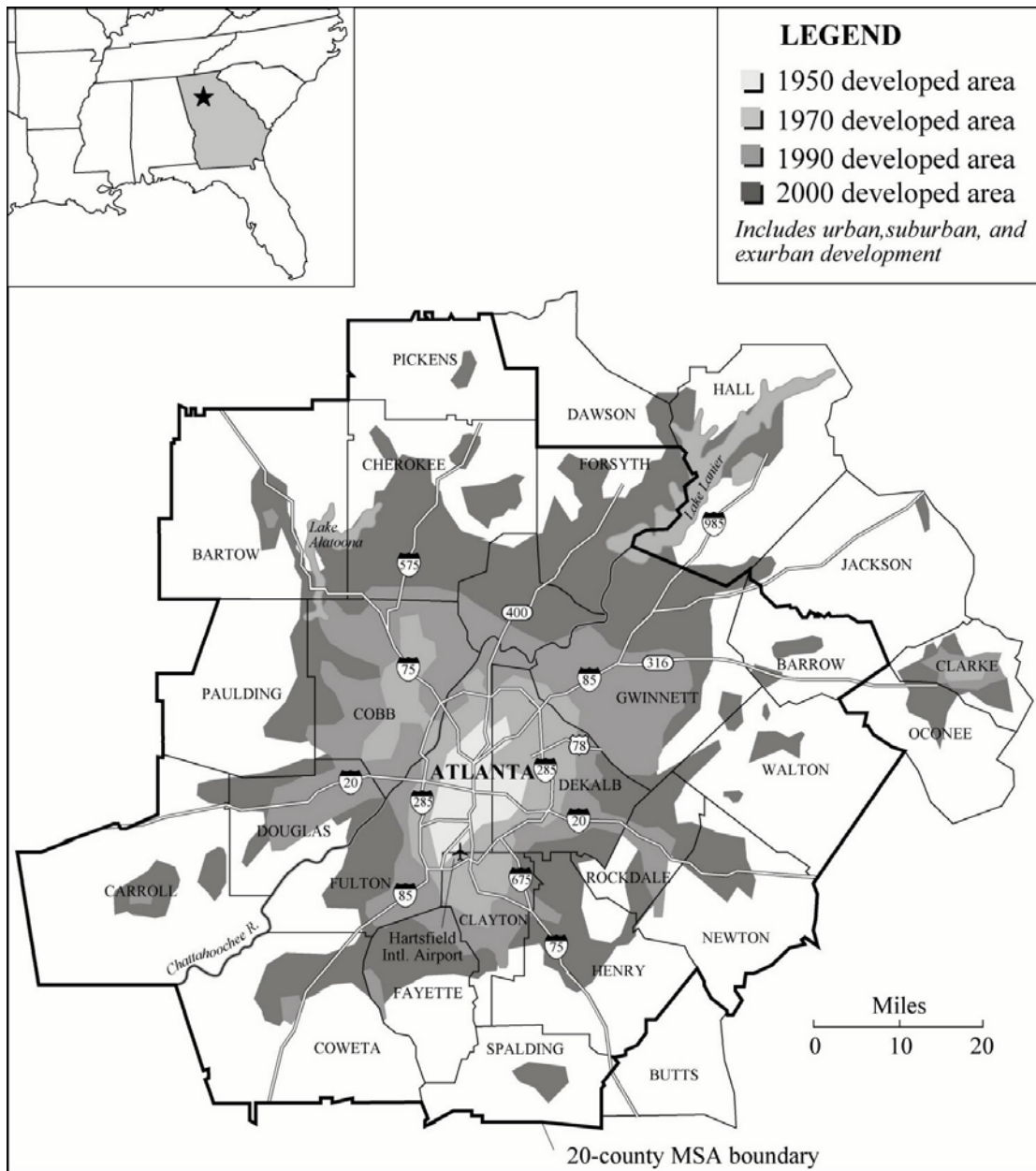


Figure 1.1: The Geography of Atlanta's Sprawl

Source: US Census (2000); ARC (2000); ARC (1994)

outside of the central city, which steadily lost population over the 1980's and 1990's until the late 1990's, when it experienced a slight rebound.

In terms of mobility, this pattern of development was the epitome of automobile-dependent sprawl. In 1995 the average person in Atlanta drove, or was driven, 34 miles a day, 4 miles more than in 1990 (Howitt and Moore, 1999). This was 10 miles more than per capita driving in other sunbelt cities like Charlotte, Houston, and Denver, and between 15 to 24 miles greater than the average person in northern cities like Boston, Chicago, or New York. According to the Texas Transportation Institute (2001), the average person spent 53 hours, or 6 1/2 work days, a year in congested conditions (which means he or she was not in free-flowing travel conditions). Only Los Angeles had a greater per capita amount of time wasted in traffic, and yet the average Angeleno drove 10 miles less per day than an Atlantan. In terms of wasted fuel, Atlanta was actually first in the nation at 84 gallons per person annually (TTI, 2001). As a region, Atlanta burned 239 million gallons of gasoline annually due to congestion, and congestion cost the average person \$915 a year in lost time. These negative environmental, social, and economic trends reflected the spatial pattern of a built environment made primarily for "automobility."

Automobility, as used here, refers to the combined impact on the built environment of the motor vehicle (cars, trucks), the automobile industry, the highway and street networks, and corollary services, plus the centering of society and everyday life around the car and its spaces. In theory, automobility is a system providing individual drivers and their passengers door-to-door access to opportunity over a wider geographic range than can walking, cycling, and public transit. The key attraction of automobility is

that it provides this door-to-door access in less travel time than do the other modes in a low-density built environment. ["Low-density" must be emphasized because, as I discuss below, relatively higher densities than those which typify most US cities would impede excessive automobility.²] The automobile, as an isolated technology, is clearly faster than a pedestrian or a human-powered bicycle in low-density, free-flowing conditions. Public transit can be as fast as, or even faster than, an automobile but is constrained by the egalitarian necessity of stopping for passengers along a fixed route that usually requires a person to approach by walking. Even if the technology of transit is superior to that of the automobile, the door-to-door travel times are often inferior for transit when it operates in low-density sprawl.

For automobility as a system to work, there are certain requirements and these requirements are inherently spatial. Automobility must be accompanied by patterns of development that support the mobility that individuals demand out of cars and trucks. There must be a road network that accesses all places the driver wishes to go. There must also be adequate parking at all places the driver wishes to go. Without the prerequisite spaces the technology of the automobile is useless. Given these requirements, it is the dispersed, decentralized, low-density pattern of urban form that keeps automobility tolerable (and marketable) to the user. Proliferation of automobility requires that low-density housing, retail, and employment centers are decentralized. Decentralization must be complimented by dispersion, or spread, in order to avoid the type of congestion that

² Density is a relative term. In this discussion of urban density, "low" density is 1-3 houses per acre, while "modest" density is 7 housing units per acre, and "high" density is upwards of 15 units per acre, which is considered adequate for supporting light rail transit (see Downs, 1994; Cervero, 1996; Ewing, 1997).

results when higher-density land uses are centered on the automobile (Lave, 1990; Gordon and Richardson, 1991 and 1997a; Levinson and Kumar, 1994). The compact, moderate- to high-density landscapes that are efficient for public transit and lifestyles centered on walking and cycling as forms of transportation (not recreation) are, therefore, incompatible with automobility at a functional level – one must be dense, while the other must be dispersed.

The consumption of land in order to accommodate unfettered automobility is profound. Litman (1995) has estimated that in the mid-1990's automobiles required roughly 125 square meters of road space per person, and that in a typical automobile-oriented city 30% of land was used for roads and 20% for off-street parking, totaling 50% of urban land. In conventional suburban commercial districts, up to 75% of the land area is dedicated to the movement and storage of automobiles. Vuchic (1999) notes that during peak hours in cities, an automobile trip consumes about 30 times more space than a trip by bus and 40 times more space than a trip by rail transit. A typical car commuter requires 20% more space for parking than the actual office work area for that commuter. Consequently, a shift in mode of transport (from mass transit to private car) can have dramatic impacts on the built environment. Thus, some metropolitan areas have experienced no population growth or very little growth in the last several decades, yet have had massive sprawl. For instance, the Cleveland metro area covers 38% more land than it did in 1980, even though the metro population declined by 11% in that time (Hoffman, 2000). Up to 7,000 acres of forests, farms, and open space are paved daily in the US and 50,000 square miles have been consumed since 1970.

Nationally, the US paves and develops an area the size of Delaware every year (Leinberger, in Duany 2000). Estimates are that the land area for roads nationally is roughly 25,000 square miles, or the size of West Virginia. The surface area devoted to storing automobiles increases the total to 29,000 square miles (Banister, 1998, quoting Delucchi, 1994). To be sure, this land area for roads and parking equaled approximately only 1% of the total land area of the continental US (Greene, 1997; Litman, 1995), but that translated into between 12% and 20% of the total developed area of the US in 1992, which was roughly 5% to 8% of the Continental US (Greene, 1997).³ Moreover, when considering factors such as the consumption of arable land adjacent to metropolitan areas and the wider "ecological footprint" of natural resource consumption, the impact of automobility on space is much greater.

Unfortunately, for advocates of mass transit, automobility cannot be overlaid onto a transit-oriented and pedestrian-centered city and be "sustainable" in an egalitarian manner. The spaces required by the automobile in order for everyone to have maximum mobility and access by car require that adequate roadway capacity be complimented by adequate parking facilities. This is a considerable land grab that effectively takes away the spaces of pedestrians, cycling, and transit, especially when the low-density component of the automobility formula is factored in. However, if system meltdown (i.e. congestion) is to be avoided, only a few privileged individuals may get to enjoy the benefits of automobility, such that a few drive while everyone else walks, cycles, or uses transit. This raises the question of who gets to drive and who decides who gets to drive.

³ Greene estimates that 5%-8% of the land mass of the continental US had been built upon, meaning that up to one-fifth of all built-upon land is devoted to the storage and driving of automobiles (including trucks).

Given the incongruity between the car and other forms of mobility such as mass transit or walking, automobility has historically tended to replace virtually all the functional spaces of other urban mobilities. Across this ubiquitous sprawl, walking, cycling, and even public transit have become novelty and recreation for all but those who either cannot afford to drive, or who are too old, young, or in some way physically unable to operate a car. The pattern is self-reinforcing: because sprawl dominates American cities, most Americans drive for almost all daily trips (Pucher and Williams, 1993; Pisarski, 1996), which often leads them to demand that greater accommodation be made for cars in urban landscapes. The result of this consumption of space is that 97% of all urban travel is by passenger cars, SUVs, vans, and trucks. Up to 80% of all intercity travel in the United States is also by passenger vehicles. In urban areas, almost 100% of freight is delivered by truck, while between cities 80% of freight travels by truck.

For Atlanta, one result of this excessive automobility has been significant increases in summer days with smog. Atlanta's "smog" tends to be ground-level-ozone, which the EPA identifies as particularly harmful to children, the elderly, and people with respiratory problems.⁴ The American Lung Association ranked Atlanta as having some of the worst air in the nation, and in 1999 Atlanta had 69 unhealthy "smog days" (Davis, 2001). In June 1996, the EPA informed Atlanta's transportation planners that it was in a

⁴ Ozone is not released into the air directly, but forms through chemical reactions with volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides ("NOx"). These are the fumes emitted from automobiles, trucks, and chemical or paint solvents. NOx also comes from powerplants, which means that Atlanta-based Georgia Power, which owns almost all power plants in the region, was sensitive to the EPA declaration of nonattainment. Atlanta has an ozone problem for three reasons. First, the natural setting is conducive to photochemical smog because air masses tend to stagnate over the region in the summer. Second, most of the electricity in the region comes from coal-fired powerplants, which emit NOx. Third, Atlanta has excessive automobile dependency coupled with both a large trucking industry and the nation's busiest airport.

"conformity lapse" and had eighteen months to come up with a regional transportation plan to produce cleaner air or face suspension of, and possible loss of, federal transportation funds. By January 1998, eighteen months later, the political leadership of Atlanta had failed to achieve such a plan. Federal funds were indeed suspended, making this the first time in the forty-three year history of the federal Clean Air Act (CAA) that transportation funds were withheld for any metropolitan area due to air pollution. This threw the region into a "transportation crisis" that threatened both profits and public health, and put Atlanta in the center of the national debate about sprawl because automobility was the single greatest contributor to Atlanta's bad air.

Atlanta's transportation crisis, when put in context, is an extension of decades of struggle over automobility and its role in society. As a result of the conflicts over modalities of mobility and the implications which stem from them, automobility has become a centerpiece for struggles over global inequity in the distribution and consumption of resources (Mackenzie, et. al. 1992; Freund and Martin, 1993; Whitelegg 1993 and 1997). It is at the center of the racially charged and class-based struggles between inner city and suburb in the US, as well as in other affluent nations (Downs, 1968 and 1994; Hodge, 1990; Bullard and Johnson, 1996; Vascancellos, 1997; North, 1998). Automobility is at the center of place-based struggles over land use and what the character of place will be, while citizen reaction to increased automobility runs through the growing NIMBY movement (North, 1998). Additionally, automobility will undoubtedly soon propagate into a struggle over the access and mobility of an aging but affluent babyboom generation who will be unable to operate vehicles independently but will be trapped in sprawl. Indeed, automobility, and the struggles over sprawl are, in

effect, subsets of the wider struggles over the globalization of capital, the questions of whether capitalism as an economic structure is ecologically sustainable or socially just, and whether capitalism as a system itself is sustainable or self-destructive in the long run.

Thrusting Atlanta into the national debate over sprawl and automobility brought a very new political discourse to the Atlanta region, and arguably to the entire South, that was critical of automobility – a discourse that had never been explicit in the region before. As I argue in the next two chapters, the critical discourse about automobility in Atlanta interrupted a nearly universal politics that considered reducing automobility as not only impossible but as undesirable. Automobility was perceived as a "hegemonic" cultural, ideological, and economic force, borrowing from Gramsci (1971), in Atlanta and the South by the time its serious side-effects were of concern to the region's leaders. Many decision-makers and concerned citizens in Atlanta would come to learn that outside of Atlanta this hegemony was being challenged and that Atlanta's hyper-automobility was increasingly considered a blemish.

1.5 The Plan of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 2 will elaborate on how automobility relates to the American capitalist social structure in order to understand its position in the capitalist urbanization process, providing the context for Atlanta's mobility politics. I will relate this to the wider politics of possibilities regarding a confrontation with the automobile and its spaces. I do not argue that sprawl came before the automobile, or that the automobile came before, and therefore caused, sprawl. Nor do I necessarily claim that the automobile is essential to capitalism. Instead, I argue that the

automobile is inextricably bound with the development pattern called sprawl that occurred under a unique set of circumstances in the US, and that any "chicken-and-egg" argument is delusive. I suggest that the automobile has come to be essentialized in scholarly and policy debates about urban growth, and this has muted the real possibilities for more sustainable and socially just urbanization patterns for the US. Yet, at the same time, contradictions within the system of automobility have resulted in increasing challenges to this essentialization of automobility. Understanding the depth of how the automobile had been essentialized requires an understanding of its relationship to American capitalism.

In Chapter 3, I sketch the history of debates over mobility and urban growth specific to Atlanta, focusing on the struggles in the 1990's that resulted in an unprecedented suspension of most road building in 1998 and the emergence of the city's "transportation crisis." In exploring the discourses of that transportation crisis, I identify seven mobility visions that represent the competing factions in Atlanta's sprawl debate. Chapters 4-7 provide a detailed discussion of these mobility visions, which were discerned using extensive archival research, ethnographic methods of participant observation, and interviews with forty-seven participants in the sprawl debate. (A discussion of methodology can be found in Appendix A.) Briefly, and reserving detailed explanation and analysis for the later chapters, these mobility visions pivot around conceptualizations of how urban space should be organized. A "metro growth machine mobility vision," an "accessible mobility vision," an "ethical mobility vision," and a "new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision," generally, but for rather different reasons, question unfettered automobility. An "auto-industrial complex," a "cornucopian automobility

vision," and a "secessionist automobility vision" share in their general comfort of having space organized around automobility, yet have pronounced differences in why they take their positions in the sprawl debate. An exploration of these three visions of automobility suggest that despite notions of a universal "car culture" frequently espoused in scholarship, planning, and political rhetoric, automobility is not necessarily monolithic, even in Atlanta (see Flink, 1988 for the concept of a "car culture").

In discussing each mobility vision, I explore what values and ideologies underpinned and informed these visions. I do not insist that these categories are final and limited to seven, nor do I think that all people in Atlanta consciously articulate a mobility vision. Again, I interviewed and observed a rather specialized segment of the population, one that was much more engaged in everyday discourses on sprawl and mobility that are not attended by the general public. Indeed, more than a few interviewees grumbled that the public tended to complain about traffic, sprawl, smog, and a plethora of growth-related problems, yet refused to come to grips with even a basic understanding of how things work in transportation and land-use planning. These mobility visions were identified because they were similar themes repeatedly expressed by participants in public forums, interviews, newspaper articles, pamphlets, minutes to meetings, and other sources.

Chapter 8 will provide a synthesis of how the interaction, cooperation, and confrontation between these multiple visions result in the spaces being produced in Atlanta. As a case study I will examine the current debate about the proposed Northern Arc highway, a 59-mile freeway that has become the most significant proposed transportation project in metropolitan Atlanta. How the competing visions of mobility

conceptualize space has significant bearing on their political engagement in the Northern Arc debate. I will explore how the Northern Arc represents stark contrasts in urban futures that are actively being produced now. For example, the articulators of the accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie visions undoubtedly oppose the Northern Arc, while the articulators of the automobility growth machine and cornucopian automobility visions strongly support the Arc as part of a wider scheme for accommodating unfettered automobility and low-density sprawl. Meanwhile, the metro growth machine's ambivalent approach towards the Arc reflects both contradictions in its mobility vision and in the corporate capitalist imperatives, which I begin to explore in the next chapter. Lastly, a profound secessionist automobility vision has emerged as the most vocal opponent of the Arc because it will intrude on the vision of seclusion and escape from the city. As I show, this has the effect of stimulating a unique political coalition between seemingly disparate values and ideologies because the secessionist politics on the Northern Arc unwittingly assist in the accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie visions. Hence, interesting politics of possibilities are emerging as the Northern Arc debate unfolds. The Northern Arc will determine the possibilities and impossibilities of future trajectories of growth that will have profound social, ecological, and political impacts. Thinking in the framework of competing mobility visions situates the debate as more than simply geographically based struggles over place and locality but, rather, as struggles over how urban futures should be organized. In the next chapter I expand upon the argument that automobility is inextricably bound into the social structure of American capitalism and suggest that when automobility is challenged, so too are wider social, political, and economic structures.

CHAPTER 2

AUTOMOBILITY AND THE POLITICS OF POSSIBILITIES

2.1 Purpose of Chapter

This chapter will discuss how automobility fits into the wider dynamic between American capitalism and the built environment. I will utilize the political economic framework of David Harvey (1982) to discuss both the role of transportation under capitalism and how automobility became embedded in the logic of the American capitalist system. Significantly, automobility became ubiquitous as a systematic built environment across virtually all of the US, regardless of place, and in conjunction with American capitalism. However, I do not intend to overdetermine the urbanization process as purely a reflection of the logic of capital. By that I mean that theories on the politics of local dependency argue convincingly that urban space is produced out of contestation. Place-based alliances between capital, labor, and other interest groups will rally to defend their local economic interests against other places that are competing for jobs and economic growth (Cox and Mair, 1988; Herod, 1991). There are city vs. suburb conflicts or older suburb vs. newer suburb conflicts that pit geographically contingent factions of developers, workers, and community activists against each other. What makes the conundrum about sprawl and automobility interesting in this context is that automobility, like the capitalist system that it accompanies, is virtually universalized across all space, regardless of place. In some ways this makes all places (with few exceptions) the same regarding their general spatial configuration around automobility,

and the travel behavior of residents. In that light, the contestation of urban space is not simply place-based but also about *how* space is configured, regardless of where in space.

I will follow with a discussion of how automobility is represented as hegemonic in contemporary discourses on urbanization, sprawl, and sustainable transportation, by which I mean that automobility has been incorporated as a part of beliefs, values, and norms into a social structure that dominates everyday life in the US. The hegemony of automobility and its near-universal spatiality means it is projected as "natural," "common sense," and "inevitable," and this affects the politics of possibilities for challenging sprawl and automobility. However, this hegemony of automobility has increasingly come under multiple challenges that have spatial implications. The multiple challenges to automobile hegemony are simultaneously ones that seek to decouple automobility from the logic of American capitalism, while others seek wider social and ecological outcomes that indirectly challenge both capitalist urban spaces and automobility. Hence, as this chapter will show, the conflicts over automobility reflect wider tensions within capital, and the urban landscape is not simply the creation of capital but, rather, the physical outcome of these tensions. The final section of this chapter will discuss the negotiations and challenges to automobility that undergird the remainder of the dissertation.

2.2 Transportation and the Logic of Capital

In *The Limits to Capital*, David Harvey (1982) theorizes that the capitalist mode of production actively produces and reproduces a geography that reflects its own needs and that is created in its own image, and that transportation is a major component of this

production of space. Indeed, transportation is central to any understanding of the political economy of capitalism because it provides the conditions for capital accumulation and provides for the social reproduction of labor (Hodge, 1990). Thus, the accumulation of capital is bound up with the cost, speed, and capacity of the transport system to accommodate the turnover time of capital. Transportation is essential for production because it provides capitalists with the means to access raw materials, labor, and markets that are spatially separated from the production site. It is central to understanding the circulation of capital because capitalists seek spatial integration that links production localities together for exchange. Transportation minimizes the spatial barriers to the circulation of capital, allowing for smoother spatial integration and facilitating the "annihilation of space by time" (Harvey, 1983, p. 219). It is also constitutive of the physical framework for consumption provided in the wider built environment because it enables the consumer to access commodities. The transportation system, then, is an example of how "investment in the built environment entails the creation of a whole physical landscape for the purposes of production, circulation, exchange, and consumption" (Harvey, 1983, p. 202). Transportation, however, is also a commodity for consumption in and of itself. There are industries focused on the production of transportation equipment such as the automotive industry, and there are consumers that seek mobility for the sake of mobility, for example motoring, yachting, or hobby aeronautics as forms of recreation.

The transportation system under capitalist social structures such as those dominant in the US reflects the contradictions that characterize the wider production of space under capitalism (Harvey, 1982; 1983). Thus, the mobility of commodities and

capital circulation require a transport network that is fixed in space at a particular historic moment (Harvey, 1983). Paradoxically, however, once a transportation system is fixed into the landscape it immediately begins to become obsolete. Hence, whereas transportation networks are essential for the functioning of capital, as they age they may provide less and less utility to collective capital (and increasingly may prove a hindrance to capital circulation). Consequently, a fixed transportation system, which produces a fixed spatial configuration, may have great utility at one historical moment but can be disruptive to the imperative of decreased circulation time at subsequent historical moments and so becomes a spatial barrier which must itself subsequently be overcome by capital.

For example, the extensive urban streetcar networks of the 1920's were a spatial barrier to the increased use of automobile commuting and the use of delivery trucks in urban areas. In the logic of the American capitalist spatial imperative, the streetcar network had to be removed to reduce the circulation times of capital, in this case in the form of automobile commute times and truck-delivery scheduling. New technologies and communications, then, can make the previous spatial configuration of the transportation system increasingly redundant, even while all previous capitalist organization was structured around that spatial configuration. Hence, urban, middle-class, high-density housing built in the 1920's, structured around streetcars, was devalued by automobility later, while urban-based manufacturing and warehousing was made redundant by the proliferation of trucking and the attraction of peripheral locations due to congestion in the core. A specific transportation system and its corollary spatial configuration must be

constructed only to be later obliterated in the search for ever faster ways of circulating capital.

Capitalists, then, both create specific spatial configurations to meet their needs and simultaneously devalue and destroy other spatial configurations that no longer meet their needs. Yet they cannot simply destroy fixed spatial configurations like transport systems without risking substantial devaluation of fixed investment that threatens the stability of the wider capitalist system. They therefore must negotiate a "knife-edge path" between preserving the exchange values of past capital investments in the built environment and destroying the value of these investments in order to open up fresh room for accumulation (Harvey, 1983 p. 220). As Harvey argues, the convenient moment to destroy a particular spatial configuration that is no longer suitable for accumulation typically is during what he calls a "crisis of overaccumulation."

Simply put, overaccumulation results when too much capital is produced in the aggregate relative to the opportunities to employ that capital. The crisis of overaccumulation has its roots in the fact that each capitalist is ultimately driven to engage in a process of accumulation for accumulation's sake and seeks, in the process, to undermine competition by raising the productivity of labor above the social average. Yet this drive towards maximum profit eventually leads to a falling rate of profit, devaluation, and crises of overaccumulation as a result of an overproduction of commodities, of idle productive capacity, of money lacking opportunities for profitable employment, of the existence of surplus labor, or the increased level of exploitation of labor (which reduces labor's ability to purchase commodities due to a reduction in real wages). One or more of these manifestations of overaccumulation can occur simultaneously. In response to

crises of overaccumulation, capitalists often channel surplus capital into built environments as a temporary solution to lack of profitability. Such a practice is what Harvey calls creating a "spatial fix," as capitalists seek to devalue spaces deemed unprofitable while then investing in new spaces (infrastructures and built environments) in order to channel money into future profits.

In creating a new spatial fix for itself, capital can flow into the built environment of transportation infrastructure for production and consumption. Consequently Harvey calls the built environment the "secondary circuit of capital." This secondary circuit encompasses capital flows into fixed capital for production, such as factories and offices, or fixed capital for consumption, such as housing. Transportation, as discussed above, facilitates both production and consumption and is therefore a unique form of fixed capital in the secondary circuit. The secondary circuit is possible only when there is surplus capital in the primary circuit, which is the site of commodity production. When overproduction or overaccumulation occurs in the primary circuit, "switching" capital from the primary circuit to the secondary circuit acts as a release valve. Switching is the recirculation of unused capital, through speculative investment, into uses which generate future capital accumulation without contributing to overproduction or overaccumulation in the primary circuit. Excess capital is directed towards longer-term investments such as real estate and transportation which, while not producing immediate returns, may result in greater overaccumulation in the future – a strategy which merely delays the looming crisis. This switching cannot happen, however, without the intervention and coordination of financial institutions like banks and the state, because individual capitalists, left to their own competitive tendencies, will continue to over-invest in their

own production process while undersupplying the collective needs of all production (Harvey, 1983, p. 202).

Moreover, the temporal dimensions of large-scale transportation projects makes their profitability questionable for the individual capitalist. Initial returns on investments in railroads, highways, or ports may take decades to recover, if at all. This makes transportation infrastructure an unattractive investment for private capital. This is especially acute for transportation investments because they are hyper-collective in that they provide multiple arrays of services for production, circulation, exchange, and consumption for capitalists engaged in competition with each other. The state is needed to finance long-term, large-scale transportation projects and to coordinate the rest of the built environment around that transportation network. Capitalists are therefore forced to constitute themselves as a class and use the state to channel investment into transportation infrastructure. As Harvey argues, investment in transportation infrastructure is essential for the accumulation process, and therefore does not necessarily arise out of a crisis of overaccumulation. However, the cumulative effect of transportation on real estate and other sectors of the secondary circuit makes it crucial to the coordinated switching between the primary and secondary circuit. For example, speculative office development in Houston, which Joe Feagin argued was a response to a crisis of overaccumulation in the energy sector in the 1970's and 1980's, was not possible without state-financed highway construction and therefore, as capital was switched into speculative real estate, it was with the coordination of transport policy (Feagin, 1987).

With this in mind, it becomes evident that automobility is bound up with the form taken by the American capitalist space-economy. There is no doubt that the capitalist

social structure of the US, when compared to variations of capitalism found in Western Europe or Japan, has tended to be centered on automobility (good comparative studies can be found in Dunn (1981); Pucher and Lefevre (1996); and Cervero (1998)). When discussing the rise of automobility, then, it is necessary to understand the context of its origins in a crisis of overaccumulation and the imperative for capitalists to invest in the secondary circuit of capital. However, it is also necessary to understand other social processes that intersected with the capitalist production of space. In the case of the US, the urban space-economy has developed a particular structure that has been inextricably linked to automobility since at least the 1920's, yet it is overdeterministic to state that automobility is somehow inevitable under all capitalist urban development. The legacy of this 1920's transformation underlay the logic of contemporary sprawl, and must be contextualized if the problems of sprawl are to truly be understood and addressed.

2.3 Automobility and the Logic of American Capitalism

Although the rise of mass, unfettered automobility and sprawl are generally associated with the post-World War Two period, in reality many of the foundations for this production of capitalist space were laid in the 1920's. Historians such as Kenneth Jackson (1985), Robert Fishman (1987), and Adam Rome (2001) have stressed that modern sprawl was actually rooted in the post-World War One era (and not World War Two). In the 1920's, the political economic vision was that automobility and single-family home ownership would become the pillars of the American economy and both sectors – automobility and home building – experienced a massive expansion and became more integral to the US political economic order. Both sectors were seen as essential for

economic stability and growth in the US, and their consumption by Americans was considered crucial for the accumulation of wealth.

Whether by design or happenstance, then, a strong coalition of automakers, cement and steel interests, petroleum firms, contractors, insurance and banking interests, and even motel operators formed an alliance with federal and state governments to build roads and automobile-oriented infrastructure across the US (Goddard, 1994).

Construction of highways, new skylines, and new suburban housing and buildings employed more workers than any single industry during the period between WWI and the Great Depression (Leuchtenburg, 1958). Yet, by the late 1920's the national automobile market was, for all practical purposes, saturated (Wachs and Crawford, 1992; Goddard, 1994). There was not a large enough middle class to consume automobility at the rate of production. Market saturation posed a serious problem for producers because enormous sunk costs in assembly lines required that new markets be opened. This threatened the economic growth of the nation as an impending crisis of overaccumulation, broadly based on an inability to synchronize production with consumption, emerged. While the rural diffusion of roads and autos (including trucks) had been successful and profitable, the cities remained an untapped market. In the cities only the wealthier classes purchased automobiles while many middle-class and lower-class urban Americans either did not need, or could not afford, a car. The automobile functioned as a means of escape to the countryside for wealthier urbanites, but in cities the car was less functional because urban space was not adequate for mass urban automobility. Rather, the cities were walkable, housing and commercial densities were relatively high, land uses were mixed, and transit

service was more accessible. Streets were narrow and main streets were quickly clogged with traffic as automobility by the rich increased.

Clearly, in the late 1920's automobile manufacturers faced a conundrum that was in large part a spatially induced crisis of overproduction. Yet the onslaught of global depression after 1929, and then global war, meant that any wholesale reordering of American society around automobility to solve such a crisis of overproduction would have to wait a generation. However, planning for full automobility did not have to wait, and urban design quickly embraced the spatial reconfiguration of cities around automobility. The pinnacle of anticipation of full automobility in a landscape of sprawl was the General Motors Futurama exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair in New York (Caro, 1975). On display in the exhibit were futuristic images of freeways, concrete high-rises in gardens, and low-density housing, all foreshadowing the suburban office park nestled in greenery near a freeway with access to sprawling subdivisions. The exhibit whetted appetites for a postwar economic boom centered not just on selling automobility, but on re-ordering urban space and everyday life around automobility.

Walker (1981), focusing upon the United States's post-World War Two urban spatial fix (what he called the US's "suburban solution"), outlined the strategies capitalists deployed as a spatial fix to overaccumulation in the 1950's and 1960's. The players producing this spatial fix were what Rome (2001) has called the "suburban-industrial complex." This complex involved a coalition of industries engaged in the production of houses and real estate, automobiles, and electrical appliances who collaborated to shape public policy so as to stimulate the consumption of new suburban spaces, automobiles, new houses, and appliances for those new homes. As part of this "suburban solution,"

situated in fear that the US economy would retrench after World War Two, the density of American cities had to be lowered and flattened for automobility to succeed, and an ideology of consuming automobility had to be created and nurtured. In order for automobility to be “good” for the USA, as a former president of GM Charles Wilson has been quoted as saying, the USA had to produce urban spaces that allowed automobility to function as a system (Goddard, 1994).

The means to this end were to reconfigure urban space and to repackage working-class ideology into what Harvey (1989) called an ideology of "possessive individualism." The consumption of luxury items like cars and large appliances in homes was transformed into a necessity and the privatization of that consumption would come to be glorified. For example, Henry Ford dreamt of an acquisitive society committed to a belief in individual advancement and an automobile-oriented consumer society that acted as a substitute for democracy (Wolf, 1996). The successful propaganda methodologies of public persuasion utilized during World War Two were applied to the marketing of automobiles and suburban housing. Goddard (1994) explained that this borrowed from the strategy of the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), a publicly funded federal agency that built roads and engaged in an extensive propaganda campaign through the formation of the Highway Education Board (HEB) in the 1920's. This campaign used Madison Avenue advertisement agencies to instill notions that use of roads was an inalienable right, whereas the use of railroads was a privilege. The strategy was to invoke a festering resentment of infamous railroad robber barons and their wealthy allies who rode first class and often in their own private rail cars, while regular paying passengers suffered inflated fares and inferior service. Open roads were symbolized as providers of freedom

(from monopoly capital) and the HEB actively conditioned the non-driving young as future consumers who would later vote in support of road building and pro-automobile policies.

Martin Wachs (1992) described how women were targeted in advertising and two-car households encouraged as early as the 1920's in order to stimulate consumption of automobiles at a time when the male-dominated market was saturated. One car was for the man to get to work in the city. The other was for the woman to keep the family together and do household duties in neighborhoods. The incorporation of the car into everyday life meant a reconfiguration of the home and, further, a re-orientation of neighborhoods from public to private spheres. Before the widespread diffusion of the car the front of the home was a public place. Porch sitting was a part of the everyday lived experience and a sense of community was upheld. Buckley (1992) points out that the garage and carport eventually replaced the porch in the front of many homes. The main entrance became the one adjacent to where the car parked, and the front entrance lost symbolic importance. Increasing traffic and higher automobile speeds on neighborhood streets made them less aesthetic, and less safe for children, so families turned to the private yard. As "backyard living" grew, the public sphere declined (Buckley, 1992). The backyard was a controlled area where children roamed free of the hazards of cars. An ideology of family over neighborhood was entrenched in middle-class white America. Neighborhood relations altered, the car allowed one to have friends further away while not knowing the next-door neighbor. Social intercourse within neighborhoods declined, and what Kenneth Jackson (1985) called a "drive-in" culture emerged. This drive-in culture created a positive feedback loop wherein the more space committed to the

automobile, the more families sought escape to the privatized space of the home or to the privatized spaces of shopping malls and amusement centers. Possessive individualism under automobility induced more possessive individualism.

The consumption of these material goods would be extended to the middle class and some of the working class by expanding credit and loans, backed by state guarantees. Debt was socially constructed as good, as something socially necessary instead of shameful. From an ideological perspective, automobility extended the ideology of private property to mobility and cast automobility as a property right. The result is what Freund and Martin (1993) have called the auto-sprawl-syndrome. The automobile made sprawl possible, which, in turn, made automobile dependency necessary. Modern urban landscapes were built to facilitate automobility and to discourage other modes of mobility. Increasingly, the freedom to go where one pleased, when one wanted, and along whichever route one wanted to take was often only possible if one had a car. A new transportation system was fixed into the American landscape while the old transit and pedestrian-based system was devalued and, in many cases, destroyed.

2.3.1 Reconfiguring Space and Ideology

After World War Two, then, the value of automobility for American capitalism was clear. Mass automobilization performed multiple functions of expanding accumulation, sustaining capitalism ideologically, and integrating more land into the speculative market than under more compact development scenarios. The ease with which the synchronization of production and consumption could be achieved through a spatial fix of automobility was extraordinary. The automobile became the quintessential

manufactured object of capitalism and the source of concepts describing capitalism, such as "Fordism" and "post-Fordism" (Sheller and Urry, 2000). Manufacturing automobiles became the leading global industry and, after housing, the automobile became the major item of consumption in the US, a commodity consumed as a status symbol and which came to represent, among other things, speed, sexuality, safety, career success, freedom, family, and masculinity. It also grew into the focus of a disproportionate amount of attention in the criminal justice system because of drunk driving, moving violations, automobile theft, and speeding (Sheller and Urry, 2000). Automobility also had intricate linkages with the rest of the economy, from automobile suppliers, big oil, gas stations, automobile dealers, road building and maintenance, motels, fast food drive-ins, suburban home building, big-box retail, advertising, and marketing. It was the apex of the suburban industrial complex.

Automobility, more than any other socio-spatial aspect of modern urban life, underlay the logic of sprawl. The possibility of mass-produced, low-density, single-detached housing would not exist without automobility. The flexibility of the car opened more land than would have otherwise been possible. Roads opened up new undeveloped lands and provided more opportunity for speculation and production of new spaces. The road network constructed by the state provided more outlets for surplus capital. Roads to everywhere provided a coverage strategy that made road building an untouchable public policy. Capitalists could create more surplus value without having to invest in as much fixed capital because the state built highways. Labor had to buy the cars, the state built the roads, and labor had to buy the fuel to use the roads, which was taxed by the state to pay for more roads. Capitalists were essentially exempt from paying the direct cost of

the journey to work of labor (Feldman, 1977). Meanwhile, traffic planning in the US became *de facto* urban planning and was geared towards reducing the costs of the circulation of capital, which was increasingly centered on automobility and trucking. Development of the road network helped "annihilate space by time" because automobility enabled greater amounts of space to be accessed with less time (as long as the roads were built). The city was viewed by traffic planners as an abstract plain upon which capital circulated and friction of distance had to be overcome. The marginalization, and often complete removal, of pedestrian, bicycling, and transit spaces was necessary to create full automobility as a functioning system because these often stood in the way of higher speed travel. Pedestrian spaces, for example, had to be minimized so that automobilists would not have to be burdened with frequent stops to allow pedestrians to cross streets. Abundant parking requirements meant that commercial and office establishments would be spaced further apart, making transit less efficient. The result was a spatial organization and mobility regime incongruent with widespread transit, pedestrian and bicycling spaces, in much the same vein as outlined in chapter 1.

The suburban-industrial complex fused its economic necessity with culture and ideology. It used the state to facilitate its expansion, it promoted itself by invoking patriotism and "American values," and it promoted a consumer culture of filling homes with new appliances and goods, all centered on automobility. This transformed America into what Sheller and Urry (2000) called a civil society of automobility. Virtually all spatial praxis involved the automobile. It came to be a dominant part of perceptions of the "good life" and, because of its impact on subordinating other modes, it was a dominant force in defining citizenship and participation in our society. Citizenship in the

US meant getting a driver's license, and for many this became a more important expression of citizenship than was voting (on automobility and citizenship in the US, see Flink, 1988; Dunn; 1998; Sheller and Urry, 2000.) Of course, in the process US cities had to be reconfigured.

As was the case with other cities, as Atlanta grew it was reordered to fit the automobile. Unlike Northern cities, where urban space had to be "retrofitted" to accommodate the automobile, Atlanta had ample undeveloped territory to configure around automobility. To be sure, parts of downtown Atlanta had to be reordered, and the streetcar system was removed for the sake of increasing automobile speeds in the city. Yet, Atlanta's new growth after World War Two increasingly centered on low-density, single-detached housing built around the automobile, and the production of these new spaces became part of the economic backbone of the city. Investment in the secondary circuit of capital of road building and real estate grew into an economic foundation, and it can be argued that sprawl was a core part of Atlanta's economy early on.

In discussing how the automobile dominates social space, Freund and Martin (1996, p. 3) have suggested that the socio-physical space of the automobile as a system is a "testament to the power of capitalism to structure consumption and hence a way of life." They argue further that the predominance of auto-centered transport in advanced capitalist societies represents a successful melding of a pattern of consumption to psycho-social needs and a landscape structured in its image. Within capitalism, then, the perceptions of what is possible, desirable, and rational are deeply structured by automobile consumption, such that the "need" for an automobile is seldom questioned. The concept of automobility is thus "hegemonic" (Gramsci, 1971). By hegemonic I

mean a worldview that is successful in projecting itself as natural, common sense, and inevitable and that legitimizes behavioral practices and social policies. Automobility is hegemonic in that it has been incorporated into the social structure that dominates everyday life in the US, embedded in beliefs, values, and norms. In light of this, in the next section I will discuss how discourses on the politics of possibilities for confronting the problems of automobility have been dominated by an ideological hegemony that essentializes automobility.

2.4 Representations of Automobile Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci (1971) described how ideological hegemony is successful in projecting itself as natural, common sense, and inevitable. The exertion of hegemony creates a veil of consensus that is produced through education systems, child-rearing practices, the organization of work relations, and everyday life (Johnston et al., 2000). Hegemony is not exerted through visible force but, rather, through the willing acquiescence of citizens to accept their status by their acceptance of cultural, social, and political practices and institutions. Hegemony is therefore more than just the dominance of particular ideologies and values, but is also the sedimentation of those ideologies and values into everyday practice and institutional arrangements. Hegemony in both academic and popular culture is the dominant "story line" that consolidates existing power relations (Johnston et al., 2000).

The hegemony of automobility arose, at least in part, out of what Harvey (1983) called the tertiary circuit of capital, which essentially functions to reproduce labor power through education, policing, military protection, and social control. Like the secondary

circuit of capital, the tertiary circuit is born out of the switching of capital from production in the primary circuit into an infrastructure that functions to both support and reproduce the capitalist order, as well as absorb surplus capital in a crisis of overaccumulation. Fundamentally, the tertiary circuit performs the function of establishing an adequate social basis for further accumulation. Within the tertiary circuit, for example, we find the planning profession, which serves to assess which investments in the secondary and tertiary circuits are best for the production of more wealth. Transportation planning and research, two very important aspects of the tertiary circuit, are crucial for an understanding of how space is produced, reproduced, and destroyed in the capitalist process of creating landscapes in capital's own image. For the purposes of this research, the tertiary circuit reveals the foundations on which the hegemony of automobility displayed in academic research is deployed as an ideology. It also reveals where and how automobile hegemony is challenged, and how those challenges negotiate a line between confrontation with the spaces of automobility on the one hand, while simultaneously seeking to avoid a real critique of capitalism on the other.

In the discourse on US urban transportation policy, the exertion of automobile hegemony creates a veil of consensus that is nevertheless challenged. Hence, Vukan Vuchic (1999), a prominent transportation scholar, laments that politicians and academics have adopted an "inevitability hypothesis" in the discourse over automobiles which says that present trends in the growth of automobility are part of a natural process of decentralization and dispersal of cities. In such a hypothesis, the future of further dispersal and decentralization is cast as inevitable. Very influential scholars such as Alan Altshuler of MIT, and prestigious research bodies like the Transportation Research Board

(TRB), have perpetuated the inevitability hypothesis. Thus, Althshuler (1984) declared that the political discussion challenging the automobile was over in the US, while the TRB, an influential arm of the National Research Council, reports skepticism about the political acceptance of the American public for policies that reduce driving (TRB, 1997). TRB, reporting people's desires, accepts the inevitability hypothesis even as its research suggests that significant policies to reduce automobile use are needed to address environmental problems like global warming (TRB, 1997). That is, TRB observes that transit investment is needed, but that its functionality and practicality must be complemented by spatial reconfigurations that reduce the convenience of automobility, in turn favoring transit. TRB concludes that, broadly, American politicians are not interested in restricting parking supply, increasing fuel taxes, or taking away urban space used currently by cars in order to make transit work better (TRB, 2001). While not taking the hard-line stance of the MIT study on automobility directed by Althshuler in the early 1980's, it does perpetuate a belief, said to be accepted by the general (voting) public, that it is not possible to challenge automobility in any meaningful way. Throughout academic discourses on urban transportation policy and planning, a similar ideological hegemony of automobility is either accepted without question or observed as an impossible barrier of social change.

One of the most influential voices on the (im)possibilities of reducing automobile dependency in the US is Anthony Downs, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Downs is an important figure in the urban transportation debate because his voice is heard in places where US urban transportation policy is decided. He speaks before Congress and his research is disseminated widely in journals such as *Housing Policy*

Debate, which often publishes articles on public policy and sprawl that speak to both academics and policy makers. His conclusions are grim and reflect the conundrum that is the hegemonic essentialization of automobility by decision makers at all levels of government.

In his 2001 testimony before Congress, for instance, Downs acknowledged that the automobile had enormous social costs and pointed out that high gas taxes, higher licensing fees, and more parking charges were needed if its true costs to the environment and society were to be met. While Downs (2001a) saw the car in a negative light, he concluded that most Americans were too selfish to change for a greater social or environmental good, even if it was for each American's long-term good. To members of Congress he announced that congestion was a "problem" without a solution because Americans will not accept a solution that will work and that "Congestion was bad enough to make us complain loudly, but not bad enough to make us change our behavior" (Downs, 2001a, p. 7). His pessimistic conclusion was that congestion was going to get worse and that people would learn to enjoy being stuck in traffic, such that "It will become just another leisure activity. You should get a climate-controlled car with a stereo and tape deck and CD player, a hands-free telephone, a fax machine and even a microwave oven, and commute each day with someone you really like. Make it part of your leisure life!" (Downs, 2001b, p. 3). Hence Downs reiterates an ideological hegemony of automobility that translates into the willing acquiescence of citizens to accept their grim predicament because they accept that somehow automobility is embedded into their everyday cultural, social, and political practices and institutions.

This rather cynical outlook on the future of driving in America was reflected in the humor of the satirical magazine, *The Onion* (Onion, 2000). "Report: 98 Percent of US Commuters Favor Public Transportation For Others" was a parody on selfishness and a lack of personal responsibility among Americans when it comes to driving. Americans were cast as extremely supportive of mass transit investment so that others would get off the road. "It's about time somebody did something to get some of these other cars off the road" one fictional motorist was quoted. The spoof parodied buses as "a chance to meet interesting people from a diverse array of low-paying service sector jobs, and the opportunity to learn new languages by reading subway ads written in Spanish." This extended the social acceptance of automobility into an arena of racialized class struggle where not driving was to be reflective of a marginal status in society. This seemingly harmless spoof is really a representation of automobility produced and circulated by scholars who shape public understandings of what is possible and impossible in urban futures. The crucible of this representation of automobility is the notion of a "car culture."

Conventional wisdom in academia is that a "car culture" in America is too ingrained to allow for the necessary social changes to reduce automobile dependency (Flink, 1988). Peter Gordon and Harry Richardson (1997a) and James Dunn (1998), scholars defending automobility, make the claim that Americans want automobility and that this love affair with the automobile is a logical extension of embedded American values like individualism, freedom, and democracy. Webber (1999), also defending automobility, has suggested that the automobile is "fully ensconced" in every aspect of American society and this trajectory cannot be broken, while Black (1997), though

examining the possibilities of full-costing the automobile, contends many policymakers believe that any significant tax increases on the cost of fuel would be politically unacceptable. What all of these scholars have in common is that their views on automobility and the politics of possibilities provided "evidence" for less scholarly think tanks and public agencies that more directly affect transportation policy. For example, as I will outline in later chapters, Gordon and Richardson have a vocal position in the right-leaning Reason Public Policy Foundation, which is a think tank that advises conservative politicians at the federal, state, and local level.

The idea or perception that Americans will not give up their cars is reflected in new forms of development such as New Urbanism. This is ironic because New Urbanism is a development form meant to reduce automobile dependency. The central organizing space of New Urbanism is the neo-traditional neighborhood grid, which has characteristics of both historic small towns and urban neighborhoods, with narrow but well-connected streets, sidewalks on both sides of the street, and short blocks. From a traffic engineering perspective, the neo-traditional grid slows down cars while making it safer for bicyclists and pedestrians. This is supposed to enable residents to choose walking, biking, and, if available, transit as legitimate mobilities. Yet theory does not translate into practice in most cases. New Urbanist developments that have been built in the 1990's have been accused of being "subdivisions masquerading as small towns" (Marshall, 1996). While the homes were closer to the streets, and the architecture meant to replicate Charleston, Georgetown, or Savannah – all walkable urban models – the developments did not reduce automobile dependency. As Marshall (2000) points out, this is because Charleston, Georgetown, and Savannah were built before the car and

therefore these spaces were designed for walking and not for cars. In New Urbanist developments, the spaces were modeled on these historic places, but then the average American suburban household, with multiple automobiles, was accommodated. The primary impact New Urbanism has had on the urban landscape, thus far, is what I call "parking-in-the-back New Urbanism." This is residential, office, and retail development that hides the car but does not reduce dependency on it. As one critic pointed out, "hiding the driveway is a form of urban Puritanism, hiding the real workings of society" (Marshall, 2000, p. 31).

To be sure, these New Urbanist spaces are isolated within a wider ubiquitous autocentric sprawl that makes it difficult for a resident to reach the wider metropolitan area without a car (see, for example, Handy, 1996, and Cervero, 1996, on the problem of walkable urbanism surrounded by sprawl). It is easy to criticize a New Urbanist development, for example, for failing to reduce automobile dependency when it is completely surrounded by sprawl. Regional planning and economic policies must compliment and support New Urbanist design (Calthorpe, 1993). Like most new development in the US, New Urbanist developments are built in fast growing suburban areas on "greenfield" sites. They are located adjacent to highways and many have only one or two entrances, similar to conventional auto-oriented subdivisions. Residents of the New Urbanist developments might be able to walk on sidewalks in their neighborhoods for exercise, but they still drive to Wal-Mart or McDonald's and, most likely, drive to work. Thus, they park their cars behind their neotraditional homes and might park behind the post office in a neotraditional town center but, overall, driving is still frequent.

Like their suburban counterparts, many New Urban projects built as urban infill in central cities face the same problem of being an isolated pedestrian and bicycling environment in a sea of automobility. This is because the last fifty years of urban transportation policy in American cities has converted denser cores into replicas of the spaces of automobility, reflecting the capitalist imperative to destroy certain spaces in order to replace them with new forms of fixed capital. In Atlanta, for example, a much touted New Urbanist development adjacent to a MARTA rail station still contained over 10,000 parking spaces because, according to the developer, automobile access was essential for getting the necessary financing for the project. The developer, Carter and Associates, said that Atlantans were in a transition phase and not ready to give up cars (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1999a). In Atlanta, a politics of impossibilities regarding reducing automobility was reflected in the wider academic discourse summarized above.

In seeking an explanation for the political impossibility of limiting automobility, Whitelegg (1997) has outlined how the automobile has contributed to a time-space complexity that has produced psychological inconsistencies and contradictions in the transportation debate. He has suggested that car users are convinced relatively easily that driving pollutes and that there are social inequities in the transportation system. Yet car drivers tend to argue that they cannot give up driving because of the pattern of their daily trips, child-care, pet-care, or the need to carry bulky items, and so on, to the point where they feel the car is essential for their daily existence. This essentialization of the need for a car is reinforced by the bombardment of advertisements that equate the car with freedom and independence, and reinforce false perceptions of dependency that people have on automobiles. In other words, the social control mechanisms

institutionalized as early as the 1920s and which intensified after World War Two are continuing to affect the political worldview of the general public in ways that coerce acquiescence to a behavior that in the aggregate most people recognized as harmful. This automobile hegemony is succinctly described by critic Jane Holtz Kay (1997), who, invoking critical media theory, points out that the automobile is so integral to the ambient culture that people can no longer isolate themselves from it to gain perspective on their place within its landscape. There is no surveillance point from which to stand aloof and view the impact of the true toll of automobility. Kay stressed that unlike a television, to which the above example was originally directed, "we cannot turn-off the influence of the automobile" (Kay, 1997, p. 33).

Challenging the "consumer preference" explanation of automobility in transportation planning, Sheppard (1995) argues that aggregate patterns of travel behavior are the result of much more than simply consumer preference, which should not be seen as a causal explanation. Thus, if transportation planners rely solely on observation of extant behavior to develop policy, they can actually make policy recommendations that reinforce a behavior that is not accurately described as a consumer preference. Hence, transportation demand modeling, which simply incorporates observed behavior and extrapolates into the future, is simply a sketch of the empirical surface of actual utilization patterns, yet this is what scholars, planners, and politicians use to justify the status quo. In the process, they do not probe more deeply to ask about the processes in society that bring about certain types of mobility (Sheppard, 1995, p. 127). In other words, the hegemony of automobility has led the vast majority of transportation planners, engineers, and academics to take it for granted that virtually all

mobility should be, and will be, automobility in the context of the US. Sheppard's (1995) analysis of transportation planning discourses implies that understanding how discourses are shaped can reveal that although hegemony refers to ideological dominance it can never be 100% dominant. In the following section I will outline how automobile hegemony is implicitly and explicitly challenged.

2.5 Negotiating and Challenging Automobile Hegemony

In the 20th century, capitalism has been the dominant mode of production and influence on the social structure of the United States, as well as much of the globe. Capitalist social relations have produced distinctive spaces that reflect the needs and consequences of the capitalist mode of production, and sprawl is one of them. Yet the physical manifestation of space is not entirely determined by the whims of capital by itself. While a logic of capital framework can provide an understanding of the historic processes that led to full automobility in the US, it can also be overdeterministic in terms of the politics of possibilities for successful challenges to automobility and how cities should grow. A more accurate assessment argues that space is produced from the outcomes of struggles within capital and between capital and labor, or other social movements such as ecological or civil rights movements (Edel, 1981). Harvey (1982 and 1989) elaborates on how divisions among capitalists and the wider class struggle produce spaces.

Workers and community interests do have agency (Smith, 1990; Cox and Mair, 1988). By agency I mean that community interests have a very real role in shaping their destinies and are not simply victim of their circumstances or subsumed to a wider

superstructure dominating society. For example, class struggle is one of the forgotten pieces of the puzzle explaining the decline of rail transit and the rise of automobility. While social engineering tactics flourished with the rise of automobility, it is worthwhile to consider also the agency of individuals and their collective role in adapting the automobile. Hence a popular explanation (see Adler (1981), Slater (1997), Cole (1998), Cudahy (1998), Dunn, (1998), and Zearfoss (1998)) argues that General Motors and a consortium of oil and rubber tire producers conspired to buy out streetcars and destroy transit in US cities. In such an explanation, responsibility for auto-dependency is placed on specific factions of capital while the general public, as well as the capitalist system, are exempted from responsibility. Such an explanation obfuscates the possibility of agency by organized social groups not part of the capitalist power structure. Critical explorations of the GM conspiracy theory, however, have been offered by Adler (1991) and Bianco (1998). These studies reveal that public policy on behalf of workers and the middle class had as great a role in the demise of urban transit in the US as did the dubious methods of corporations linked to automobility. Their research democratizes the responsibility for creating the sprawl that typifies America today. The regulation of streetcars and railroads was part of a wider class struggle that systematically bankrupted the private railways and urban transit industry while also subsidizing road building. The regulation itself was on behalf of workers to keep transit fares low, yet private rail transit operators were not able, or refused, to invest in improving service (see Yago, (1984); Whitt and Yago, (1985); and Jones (1985)). Over time workers grew to oppose private transit because of its declining service, crowded conditions, and lack of responsiveness

by the system owners, coupled with the crowded urban housing conditions that were also the result of capitalist urban processes.

Workers in a position to buy a car and move out, then, did so in part by choice as a form of escape from capitalist exploitation, albeit only to buy into a separate capitalist spatial regime of automobility and sprawl. Thus, this example highlights that space is not produced by the capitalist social structure alone but, rather, by the outcome of class struggles and other social conflicts, including environmentalism, racial struggles, and labor union movements. Therefore, when summarizing the historical development of automobility in the US it is necessary to address the agency of workers and the middle class in participating in the process of destroying urban transit and creating sprawl. Space is not completely produced by capital itself, but by the contested nature of the capitalist social order. In turn, space mediates the social relations that emerge out of capitalism. Such a notion of a contested nature of produced space threads through the competing visions of mobility in Atlanta, and reveals that automobile hegemony is in fact negotiated and resisted.

Gramsci argued that there are two sources of negotiation and contestation of hegemony (Beilharz, 1991). First, there is the conflict between established social norms and traditions that stand in the way of advanced capitalism and the modern state. For example, automobile hegemony has ironically come to be seen as an impediment to the further accumulation of capital by some factions of capital in Atlanta's sprawl debate. The social structure centered on automobility, or the "car culture" as some have called it, can impede economic growth when its outcome is smog, congestion, and land uses that contribute to a potential regional devaluation in places like Atlanta. Capitalists thus

negotiate automobile hegemony. Secondly, there is opposition from within the community by those who contest the organized social structure of automobility and, implicitly, American-style capitalism. Certain environmental and social justice organizations contest the spaces of automobility and its hegemony, and indirectly challenge the capitalist urban process in Atlanta. Automobile hegemony, like the broader concept of hegemony, is not totalizing, static, or insurmountable. Hegemony is a moving equilibrium, it is dynamic and evolving, yet oscillating around a consensual form (Johnston, et al., 2000).

In short, the logic of capital explanation of automobility tells us an extremely important part of the problematic of sprawl, especially regarding how an ideological hegemony that essentializes automobility profoundly impacts the debate, but my research reveals that there is a multi-dimensional struggle over urban growth in Atlanta that transcends a logic of capital narration. All that is unfolding in the sprawl debate in Atlanta is not reduced to the logic of capital, and this is especially the case when considering how automobility is contested. In what follows, then, I offer a more grounded analysis of the local political struggle in Atlanta as evidence that automobile hegemony is being negotiated and contested on multiple fronts in both a place-based conflict but also in a salient conflict over *how* space is configured around differing mobilities. I stress that such hegemony, together with real urban spaces, are being simultaneously negotiated and contested through efforts to implement the competing mobility visions that I have identified concerning how the Atlanta region should confront the problems of automobility. Certainly, some of these visions are less confrontational of automobile hegemony than are others. Some even embrace automobility but have

competing conceptualizations of the role of the state and of who should be extended the benefits of full automobility. Yet, understanding the competing visions of mobility and the urban landscape is essential if a new politics of urban design – one that may even go as far as to challenge American capitalism – is to evolve.

CHAPTER 3

CONTESTING AUTOMOBILITY IN ATLANTA

3.1 Purpose of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to show how, in Atlanta, the automobile became conceptualized by many decision makers as an intractable spatial, ideological, and representational problem. Events that unfolded during the 1990s revealed that while the hegemony of automobility was challenged, strong political forces defended this hegemony, leading to a discursive environment whereby the inevitability hypothesis became widespread and a politics of impossibilities with regards to ending automobile hegemony was fortified. The chapter will involve a discussion of the planning process in Atlanta, as well as the important national environmental and transportation policies that had a profound impact on the politics of urban transportation planning in Atlanta. These policies bolstered challenges to automobility and provided momentum to an assortment of local advocacy organizations seeking to enable a different mobility vision. How the defenders of automobility responded to the efforts of local advocacy organizations and other factions of capital who were interested in ending automobile hegemony provides a lesson in the political power of those who defend unfettered automobility. It also reveals how place-based struggles against roads and other intrusive infrastructure intersected with conflicts over *how* space should be configured and organized.

3.2 Background: The Clean Air Act and ISTEA

Atlanta's sprawl debate was fomented by air pollution from automobiles. Although automobility has a plethora of environmental and social problems, all of which deserve much more attention than can be provided here, the nexus of the political struggle over automobility in the United States since the 1950s has been air pollution. Congress passed the first Clean Air Act (CAA) in 1955. Over the next 40 years the Act was revised and amended, and became a major focus of struggle with regard to the automobile. For those seeking to challenge automobile hegemony in Atlanta, the Act has been a most powerful regulatory tool. A review of clean air regulations is therefore appropriate.

Garrett and Wachs (1996) and Doyle (2000) have discussed the political struggle over the regulation of automobility. By 1970 there was no question that automobility had to be regulated by the newly formed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) if metropolitan air was to be cleaned. Broadly speaking, however, there was contentious debate over how the EPA was to regulate. This debate was between supporters of limiting the further increases in automobility and those who supported unfettered automobility but with cleaner engines. Supporters of limiting automobility suggested using the EPA's powers to discourage excessive driving by forcing cities to build transit systems, to reduce or eliminate free parking, and to impose road pricing. I want to emphasize "excessive" because the supporters of this agenda did not explicitly call for the abolition of automobility (see, for example, Leavitt, 1970; Taebel and Cornehl, 1977). Rather, this public policy agenda was couched in terms of "balance," and proponents argued that the system was substantially unbalanced in favor of excessive automobility.

However, this was still a pointed challenge to the overall "hegemony" of automobility as a system of spatial organization that required other mobilities and their spatial configurations to be either subsumed or eliminated.

The other path towards cleaner air, and the one that eventually gained political acceptance and was institutionalized at the EPA, was the adoption of national emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks, called CAFE (corporate average fuel economy). CAFE would be achieved by improving engine technology and fuel efficiency. By 1975 there was no mainstream political will to contain spatially automobility through metropolitan planning; instead, CAFE standards were deployed. The 1975 CAFE standards remained the primary method of regulating air pollution from automobiles for the next fifteen years and reflected the endurance of automobile hegemony in US urban transportation policy.

By the late 1980's, the massive growth in driving was undermining all technological gains in fuel efficiency and cleaner engines. Overall, national vehicle miles traveled increased 37% during the 1980's (USDOT, 1994). People took more daily automobile trips, increased solo driving, and drove further and further every year. This was the outcome of public policies that promoted sprawl and road building over all other urban travel options (Bank of America, 1995; OTA, 1995; Burchell et al. 1998). Also, more consumers were purchasing more fuel-intensive and dirtier trucks and SUV's (Roberts, 2001). These vehicles were increasingly used as traditional passenger vehicles and not for utility purposes. CAFE standards exempted SUVs and trucks from the same

standards as passenger cars.⁵ In addition to rapid increases in excessive automobility and the rise in consumption of dirtier vehicles by the public, new research was showing that automobile-related air pollution was a much greater public health problem than originally thought. This led to calls for revising the CAA and rethinking mobility. Consequently, the CAA was amended in 1990 to link metropolitan transportation planning to urban air quality improvement. Specifically, a metropolitan area could lose federal transportation funding if it failed to meet air quality standards in a timely manner set by the EPA. This became the single most important regulatory tool in the unfolding sprawl debate in Atlanta and the key device for challenging automobile hegemony. Atlanta was required to meet the EPA's attainment for ozone by no later than November 15th, 1999 (Anderson & Howitt, 1995). To be sure, almost every large metropolitan area in the US had such deadlines imposed, although the exact dates varied in recognition that each city had different local factors relating to pollution. The new regulation did not explicitly mandate how a metropolitan area was to meet the new clean air deadlines, only that the state and metropolitan governments were required to meet them somehow. Theoretically, then, the state and local officials responsible for ensuring cleaner air in metropolitan Atlanta were busy calculating ways to reduce the impact automobility had on smog. These efforts were enhanced by even further action by the federal government.

In 1991 the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) was authorized by the US Congress and, relatively speaking, it offered the strongest contestation of automobile hegemony yet to be institutionalized. The ISTEA provided

⁵ The logic in 1975, when very few households in urban areas owned this type of vehicle, was to avoid burdening small business owners (who relied on utility vehicles) with increased operating costs.

firm language and procedural mechanisms linking federal transportation policy to air quality regulations. It required that any long-range "regional transportation plan" (RTP) for a metro area include models of future emissions from automobiles and trucks. Federal funds would only be released if the models showed conformity to EPA standards. Again, the federal regulation did not explicitly tell the planning agencies how to achieve the mandates; it only required them to meet the deadlines outlined by the CAA. The EPA and US Department of Transportation (USDOT) could advise a metropolitan area on how to achieve cleaner air, provide a menu of options, and offer technical assistance. However, the political climate of "states' rights" and local control that dominated the US Congress meant that the EPA and the USDOT were limited in their ability to explicitly mandate how clean air would be achieved (Anderson & Howitt, 1995).

Nevertheless, the CAA Amendments of 1990 and the ISTEA in 1991 changed the focus of urban transportation planning in the US. For decades that focus has been to eliminate congestion and accommodate increasing automobility. Transportation planners, embedded in the tertiary circuit of capital and implicitly commissioned to expand automobile hegemony, analyzed the costs of constructing or widening highways against the benefits of improved travel times, lower vehicle operating costs, and fewer accidents. These were considered the measures of mobility, and transportation goals were meant to increase mobility. This was "progress" reflecting the imperatives of capitalism outlined in chapter 2. The role of the transportation engineer was considered unbiased and neutral, and was simply to improve mobility in the form of increased speeds at the lowest cost possible while minimizing accidents for automobiles and trucks. "Soft" mobilities, such as walking and bicycling, were delegitimized and considered recreational

amenities. Transit was considered only socially necessary when either the spaces for freeway widening had run out or there was a large poor population that needed a basic level of mobility. Even when expensive heavy rail systems were built, such as the Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transportation Authority (MARTA) rail system, these were not explicit challenges to automobile hegemony. Indeed, the heavy rail systems like MARTA epitomized a lack of challenge to automobile hegemony because the land around rail stations (with the exception of a few downtown stations) was dedicated to parking and not pedestrian or bike access, housing, or commercial development that was transit-oriented. It was expected that most people who were not poor would drive to catch a train. MARTA was designed for rapid movement across greater spaces, with automobility as the preferred mobility to begin or end the trip. That the working poor also used MARTA rail was a result of the restructuring of the bus network such that they had to use rail (Kain, 1997). What had previously been fast bus trips between outlying neighborhoods and Downtown, for example, were lengthened because the bus network was reoriented to the rail stations and passengers had to transfer to rail, adding time to trips. MARTA, in essence, was designed primarily to complement automobility by providing access to Downtown and the airport.

Fast, longer distance mobility, specifically automobility, became strongly linked to the economy, and it was generally accepted that increased mobility was essential for economic growth, while decreasing mobility would hurt the economy. Policies accommodating unfettered highway mobility and air travel were seen as good by federal, state, and local policy makers. Factors such as the social and environmental costs of driving were not considered part of the cost-benefit equation. Many policy makers,

especially transportation planners, felt these were not issues of mobility but were instead social problems with which transportation engineers should not be bothered.

By the late 1980's, however, the meaning of mobility had become increasingly contested, and a coalition of national environmental and social justice organizations and sympathetic political leaders sought to redefine how mobility was conceptualized in US transportation policy. In doing so they challenged automobile hegemony in a way that had not occurred to date, in a coordinated manner with extensive grassroots organizational support coupled with Washington-based national environmental groups. This national coalition formalized into the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) in 1990 to focus on federal transportation policy. The goals of STPP were to shape US transportation policy in a way that:

conserves energy, protects environmental and aesthetic quality, strengthens the economy, promotes social equity, and makes communities more livable (STPP,1995).

Members of this coalition included a number of US senators and representatives led by Senator Patrick Moynihan of New York, who was known for his support of passenger rail and urban mass transit.

STPP saw transportation reform as an important component of wider agendas for social change. Utilizing its congressional allies, STPP was successful in shaping the ISTEA into a document that, while not categorically ending automobile hegemony, offered an opportunity for it to be challenged. Its most significant success was that the ISTEA had strong language requiring that local planning organizations incorporate public participation and social and environmental concerns into the planning process. This was instrumental for empowering local advocacy organizations in Atlanta and was considered

revolutionary for a branch of the government that was believed to be immune from such requirements. The logic of this approach was that automobile hegemony was easier to challenge in localities or state-by-state than it was at the national level. At the national level, STPP would act as a clearinghouse and watchdog of federal policy, concerned especially with enabling localities to choose to spend their share of federal funds on projects other than roads. To facilitate the local empowerment aspects of the ISTEA, STPP developed ties with advocacy organizations in cities like Atlanta and assisted locals in understanding the new framework of public participation and the new parameters of social and environmental concerns that local governments now had to consider (Chapman, 1994). Like many other national environmental and social reform organizations, STPP came to view Atlanta as a national precedent for transportation policy reform (Dittmar and McCann, 1999; Chen, 2000). With both the newly enhanced Clean Air Act and the locally empowering, reform-oriented ISTEA guiding the metropolitan planning process, in the 1990's Atlanta became ground-zero for the national struggle over how mobility could be redefined to include issues other than speed and unfettered movement. The next section discusses how the process of local empowerment and reform unfolded.

3.3 Vision 2020

The ISTEA mandated that metropolitan planning organizations, which oversaw how federal funds were spent in cities, develop strong public participation guidelines.⁶

⁶ As the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) of the Atlanta region, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) carries out transportation planning in accordance with the Federal-Aid Highway Act and Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964. ARC is

The ISTEA called for community visioning as the first step towards developing regional transportation plans (RTP's). A "vision" is a desired urban future shared by a broad segment of the metropolitan region's population and was to be a synthesis of identified values and aspirations found in a "visioning" process developed through consensus-based meetings open to the public (McCann, 2001). Talen (2000) suggests that the visioning process can enable a nurturing of utopian ideas and normative ways of thinking that may challenge universal assumptions about how cities should grow. The consensus-based collaborative structure of visioning is intended to foster alternative policy outcomes through the opening of planning to all groups in society, and not just to professional planners, traffic engineers, and the business and political elite. Further, visioning as construed in urban planning discourse is a step further than agreeing on abstract values and aspirations. For example, everyone wants a clean environment or social justice, but these nebulous concepts can mean different things to different people. A vision would spell out what the community sees as specific outcomes necessary to have a cleaner environment or social justice. A vision would include the specific strategies a community agrees are needed to achieve a cleaner environment or social justice.

required to develop and adapt a transportation plan that guides future transportation projects in the region. This requirement is necessary for the receipt of federal funds for transportation infrastructure and operating assistance. This transportation plan is called the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

ARC is also the state-designated regional development commission (RDC). The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 required that local governments collaborate to create a comprehensive regional development plan (RDP) that charts future land use, environment, economic development, housing, and human services. Therefore, ARC is required to devise a comprehensive plan that expresses how the region should grow and outlines what the goals are for the region in the future. RDP's are the blueprint from which an RTP draws. Vision 2020 was meant to guide the RDP process.

Visioning supplies a sense of direction (Talen, 2000) while also allowing for such universalized understanding of urban growth, such as that of unfettered automobility, to be challenged. In theory visioning enables more possibilities in urban futures to be considered and taken seriously. This is because the visioning process initiates with an acceptance of the assumption that there can be a normative framework for "good" urban design and development (Talen, 2000). Moreover, the initiation of a visioning process implies that there is dissatisfaction among stakeholders about the trajectory of the existing paradigm of planning and growth and that stakeholders believe in alternative possibilities. Again, the visioning process spells out what participants see as community problems, and then outlines more focused ways of addressing the problem and outlining desired outcomes. As this section will show, the vision that emerged in Atlanta concomitant with the ISTEA mandates was a vision that explicitly challenged automobile hegemony.

In 1991, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) initiated Vision 2020 to include the community in long-range planning. Many of the people interviewed in this research were involved with Vision 2020, and many of them continued to support the vision elaborated in Vision 2020 that I will outline here. Vision 2020 was the local manifestation of the national contestation of excessive automobility and sprawl led by the STPP coalition, and was a step towards drafting a blueprint for achieving the clean air requirements of the CAA and the ISTEA. The date of 2020 was selected to correspond to the drafting of a new 25-year regional transportation plan (RTP), which was expected to be adopted by 1995 for the 10 counties in the ARC.⁷ The RTP was required to be

⁷ These counties were Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale. Notice that the 10-county ARC planning area does not

updated in order to show that Atlanta was going to meet the 1999 deadline for conformity with CAA standards. The stated purpose of Vision 2020 was to forge a consensus about how Atlanta should grow. On the surface, Vision 2020 was meant to allow the public to define what was possible in transportation and urban design and for policy-making to be open and candid. More importantly, it opened the process to previously excluded citizens and environmental groups with interests in transportation policy, as was mandated by the ISTEA. Vision 2020 was, in theory, ISTEA working at the local level.

Vision 2020 was a significant break from Atlanta's tradition of decision-making by a small elite (Helling, 1998; see also Stone, 1989; Keating, 2001). Before Vision 2020, the ARC would make plans and then allow a brief period of public comment. Possibilities of transportation futures were presented to the public in a take-it-or-leave-it fashion. Citizen input in planning issues such as transportation was limited, and this was one way that automobile hegemony was sustained with ease in Atlanta. There was what Keating (2001) has called an "anti-public planning ideology" that characterized Atlanta's business elite, as well as the engineers at the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Atlanta's decision makers, including the ARC, GDOT, and the business elite, were deciding which issues were acceptable for discussion and which were not. In reviewing the scholarly literature on Atlanta politics, one can conclude that few people in Atlanta thought it was politically possible to challenge automobility as a system (see for example, Stone's (1989) coverage of the Stone Mountain Freeway debates). Rather, neighborhood activists contested specific road projects singularly and only when the

correspond with the 20-county MSA, a legacy of Georgia politics and the fact that counties can opt to not be part of the ARC as long as they are part of another regional development agency (see Figure 1.1).

roads threatened select neighborhoods. MARTA, the rail and bus system centered on Downtown, was not constructed to reduce automobile dependency. Rather, it was meant to compliment access to Downtown, while simultaneously providing basic mobility to the poor. The public discourse in Atlanta was not about whether or not to build roads, but where exactly to put them, and MARTA rail stations were designed for full automobile access, with large multi-lane arterials and massive parking facilities surrounding them instead of compact transit-oriented, new urbanist-style development. Consequently, most citizens who were active in Atlanta's transportation debate before the 1990's engaged in the debate from a reactive posture, opposing certain roads on a project-by-project, neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis instead of opposing unfettered automobility and road building systematically.

Significantly, two major road fights galvanized local neighborhood groups to demand the types of systematic improvements in Atlanta that the new ISTEA was requiring. These road fights, which involved the completion of the Georgia 400 expressway in Buckhead and the defeat of the Stone Mountain Freeway in Virginia Highlands and Druid Hills, stirred citizen awareness and contempt for the traditional planning process (Stone, 1989). Coming out of such political agitation, Vision 2020 provided a platform for the public to participate actively in deciding what the most appropriate transportation system would look like. It was the largest community-based, long-range planning effort ever conducted in the US at the time. The visioning process was a four-year collaborative effort of members of the business elite of Atlanta, community and environmental activists, academics, and representatives of government agencies. In regional planning and academic circles around the country, the ARC gained

national recognition as an open, democratic, community-oriented planning agency.

Atlanta boosters took this to heart, adding it to the list of examples of why Atlanta was both a socially progressive and business-friendly place to live and work.

Focusing on the 10 counties within the planning realm of the ARC, the first stage of the visioning process began with an assessment of trends and issues facing Atlanta in 1991. The input of a steering committee, the ARC Board, and 500 citizen participants was included. The ARC staff set up a framework for considering possibilities for future growth by insisting that the "Atlanta Region was uniquely capable of becoming whatever its leaders and citizens want it to be" (ARC, 1993, p. 1). Implied in the visioning framework was the encouragement of thinking "outside of the box," which stressed an optimistic pragmatism about what the possibilities for urban futures were. The Vision 2020 process was an opening for negotiations and challenges to automobile hegemony in a way never deemed possible in Atlanta. With this frame of mind, the ARC then undertook a massive survey effort to gauge public opinion on what Atlanta's vision should be.

The public was invited to help develop a "shared vision of their preferred future," and this included 23 public forums and a public survey in local newspapers. ARC representatives spoke to community organizations across the region as well. A mass media campaign to attract participants in the visioning process included billboards, a televised town hall meeting, and public service announcements on radio stations. The main daily newspaper, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC)*, was utilized as the main forum for the discussion on how Atlanta should grow. The *AJC* ran feature length articles and editorials stressing the importance of the visioning process and devoted

ample coverage to the public visioning forums being held across the region. Just before the formal opinion survey in March 1993, the regional daily ran a series of 7 guest editorials by prominent players in Atlanta's growth, such as CEO's and developers. The *AJC* also made sure that traffic congestion, pollution, housing affordability, and lack of regional cooperation were covered in the daily news to sell the need for a new vision. A special *AJC*-sponsored effort distributed the survey to 1.5 million households for free, and the region's African-American, Latino, and Chinese newspapers were specially targeted. Ten thousand persons responded to the survey, which could be mailed to ARC or dropped off at one of 75 Kroger grocery stores (to be sure, this amounted to roughly .4% of the ARC population). Half of the respondents also wrote additional comments. ARC staff then synthesized the results of the surveys, forums, steering committee directives, and ARC board input into a report titled "A Shared Vision for the Atlanta Region."

Vision 2020's survey results implied that the direction in which the region had been growing was not desirable. The low-density, automobile-oriented, politically fragmented, and class- and race-segregated nature of Atlanta was cast as a serious problem in need of new ways of thinking. Automobile hegemony was contested, and social, environmental, and political problems in the region were not considered inevitable side effects of growth. A "no growth" scenario was not expressed in the Vision 2020 synthesis. Evidently, respondents did not equate sprawl, excessive automobile dependency, or segregation as natural outcomes of prosperity (as will be discussed in subsequent chapters describing the competing visions of mobility, the conceptualization of sprawl and automobility as "inevitable" and "natural" would remain a key rationale in

the defense of automobility). Public opinion was in favor of more growth, but not in the sprawl pattern that had typified growth in Atlanta since the 1940's. Economic growth with a more compact urban form was conceptualized as possible. This said a lot about the politics of possibilities for the region. Change was possible, and how Atlanta grew was not subject to inevitabilities. The vision expressed an optimism that growth could come with a clean environment, social justice, and higher quality of life.

Transportation and land-use thread through the visioning process. The concept of "livability" dominated the transportation and land-use vision, and there was a strong anti-sprawl sentiment (ARC, 1993). The public defined livability with explicit reference to promoting alternatives to the automobile and the spaces of the automobile. "Livable" was defined to mean communities with more trees and public parks, bike paths, sidewalks, and a critical mass of people on the streets so that they were safer. There was strong support for land-use planning that focused on reducing automobile dependency. The public survey results emphasized the idea of neighborhoods configured around local shopping and services within walking distance on safe sidewalks and a renewed shared sense of community. There was also a very strong emphasis on making downtown a live/work center. Issues of affordable housing played into the transportation theme (some respondents even asked for rent control). Concerns were expressed over gentrification and the vision solution was affordable housing inserted into the mix of office, retail, and housing, all in proximity to transit and walking (ARC, 1993). Many participants expressed concern about air quality and the threat of losing federal funds, recognizing that 1999 was the EPA deadline for ozone attainment. Many said they wanted to drive less but that they could not do so because there were no other transportation choices. The

survey respondents also stressed concern about global warming and energy consumption, but there was not an articulation of how that related to automobility.

ARC staff ranked the results of the transportation component of the Vision 2020 process and concluded that the first choice most people envisioned was expanding both bus and rail transit to all parts of the metropolitan area. Following this choice was a popular demand for bike lanes and sidewalks throughout the region. Commuter rail investment followed third, and more highways ranked last in the ARC staff analysis of public opinion (ARC, 1993). The results of the public opinion survey revealed that many people felt that other mobilities besides automobility were legitimate and needed immediate attention. With that in mind, the ARC staff, under the guidance and direction of the Vision 2020 steering committee, the ARC Board, and roughly 1,000 "dedicated and diverse" citizens, developed a second cut of Vision 2020, which was finalized in 1995. The second cut involved transforming themes of the consensus vision into a package of initiatives with defined goals and dates for reaching those goals. In the second Vision 2020 report (*A Community's Vision Takes Flight*), detailed and specific transportation strategies were recommended (ARC, 1995).

The final report was a considerable affront to automobile hegemony. It called for the expansion of regional transit into all 10 ARC counties and the construction of a transit-oriented development (TOD) prototype around a rail station. It called for changing zoning laws to encourage mixed-use development and for local governments to encourage lending practices that facilitated TOD and mixed-use development. The report also called for implementing a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan, and the construction of bike lanes and sidewalks on all new roads, as well as in conjunction with any road

modifications. A commuter rail network linking Atlanta with other North Georgia cities was also called for. Notably absent from these initiatives was the encouragement of new roads.

The affront to automobile hegemony was mixed, however. In the synthesis report, the ARC staff noted that roads were one of the outstanding issues without unanimous consensus. In fact, the position of the public on roads was paradoxical, if not contradictory. Although a large majority agreed that expanding transit to all counties was needed, many thought roads were still important. However, only a small minority thought the region should keep building new roads. Most road supporters were more concerned with upkeep and safety on existing roads. This suggests that while there was growing skepticism of the long-term sustainability of a region configured around full automobility, there was less comprehension among Vision 2020 participants of how people would modify their own personal driving behavior.

There was also strong disagreement and uncertainty about a proposed 211-mile Outer Perimeter (discussed in detail below). Roughly half of respondents approved of building it, while the other half opposed it. The Outer Perimeter represented an apparent public ambivalence about automobility that provided the defenders of automobility with evidence and ammunition in the sprawl discourse. For defenders of the status quo, already skeptical about the Vision 2020 results, the sharp division on the Outer Perimeter revealed that people were confused about automobility. While some people urged that funds be spent on transit and other modes, and that the region consider land-use policies that facilitate reducing automobile dependency, still others urged that in addition to those policies, the region also invest in the Outer Perimeter. For the defenders of automobility,

this showed that while the public supported investment in transit and changes in land-uses to support different forms of mobility, personal opinion really suggested, as the Onion (2001) satire put it, that "people wanted transit so everybody else would get off the road." Meanwhile, as the ARC was conducting the Vision 2020 process, advocates for the Outer Perimeter within the ARC board had directed the ARC staff to study the proposal. As will be discussed below, the Outer Perimeter became the symbol of everything that many people believed was wrong with Atlanta's transportation planning process. However, before discussing the deep divisions that ultimately centered on competing visions of mobility, it is necessary to briefly remark on who was leading the Vision 2020 process.

3.3.1 Whose Vision?

Understanding who participated in the Vision 2020 process helps explain how the ambivalence regarding automobility that emerged in the attitudes towards roads, and especially the Outer Perimeter, may have come about. McCann (2001) argues that the question of who controls the organizational aspects of a visioning project is crucial to the outcome of the project. The interests that have power and control over the process themselves generally have significant influence over the production of urban space. Prominent local developers and construction firms, academics, consultants, planners, and an assortment of professionals were among the participants. Several suburban developers and county commissioners also participated. However, a closer look at who funded the Vision 2020 program, and of who was involved in the development of Vision 2020, shows that Vision 2020 was also reflective of a rapprochement between Atlanta's

downtown business elite and the environmental-liberal white, middle class that resided within I-285. This was, in effect, a more urban-focused segment of the population.

The \$2.4 million Visioning process was funded by donations from corporate foundations, including Georgia Power, United Parcel Service (UPS), NationsBank, Trust Company and Bank, Wachovia Bank of Georgia, Post Properties, BellSouth, the Woodruff Foundation (Coca-Cola), and Georgia Pacific. Most of these corporations had headquarters in downtown Atlanta, or in the spine of development between downtown, through Midtown and Buckhead, to the Perimeter Center area. Over \$1 million in donated services were provided by the local corporately owned media. This included the *AJC* (owned by Cox enterprises, a national television and print media corporation) and other television and print media, most of which were also based in the central core of the region. Vision 2020's steering committee was mainly corporate in make-up and included ranking executives from BellSouth, Georgia Power, Nation's Bank (now Bank of America), Wachovia Bank, Georgia Pacific, GTE, and IBM. The chair of the steering committee was former Governor George Busbee, then a partner in the locally prominent and politically connected law firm of King & Spalding, also located in the central core.

Complimenting the downtown business orientation of the vision, intown, white liberals had prominent voices in the groups of "collaborative stakeholders" made up of roughly 1000 citizens. This suggests that the liberal faction in Atlanta politics was willing to work with the corporate elite, something that reflects the "Atlanta Way."⁸ It

⁸ The "Atlanta Way" referred to strong business control of local public policy and an extremely pronounced infusion of business capital into the arts and local charity. It was a legacy of Atlanta's history which lacked any significant European ethnic group or organized labor that challenged the political order, as was the case in many northern cities (Keating, 2001). Moreover, as African-Americans asserted political power, it was a conservative, business-oriented black elite, and not progressive, working-class blacks,

implied there was no powerful opposition to corporate control of Atlanta, at least in any pronounced or organized manner, and that those who were leftist practiced a politics of cooperation and negotiation instead of confrontation. This is an important consideration to keep in mind when discussing how the political left in Atlanta negotiated the transportation crisis that emerged later. Among the "collaborative stakeholders" were leaders of the advocacy organizations that would encompass the struggle against sprawl and the automobile. For example, leaders from the Georgia Transportation Alliance, which lobbied against road building and for transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure, were present (the Georgia Transportation Alliance later became Georgians for Transportation Alternatives"). Also involved were leaders from neighborhood organizations involved in fighting freeways in the 1980s, and leaders of prominent environmental organizations such as the Georgia Conservancy and Sierra Club.

The consensus between these two groups was that Atlanta needed to invest substantially more in transit infrastructure and begin reconfiguring urban space into New Urbanist models (the term "New Urbanism" was not used explicitly, but the concepts Vision 2020 called for were very similar). On the other hand, the ambivalence towards roads expressed in *A Community's Vision Takes Flight* revealed that different conceptualizations of mobility were in play. The business elite, as I will outline in Chapter 4, were mostly occupied with conceptualizing mobility as the movement of goods and people to and from their landed interests. Improved mobility, including better mass transit, increased the exchange values of property owned by the business elite. For the environmental-liberal, white middle class that resided inside I-285, mobility was

that gained political empowerment and formed an alliance with the downtown white business elite (Stone, 1989).

conceptualized rather differently. Improving mobility was not necessarily about increased speeds and volumes in order to increase land values but, instead, mobility was conceptualized from quality of life, environmental, and social justice perspectives. Hence, in the previously mentioned struggles over building the Georgia 400 and Stone Mountain Freeway, the intown urbanites opposed roads, while the business elite supported the new freeways (Keating, 2001). Roads, to the business elite, were still necessary for both enhancing the exchange value of property as well as decreasing the circulation times of capital. The lack of clarity or consensus about roads conflicted with the emerging mobility reform movement that contested the status quo. Thus, despite Vision 2020 and a clear mandate for increased transit investment, defenders of the status quo, as shown below, were proceeding as if the only direction out of Vision 2020 was that the confusion about road building gave license to continue that strategy. Moreover, it was as if no large-scale, (somewhat) democratic, open visioning process that contested automobile hegemony had even taken place in Atlanta.

3.4 Defenders of Automobility

As mentioned above, the Outer Perimeter was an unsettled issue in the Vision 2020 Process. It is important to outline the power held by political supporters of the Outer Perimeter because they represented the institutionalized vision of mobility and automobile hegemony that Vision 2020 contested. The apex of the political power supporting the Outer Perimeter drew from the GDOT, the voting board of the ARC (not the professional staff), and a cabal of developers and their allies in important public offices. The actions of the GDOT and the ARC Board, and their advocacy for the Outer

Perimeter, became the motivation for many stakeholders' involvement in Atlanta's sprawl debate. Indeed, for some, it was what propelled them into participating in the Vision 2020 process in the first place.

Almost all environmental and community activists interviewed for this research said that the single most important reason they got involved in Atlanta's sprawl debate was their opposition to the Outer Perimeter. The Outer Perimeter became a symbol of sprawl, the political power of the GDOT, and a sectarian majority on the ARC board. The liberal-leaning *Atlanta Constitution* Editorial Board called the decision on the Outer Perimeter the "single most important environmental decision to confront the state in 20 years" (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1994a).⁹ In juxtaposition to the discussion of who led the Vision 2020 process, it is necessary to understand the Outer Perimeter, who advocated it, and what political power they had.

The geography of the Outer Perimeter is displayed in Figure 3.1. The idea for the massive road first emerged as soon as Atlanta's first beltway, I-285, was finished in 1969. The Outer Perimeter was put into statewide transportation plans in 1972 and was reaffirmed in 1978, 1986, and 1991. Yet in 1973 the ARC evaluated and then dismissed the building of an Outer Perimeter, contradicting the desires of the highway-building GDOT. In 1989 the Outer Perimeter was added to the Governor's Road Improvement

⁹ The *Atlanta Constitution* was the liberal morning paper for the region, and the *Atlanta Journal* was the conservative afternoon daily. On weekends the two combined. The two were both owned by Cox enterprises, based in Atlanta, and shared the same reporting staff. The only difference was politically different editorial boards. Like the *AC*, the *AJ* said that the Outer Perimeter was one of the most important decisions in Georgia, but it supported the road. Since late 2001, the two separate editorial boards have merged and the space for editorials was expanded to allow more outside commentary, and to allow for competing ideological positions on the editorial board to be aired on the same pages.

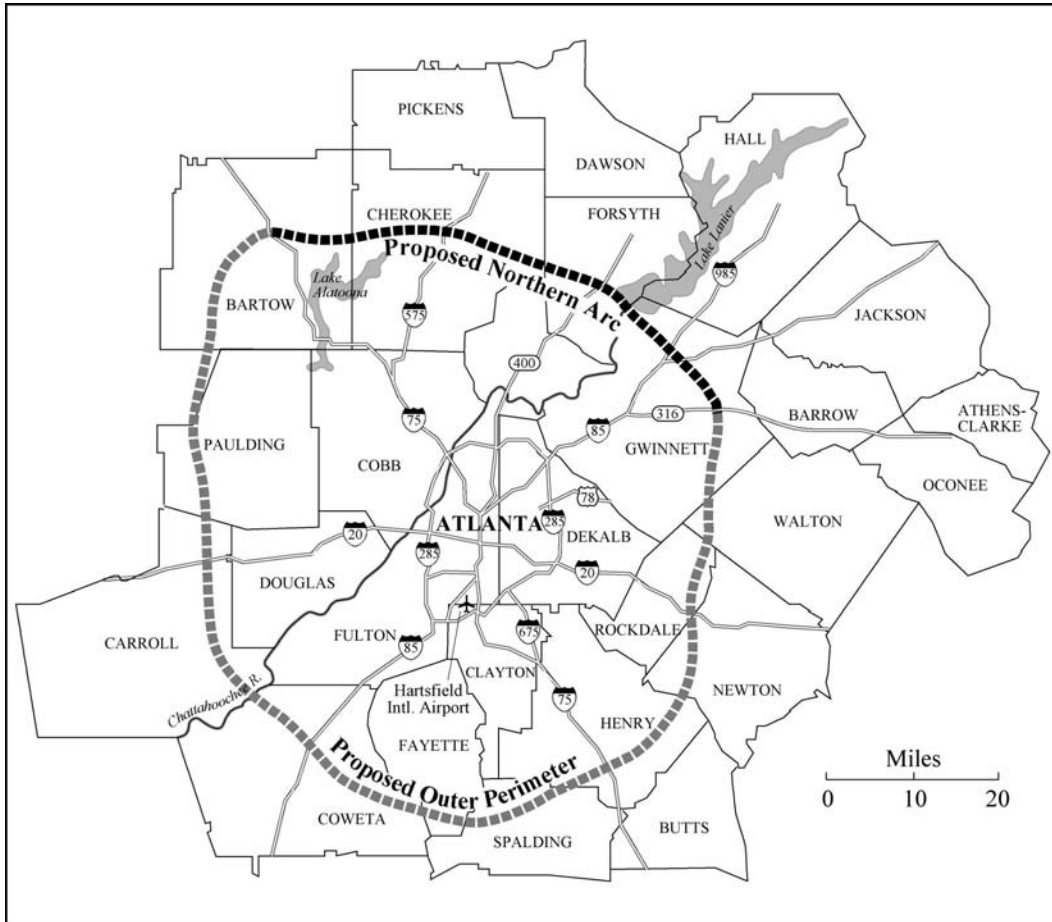


Figure 3.1: The Geography of the Outer Perimeter
 Source: GDOT (1995)

Program (GRIP), a state program to build developmental highways in areas that were lagging in economic growth, even though Atlanta's suburbs were booming. Putting the Outer Perimeter into GRIP opened new funding opportunities from the state general funds, even though the intent of GRIP was to build roads in economically depressed areas, and not wealthy areas like Atlanta's northern suburbs (ARC, 1994; Hartshorn, 1994; GDOT, 1995).

The most important champion of the Outer Perimeter was the leadership in the GDOT, whose power Keating (2001) attributes to a combination of simultaneous spatial processes resulting from racism, white flight, suburbanization, and globalization of the economy. It was not that these socio-spatial processes created the political power of the GDOT as much as they weakened the power of Atlanta's downtown corporate elite in producing the metropolitan area's urban space. Hence, as white flight became a literal tsunami of whites fleeing Atlanta partly because of their unwillingness to accept African-American political empowerment, the downtown elite lost command of controlling how the region grew (White, 1982; Keating, 2001). Issues dear to the downtown elite, such as a more regional form of governance, a region-wide transit system, and a dominant "vital center" located in downtown Atlanta, faded with white flight, the bulk of which was towards the north side because blacks resided on the south side (see Bayor, 1996; Keating, 2001). Additionally, living in the flight path of what was becoming one of the world's busiest airports, which was on the south side, was not desirable for the whites leaving the city for racial reasons, making the north side more attractive for real estate development.¹⁰

¹⁰ Another factor contributing to the trajectory of white flight to the north side was cleaner water because the northside was upstream in the Chattahoochee River, the only

With globalization of the economy, more of Atlanta's corporate executives became less rooted in the locality. Many executives were transferred and were less tied to place. The difference between Alpharetta, Georgia, Hoffman Estates, Illinois, Plano, Texas, or the Route 128 Corridor in Massachusetts were insubstantial. Many in the new corporate managerial class were non-natives and expected to move again. Globalization and suburbanization together weakened the political power of the downtown Atlanta elite because downtown was less important as an identifiable place to a class of people who drifted in placeless sprawl. At the same time, interests in Gwinnett, Cobb Counties, and across the northern and far southern suburbs combined to compete for state resources to make sprawl possible. According to Keating (2001), this made the GDOT the single-most influential power and influence over growth in metropolitan Atlanta. In effect, the GDOT became the booster of sprawl, the equivalent of the downtown boosters who sought to sustain downtown as the region's vital center. Following its ideology that growth required big roads, the GDOT built roads at will in Atlanta's suburbs and largely determined where development occurred in the region.

Yet it is not sufficient to describe the rise of the GDOT as simply the ungovernable consequence of structural forces. There was concerted agency in producing the sprawl of Atlanta, and the GDOT was actively harnessed to produce that sprawl. This is a key point to make in light of the "inevitability hypothesis" and naturalization of sprawl embedded in the ideology of automobile hegemony. Within state politics, suburban Atlanta interests gained more clout with the GDOT, especially through

major source of water in the area. Proximity to the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains was also an attraction, as were the man-made reservoirs of Lake Lanier and Alatoona (see Figure 1.1).

Zell Miller, a politician with strong ties to pro-road developers who profited greatly from GDOT's road building (Roughton, 1997; Pruitt, 1999; Ledford, 2000a). During the 1980's, Zell Miller was head of the Georgia State Senate and a very strong ally of Tom Moreland, one of the most powerful heads of the GDOT. Moreland fought intown Atlanta neighborhoods and Buckhead over the Stone Mountain Freeway and the Georgia 400 expressway, which propelled many intown neighborhood activists into the sprawl debate and Vision 2020 process outlined above (Stone, 1989; Campos, 1998). Perhaps rather appropriately, the infamous Spaghetti Junction interchange, where I-85 crosses I-285 in the northern suburbs, was named in honor of him. Miller actively defended Moreland as his political enemies multiplied and often intervened to ensure that Moreland got the road money he demanded.¹¹ When attempts were made in 1982 to oust Moreland in favor of a less road-oriented commissioner (Joel Cowan), Miller used his political power as head of the State Senate to protect Moreland. Moreland would later actively manipulate the GDOT Board, and he ran his own personally selected candidates for GDOT Board seats (those board members then turned around and voted to keep Moreland head of GDOT).¹² Moreland was also infamous for using political pressure to

¹¹ Although in theory all of Georgia's roads were supposed to be paid for by state gasoline taxes, which were used to match federal funds, in reality every year the Georgia General Assembly supplemented the GDOT's budget with money drained from general funds (Floyd, 1996a and 1996b).

¹² Each GDOT Board member is elected based on US congressional districts by the collective State Senate and State House members serving within all or part of the respective congressional district. There is no qualifying process, no official list, and no public campaign. Candidates are nominated from the floor of the Senate and House. Advocacy organizations cannot directly nominate board members and are essentially excluded from the decision. The process is unpublicized and the final votes are by secret ballot. The board then votes on the commissioner. The board, with the commissioner, decides on where roads are built and on GDOT's agenda. All 11 members of the GDOT Board are men and are either former legislators or businessmen. Conservative columnist

get legislators to vote his way on road building issues and both he and Miller had strong ties to what was called the "Gwinnett Mafia," a cabal of white, male real estate developers and their political cronies based in Gwinnett County, in Atlanta's northeast suburbs (Roughton, 1997 and 1998; Shipp, 1999a). Although this cabal and their vision of mobility will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, it is important to get a general sense of their power in shaping Atlanta to set the groundwork for how Atlanta became a national symbol of sprawl.

The linkages of a small, tight network of men are important to keep in mind when considering Vision 2020 and its summons for reforms that redefined mobility and challenged automobile hegemony. As these forces engaged in a reform movement, quite the opposite happened in Georgia electoral politics in 1990, as Zell Miller was elected governor of Georgia. Upon taking office, he immediately maneuvered to install a member of the "Gwinnett Mafia" to head the GDOT (Moreland had retired, and his successor was not considered part of the cabal). This appointee, Wayne Shackelford, was known as the "right-hand man" to the former chairman of Gwinnett County and oversaw the initial growth boom in Gwinnett (McCosh and Shelton, 1999a; Simmons, 2000a). Shackelford orchestrated sewer and water development in Gwinnett and leveraged roads which laid the groundwork for automobile-oriented sprawl (McCosh and Shelton, 1999a). In the 1980's, Shackelford worked as a developer and was involved in building three malls across Atlanta's north side. By the late 1980's he was head of an advocacy organization calling for the Outer Perimeter, with its route connecting the three malls he

Bill Shipp (2000) said that "to be a member of the (GDOT) board was to have more power over the economic destiny of the state than any 10 legislators." The Georgia Legislature has said that if people with highway or real estate interests were excluded from serving on the board, the pool of candidates would be too small (McCosh, 2000).

helped build on the north side. With his appointment to head the GDOT, the momentum to build the Outer Perimeter accelerated. Most egregiously, the GDOT increased its efforts to purchase the right of way for the corridor, arguing that it needed to buy land in order protect it from development. This revealed that in the minds of the GDOT leadership, the road was a done deal. The momentum for the Outer Perimeter was enhanced by the politics of the ARC, whose board members were also linked to the Gwinnett Mafia.

Just as the decline of the power of downtown Atlanta's business elite led to the rise of the GDOT, the pattern of sprawl and where it occurred influenced the political structure of the ARC. Since an important driver of Atlanta's areal growth was white-flight-induced sprawl, the ARC board increasingly reflected that. The ARC board was made up of twenty-three local elected officials and fifteen private citizens, and one representative from the Department of Community Affairs. Each of ten county commission chairmen was automatically an ARC board member. A mayor of one chosen city in each of the ten counties was also a member of the ARC board.

The structure of the ARC has been compared by some to resemble the old county-unit system of Georgia or to the electoral voting system used to elect the President of the US (Goldberg, 1998h; Keating, 2001), for less populated areas have disproportionate political representation compared to more populated, urbanized areas. Douglas, Fayette, Clayton, Cherokee, Henry, and Rockdale Counties made up 23% of the ARC regional population, yet had 12 elected officials (52% of the total elected officials) on the ARC Board. Fulton County, with 25% of the ARC region's population, had 5 board members

(3 from Fulton, 2 from Atlanta). DeKalb County, with 20% of the region's population, had only 2 representatives on the ARC board (ARC, 2000). The city of Atlanta, with 13% of the ARC region's population, had 2 representatives, while Cherokee, Henry, Rockdale, and Fayette Counties combined had 13% of the population but 8 representatives on the ARC board.

This disproportional representation of mostly white, suburban counties was not redressed in the distribution of the fifteen citizen representatives. The selection of citizen members was controlled by the twenty-three elected officials on the ARC board. The power of the Gwinnett Mafia in deciding the fate of the region was often displayed in ARC board meetings. The counties that ringed Fulton and DeKalb often voted in a block, and elected from within that block the chairman of the ARC board. By the late 1990's they had elected the chairman of Gwinnett County, Wayne Hill, to be the chairman of the ARC board, who followed the previous chair, from Rockdale County, in prioritizing new roads over all else. Hill became one of the most controversial figures in Atlanta's sprawl debate, and was often accused of strong linkages to the Gwinnett Mafia (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1996; Saporta, 1998a; Bookman, 1999). Like Zell Miller, Tom Moreland, and Wayne Shackelford, Hill became one of the most vocal supporters of the Outer Perimeter.

With control of the ARC board in the grip of this cabal, the ARC board directed ARC's reluctant professional staff to study the Outer Perimeter as the Vision 2020 process was nearing completion (Goldberg, 1998j). Focus groups were assembled, and many participants were also participants in the Vision 2020 process (and were interviewed in this research). ARC staff undertook analysis of the need for the road,

focusing on the potential the Outer Perimeter would have in reducing congestion on I-285. It was also analyzed for future air quality impacts, with the 1999 CAA deadline in mind. Public forums were held across the region to gauge support for the Outer Perimeter. The conclusion of all this was that the Outer Perimeter would promote automobile dependence and create more sprawl, drawing development away from existing urban areas. Environmental problems also ranked high as concerns over watersheds and air were increasing. Additionally, some participants, when asked what needs the loop would meet, responded that there were no needs for the Outer Perimeter. Examinations of alternatives to the Outer Perimeter were also favored, including commuter rail and land-use measures favoring urban and suburban infill rather than further sprawl. Overwhelmingly, the conclusion was "no build." The study, therefore, clarified the ambivalence expressed in Vision 2020 and was evidence that automobile hegemony was clearly being challenged in the region.

The results of public forums were also hostile to the Outer Perimeter. Over 60% of participants in public forums opposed the road. Many of those who did support the road said they really only supported a certain part of it – for example, a lot of supporters argued that the northern segment, which later became known as the Northern Arc, was a good idea. [It was in this segment, which happened to be in Gwinnett County, that the GDOT focused on purchasing right of way (Figure 3.1 shows the Northern Arc).]

Finally, the ARC staff released its analysis of the Outer Perimeter (ARC, 1994). The study showed that the road would not relieve congestion on I-285, which had been the main argument the GDOT had used to justify the road. The ARC staff concurred with the focus groups that the road would induce sprawl. However, the ARC staff also

pointed out that the Outer Perimeter would not cause a net increase in growth but, rather, it would simply enable a more dispersed pattern of growth instead of a tighter, more compact growth pattern (the pattern favored in the Vision 2020 process). Moreover, the ARC staff concluded that the Outer Perimeter was not necessary to stimulate growth, which was another argument used by supporters of the road. The ARC staff also concluded that the Outer Perimeter would divert growth from inner areas to outer areas and would take billions of dollars from other transportation projects in Atlanta. Lastly, the staff concluded that the Outer Perimeter would make air quality worse in the region, reminding the board of the impending deadline of 1999 for meeting CAA standards for clean air. Hence, the ARC staff, through its clear opposition to the Outer Perimeter, was voicing dissent against continued automobile hegemony.

Following the release of the report, the response of the ARC board and GDOT reinforced accusations that the two bodies acted solely in the interests of not just developers, but of a small segment of developers centered in Gwinnett County. Firstly, the ARC staff was compelled to reword its study of the Outer Perimeter and to recommend that although the majority of the Outer Perimeter was not needed at present, this did not discount future need. Secondly, the ARC staff, in an act inconsistent with its earlier conclusions, recommended that the Northern Arc of the Outer Perimeter be included in the next regional transportation plan. In the final ARC board vote, the entire Outer Perimeter was summarily rejected, but the Northern Arc was approved after several weeks of contention, debate, and intensive lobbying of ARC board members by the GDOT. In the end, only representatives from Fulton, DeKalb, and Atlanta voted against the final approval of the Northern Arc. To the dismay of Outer Perimeter opponents, the

delegation of the ARC board representing south side counties voted for the Northern Arc. To the opponents of sprawl and excessive automobility, this suggested that the tentacles of influence from the Gwinnett Mafia and GDOT were not limited to the northern suburbs, but actually circled Atlanta. Moreover, while the resolution directed the ARC to discontinue studies of the entire Outer Perimeter and focus only on the Northern Arc, the GDOT leadership vowed that it would continue to push for the entire Outer Perimeter (Goldberg, 1994). Very powerful individuals were ensuring that automobile hegemony would remain the dominant ideological force directing transportation policy, and thus how Atlanta would grow in the future. The fact that they had to force the ARC staff to re-word its studies while opposition to the GDOT and ARC board activity was mounting showed that this hegemony was being challenged openly in a way that was new and uncharted. Moreover, the dissidents against automobile hegemony grew increasingly bold in accusing the defenders of automobility and sprawl of corruption and ethical lapses, primarily targeting the close relationship between Governor Zell Miller, the chairman of the GDOT, and powerful developers in Gwinnett County (see for example, the *Atlanta Constitution*, 1996, 1998b, 1998d and 1999d).

In the survey results of Vision 2020 there was reference to "special interests" controlling the ARC, a charge that was directed towards those who had produced the sprawling landscape deplored in the Vision 2020 results. Moreover, the most vocal charges of corruption and conspiracy emerged from the editorial pages of the *Atlanta Constitution*, which aggressively supported the mobility reforms outlined in Vision 2020. As the debate over the Outer Perimeter coincided with the Vision 2020 process, the *Constitution* editorial staff, almost weekly, openly accused the ARC board and the GDOT

leadership of collusion, unethical practices, and everything just shy of blatant corruption (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1996, 1998b, 1998d and 1999d; Roughton, 1997 and 1998; McCosh and Shelton, 1999). The newspaper became the key outlet for growing discontent over the way the GDOT and ARC board ignored the public participation process and the advice of professional planners. One editorial asked: "Why did they bother?" when referring to the ARC board's disregard of the study its staff conducted of the Outer Perimeter (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1994b). The *Constitution* charged that the true purpose of the Outer Perimeter, now in the form of the Northern Arc, was to create a new downtown in Gwinnett County. The popular daily charged that the chairman of Gwinnett County, Wayne Hill (who had enormous influence over the ARC board), and Wayne Shackelford, head of the GDOT, were colluding on behalf of Gwinnett-based developers to actively produce this new space. The paper even accused the head of the GDOT of extorting the other ARC board members by threatening to withhold road money for other, more localized road projects if the board member refused to support the Northern Arc (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1994b; Goldberg, 1996c).

In that climate, the Vision 2020 included an emphatic call for opening the transportation planning process up to more public participation and diverse interests, including adding representatives from advocacy organizations to ARC committees. Vision 2020 called for the addition of at least 3 members of the public to be nominated by a "community committee" to serve on the ARC Transportation Coordinating Committee, instead of being nominated from the ARC board. This would balance the bias towards developers and highway builders among members of the ARC board. Yet, these accusations of cronyism and political favoritism of auto-oriented developers were

not enough to change the make-up of the ARC board. The decision to change the board would have to be made by the ARC board itself or by the Georgia General Assembly, neither of which considered the trajectory of sprawl a major problem.

When it came time to implement the specific public policies called for in Vision 2020, the entrenched nature of the status quo was a formidable barrier. The GDOT and its quest to build the Outer Perimeter (and, later, a scaled back version of it called the Northern Arc), became the antithesis of the values, aspirations, and vision outlined in Vision 2020. Inextricably bound with the power of GDOT was the suburban-dominated ARC board and a governor who reflected their values and vision of hegemonic automobility. In the next section I show how the struggle between the mobility reform movement and the cabal of influential white powerbrokers came to a head over air quality and the requirements of the CAA and the ISTEA.

3.5 The Political Economy of Ozone

In the previous sections I delineated a dichotomous stalemate between the proponents of Vision 2020, many of whom challenged automobile hegemony, and the proponents of a "status quo" vision centered on building the Outer Perimeter, or at least the Northern Arc. It was in the context of that stalemate that the federal policies I outlined in the beginning of this chapter, the CAA and the ISTEA, really became important to the local planning process. In this section I show how, by the late-1990's, the CAA and the ISTEA forced the debate in ways that may not have been possible otherwise. For the defenders of automobile hegemony, these federal policies were cast as

intrusive, but for the proponents of Vision 2020 these policies were considered justifiable.

As the Vision 2020 process came to a close and divisions deepened over the Outer Perimeter, ARC planners were directed to focus on moving people during the 1996 Summer Olympics. Meanwhile, Atlanta's smog problem worsened. In June 1996, weeks before the Olympics, the Atlanta transportation plan failed a computer air quality model showing attainment of EPA ozone standards by 1999. The ARC staff warned that the plan, which was created by the politically motivated ARC board, had too many new roads, including the Northern Arc (Goldberg, 1996a). Then, during the 17-day long Olympics, the proof that automobility, more than any other source, caused Atlanta's smog problem became clear because significantly reduced automobile travel, higher transit ridership, and cleaner air typified the Olympic period.

During the Olympics, pollution in Atlanta declined by as much as 30%, as there was concomitantly higher usage of rail transit, fewer single-occupant vehicles on area highways, and a massive fleet of buses used to transport tourists and athletes (Goldberg, 1996b; Friedman, et al., 2001). Weather conditions in Atlanta during the Olympics were normal for that time of year, which meant that they were warm and stagnant, conditions conducive to smog. Although many Atlantans changed their work schedules or took their summer vacations during the Olympics, that was countered by over one million people visiting the Atlanta region. Those one million visitors could have increased the daily emissions that caused ground level ozone, but many of the visitors did not drive. Rather, they used transit. Trucking deliveries were scheduled in evenings, and the downtown

core of Atlanta was cordoned off from automobile traffic. Over 2,000 buses were borrowed from transit agencies around the country to help move the public.

The air quality during the Olympics reinforced what transportation experts had known all along, that the single largest anthropogenic source of air pollution in metropolitan Atlanta was from motorized vehicles, primarily automobiles and trucks. Several factors made Atlanta's automobility directly responsible for more than half of the total air pollution in the region. First, new car sales in metropolitan Atlanta were increasingly geared towards SUV's and pick-up trucks (Goldberg, 1999a). As discussed previously, these vehicles were not held to the same emissions standards as traditional passenger cars, and thus polluted more (by 2000 these made up 50% of sales). Second, the optimum speed for an automobile, in terms of the efficiency of its engine and the minimum amount of air pollution it produced, was actually slower than average local speed limits of 35, 45, and 55 miles per hour. The optimum speed of an automobile in terms of less pollution was 20 miles per hour (Holtzclaw, 1999). At higher speeds pollution was higher. Free flowing freeways actually contributed to greater pollution. When roads were not congested, the vast majority of motorists exceeded the speed limit regularly, and thus produced even greater amounts of pollution. With speeding came "dithering," or the continual acceleration and deceleration of a vehicle in response to road conditions. Dithering, in the aggregate, made cars and trucks even dirtier. Thus driving behavior, in the form of speeding, lane changing, and dithering, was contributing to more pollution than would have been the case with more strict controls on speeds, such as lower speed limits coupled with more punitive measures and enforcement against motorists.

Congestion, or the slow movement of vehicles, was not actually responsible for the increases in air pollution (Holtzclaw, 1999). To the average motorist stuck in traffic, it was easy to blame congestion for the air quality problem because that person had a lot of time to contemplate what was coming out of the tail pipes of vehicles around them. The frustration of congestion had a psychological effect on the public, who attributed congestion to dirtier air (Holtzclaw, 1999). Instead, the sheer number of cars on Atlanta's roads, and their excessive usage, was the true culprit. More than 75% of the pollution from a car was created in the first few miles of driving (Wachs, 1993). The most polluting segment of an automobile trip was the "cold start," or starting a cool engine. Over the course of any given day in Atlanta, a household would make between ten and thirteen automobile trips, meaning, more than likely, between ten and thirteen cold starts. The aggregate of millions of cold starts every day was significant. The immediate cause of Atlanta's increased smog was excessive automobility and driver behavior – not congestion. Yet the ideological hegemony of automobility led the average motorist, fed misinformation by transportation officials seeking to bolster automobile hegemony, to think that if the roads were widened and more were built, congestion would go away and the air would be cleaner. Air quality during the Olympics showed another possibility, one that was a dangerously sensible and direct challenge to the mantra that more roads and wider roads were needed to resolve both congestion and smog problems.

Upon the failure of Atlanta's transportation plan to show cleaner air by 1999, the EPA put the region on notice that it had 18 months to devise a plan that showed conformity or it faced being declared in a "conformity lapse," which meant suspension of

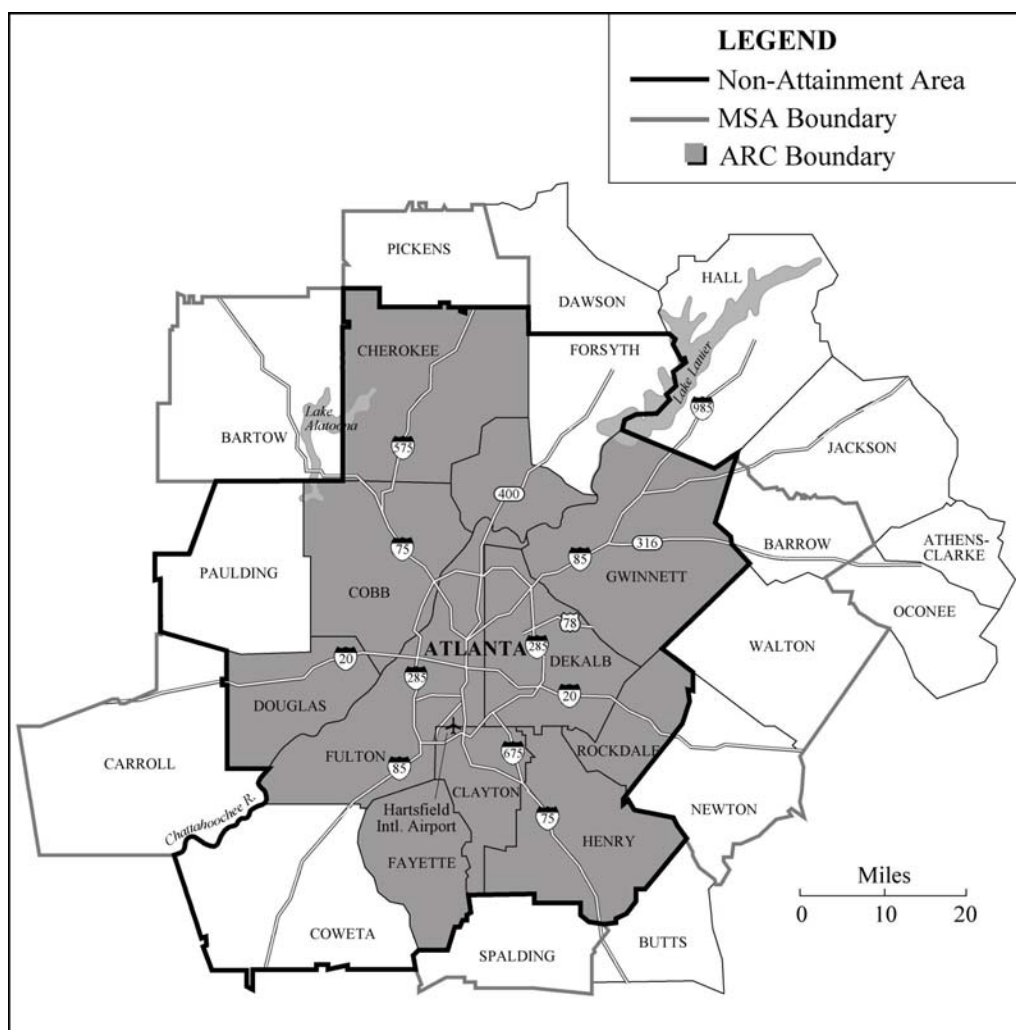


Figure 3.2: The Atlanta Non-attainment Area

Source: ARC (2000)

federal funds (Goldberg, 1996a). This applied to the 13-county Atlanta non-attainment area that EPA designated in 1990 (see figure 3.2).¹³ The federal government, empowered by both EPA and the ISTEA framework, could suspend highway funds to force the region to meet its committed deadline. In a conformity-lapse situation, a state air planning agency (the Environmental Protection Division, or EPD, in Georgia) could reallocate statewide emissions to allow for higher emissions from the transportation sector of a non-attainment area. This would avoid the withholding of federal transportation funds. However, that would mean offsetting automobile and truck emissions with a decrease in emissions from another source, such as powerplants or industry, a strategy which Anderson and Howitt (1995) have called a "zero-sum pollution reduction game."

The advocates of Vision 2020, citing EPA's mandates and pointing to the relatively cleaner Olympic air, called for an end to new road building and a reprioritization of transportation funding to other modes and maintenance of the existing road network. They found an ally in the corporate elite who feared for the region's reputation and the region's ability to attract industry and jobs. They also had an ally in the powerful Southern Company, parent of Georgia Power and owner of some of the dirtiest powerplants in the entire US. The Southern Company recognized that if automobility was not contained, and if other forms of mobility were not prioritized, the burden would be upon the utility to clean its power plants. This unlikely coalition

¹³ Figure 3.2 shows the non-attainment area. The 13 counties designated in non-attainment were the 10-county ARC planning region, which included Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale Counties, and three adjacent counties outside of ARC jurisdiction but part of the Atlanta MSA: Coweta, Paulding, and Forsyth Counties.

reflected the main proponents of the Vision 2020 process. Atlanta's environmental and community activists, corporate elite, and the major utility, albeit for very different motives, actively promoted the themes of Vision 2020 (primarily reducing automobility) and asserted political pressure for mobility reform.

The efforts were bolstered in mid-1998 when the federal government reviewed the ARC's planning process, responding to complaints that the Vision 2020 had been blatantly ignored (Goldberg, 1998i and 1998j). The US Department of Transportation (USDOT) concluded that there was a great amount of tension between the ARC staff and the ARC board. It noted that the ARC staff quit more often than at other metropolitan planning organizations around the nation, and retention was very low. The ARC board accused the staff of having an "agenda" while the staff said it felt hamstrung by the board. The review noted that the ARC's executive director, who generally sided with the board and not his staff, had become publicly combative and defensive of the ARC's continued support of road building.

The federal review said that Vision 2020 had been disregarded by the ARC board. It also concluded that the public was not informed about how and why ARC board decisions were being made. Auditors noted that Vision 2020 called for stopping sprawl and reducing automobile dependency, and for more investment in sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit, yet this was not happening in Atlanta and there was no legitimate explanation from the ARC board. The federal review pointed out that the process gave too much leeway to the GDOT, which ultimately controlled transportation money. As a consequence, the ARC was put on federal probation by USDOT, which said that ARC had deficiencies in public involvement, needed to be more responsive after plans were

unveiled, and needed to incorporate public comments in a better way. The USDOT complained that the ARC board just compiled a list of projects instead of working with a coherent vision and gave the ARC 18 months to repair its faulty public participation process.

With that scathing review, the divisions between the advocates for implementing the themes of Vision 2020 and the cabal centered on Gwinnett County grew sharper and increasingly hostile. While superficially the ARC board accepted the review and spoke of reform in the planning process, the events that unfolded proved contradictory. Instead of seeking ways to reduce automobility and implement Vision 2020, the ARC board, GDOT, and Governor Zell Miller sought a three-pronged strategy for circumventing Vision 2020 and the impending suspension of highway funds because of dirty air. The first strategy was to explore the option of "grandfathering" road projects before the final punitive measures would take effect. The second was to exhaust all possible options short of reducing automobile use by seeking to both impose regulations on industries and utilities and to introduce new fuel technologies and emissions testing techniques for automobiles. The third strategy was to work behind the scenes to have the Georgia Congressional delegation simply change the federal law, attempting to decouple highway money from air quality regulations. As I will show below, arguably nowhere in their agenda was there an acknowledgement that automobility had to be reduced, and in the ARC and GDOT board meetings during this period an attitude of defiance and indignation towards the EPA and supporters of Vision 2020 was common. A concerted defense of automobile hegemony was being mounted.

3.5.1 Scheme 1: Grandfathering

Grandfathering was the first tack the ARC and GDOT took. The EPA's conformity rule had a clause that allowed road projects to proceed if they were already under construction when a conformity lapse occurred. The reason for allowing previously started road projects to continue was to "protect the taxpayer." In other words, if work had to stop on a project already underway, then taxpayers would have to pay more later to re-start the project or would have wasted money if the project was abandoned. These "grandfathered" road projects became the focus of a contentious legal and political struggle in Atlanta in 1999.

As the ARC and GDOT pursued grandfathering, a coalition of environmental organizations, all of whose members participated in Vision 2020, sued after intensive negotiations among the agencies, the EPA, and environmentalists failed. The aim of the lawsuit was to block 61 grandfathered road projects that GDOT and ARC put into an interim transportation plan that was supposed to allow the region to spend federal funds on transit and non-motorized mobility while in a conformity lapse (see Figure 3.3 for the locations of the 61 projects). The total worth of the 61 road projects was \$700 million. The Sierra Club, Georgians for Transportation Alternatives, the Georgia Conservancy, and the Southern Environmental Law Center charged that only 14 of the 61 road projects had been started before the conformity lapse. Thus, GDOT and ARC, with permission and assistance of the Federal Highway Administration, were blatantly abusing the intent of the grandfathering clause (Goldberg, 1998a).

The lawsuit, whose ultimate goal was to allow road money to be diverted to transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure, was the first citizen legal action nationwide

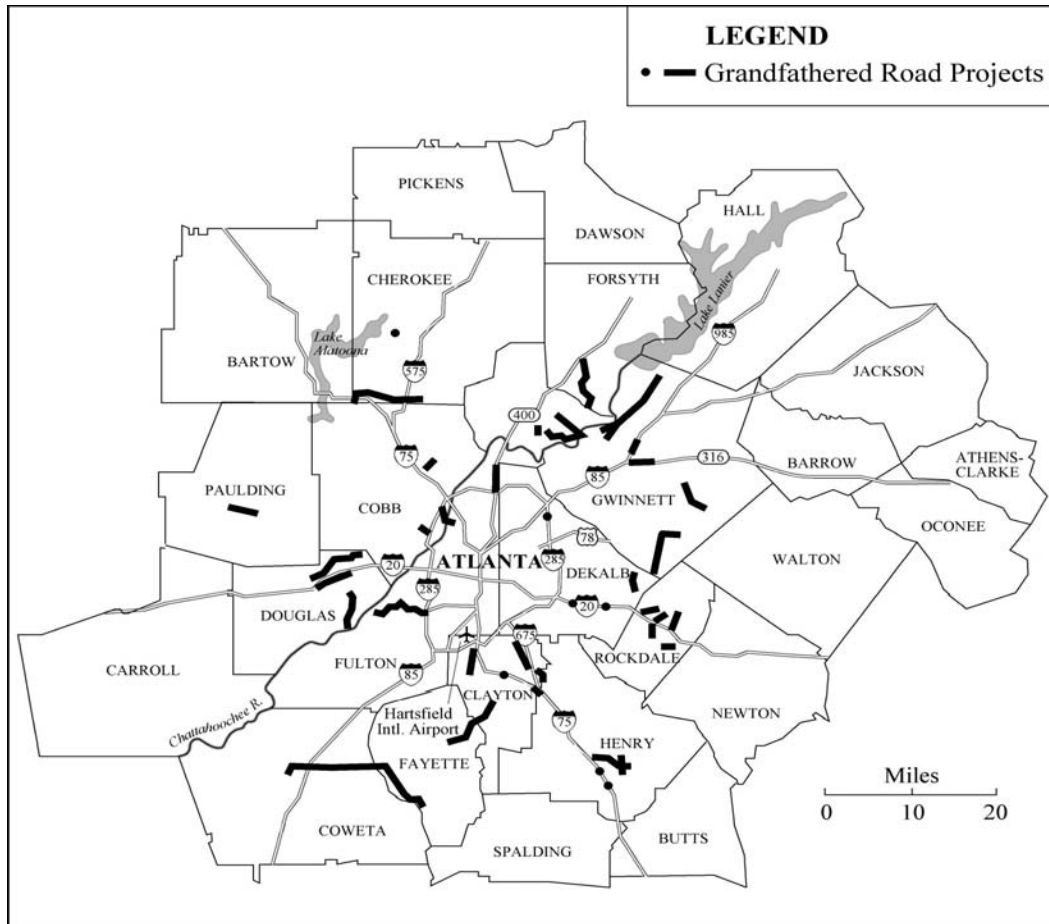


Figure 3.3: Grandfathered Road Projects
 Source: SELC (1998).

for enforcing the conformity regulations of the 1990 CAA. The case was a precedent nationwide. Leaders in metropolitan areas like Washington, Charlotte, Denver, and Los Angeles watched closely. Industry trade organizations in road building and development also watched closely. The plaintiffs said that USDOT, ARC, and GDOT were bending rules and breaking the law. The *Constitution* editorial board proudly supported the lawsuit, stating that it was the last recourse against a stubborn ARC board and GDOT (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1998a). Meanwhile, a second lawsuit was filed in Washington, DC against the EPA for its unwillingness to enforce proactively its own clean air rules against the grandfathering process. That suit, filed by the national organization Environmental Defense (ED), was broadly meant to clarify the parameters of grandfathering, though the immediate test case was Atlanta.

As the environmental groups sued, a second coalition of civil rights organizations also filed notice of intent to sue. These groups were assisted by Environmental Defense, which focused on linking environmental aspects of transportation policy with social justice concerns. The aim was to put a civil rights angle on the deception of the ARC, GDOT, and FHWA. Thus, the organizations claimed that racism was a factor in grandfathering attempts. The leadership of ED declared that Atlanta was the frontline in the struggle for a clean environment and "transportation civil rights." The groups claimed that blacks suffered disproportionately from asthma, while suburban sprawl made jobs inaccessible to the working poor (Goldberg, 1998b). The issue of grandfathering was extremely contentious, for it not only pitted local environmentalists and civil rights leaders against local planning organizations, but it also pitted Atlanta's two African-American congressional representatives, John Lewis and Cynthia

McKinney, against Atlanta's white, suburban Republican representatives, while also pitting the USDOT against the EPA in Washington. Ultimately, the Clinton White House would intervene to mediate the dispute. However, before the White House made any decisive moves, in March 1999, a 3-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals in Washington declared that EPA could not approve grandfathered projects in a non-attainment area with a non-conforming transportation plan. This meant that the ARC and GDOT could not proceed with purchasing rights of way or construction on any project not already started, although it did allow previously started construction to continue. The courts did not rule on the lawsuits in Atlanta, but clarified the parameters for grandfathering in favor of the environmental and civil rights litigants based in Atlanta. Both ED and the federal courts affirmed that the Atlanta case was the national test case of CAA conformity regulations (Goldberg, 1999b).

The result of the ruling in Washington was that the GDOT and ARC had to negotiate with the environmental coalition to identify which road projects qualified for grandfathering and which did not. An out-of-court settlement was reached in June 1999, and it declared that 17 of 61 contested roads could be grandfathered. The other 44 roads had to be re-evaluated and delayed until the region drafted a new long-range regional transportation plan (RTP). The total value of the projects unable to be grandfathered was \$600 million. The plaintiffs agreed not to fight the 17 grandfathered roads, even though a few of them were actually started after the conformity lapse. The settlement required that the ARC undertake a comprehensive study of the mobility needs and options in the northern suburbs, a study implicitly directed at analyzing the need for the Northern Arc. Additionally, the settlement mandated that the ARC open the analysis of its air quality

modeling process to an independent panel of experts and undertake an analysis of transportation spending on poor and minority residents.

As it would turn out, the goal of transferring the bulk of the road money in the grandfathering case was not achieved. A small portion (\$25 million) was reprogrammed to MARTA for natural gas buses. Instead of transferring the money into local alternative projects, the ARC and GDOT placed the balance of \$575 million into road safety and maintenance programs in the ARC region. A large portion of the money was also circulated back into the GDOT general fund, and GDOT was accused of moving the money to road projects in other parts of the state. Meanwhile, national highway and automobile lobbyists bitterly denounced the settlement as a dangerous precedent that could undermine unfettered automobility in metropolitan areas. Yet by fall of 2001, none of the requirements of the settlement had been met. As I discuss later in this research, the coalition of environmental and civil rights organizations eventually returned to litigation.

3.5.2 Scheme 2: Technological Fixes

As the grandfathering controversy unfolded, the ARC was also drafting a new 25-year regional transportation plan (RTP) and attempting to meet the requirements and deadlines of the CAA. At the state level, Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) had to show that the aggregate of all emissions produced in the state would be within a certain emissions budget defined by the EPA. The emissions budget was set by EPA to account for the role Georgia played in polluting states downwind, and many northeastern states claimed Georgia's pollution affected them. All states east of the Mississippi had to meet EPA emissions budgets that allocated pollution among the states.

Moreover, the air quality in remote places like the Smokey Mountain National Park was worsening due to pollution which was, at least in part, from metropolitan Atlanta (Mardock, et al., 1999). For metro Atlanta the EPD budgeted a certain amount of emissions per year, and this was the framework within which the ARC had to draft the long range RTP.

The ARC board preferred a designer fuel (essentially reformulated gasoline) strategy rather than substantial efforts to change driving behavior in the region (Goldberg, 1998c). The ARC staff was directed by the ARC board to keep the Northern Arc in the plan. The new RTP also included modest transit improvements, such as new High Occupant Vehicle (HOV) lanes that buses could use. The ARC modeled regional air quality with the assumption that the future automobile fleet would use designer fuels. ARC concluded that the designer fuels would help get the region's emissions budget in line with EPD and EPA requirements, while at the same time accommodating the Northern Arc and road expansions in the suburbs.

The reformulated gasoline would have increased the price of gas by up to 26 cents per gallon, and Governor Zell Miller was adamantly opposed to increases in the price of gas (Goldberg, 1998g; Soto and Ledford, 1999). Miller viewed the ARC designer fuel concept as a tax on motorists, and he had campaigned on promises of never raising gas taxes. Oil companies also opposed the designer fuel concept. They said that it would be too expensive for them to convert their gas stations in the time frame required to begin meeting attainment (Soto and Ledford, 1999). Additionally, the EPD wanted to require mandatory annual emissions testing in the 13-county non-attainment zone, another expense on motorists (Goldberg, 1999c). Once again a stalemate ensued, only this time it

was between advocates of unfettered automobility and advocates of a "cleaner" automobility.

The ARC, reacting to this political impasse, requested that the EPD change the emissions budget for metro Atlanta to make the regulations looser (Goldberg, 1998c). In this proposal, the EPD would have to cap emissions from somewhere else in Georgia. The logical source for that balance in emissions cuts would have come from coal-fired plants and other emission-intensive industries like paper mills and kaoline plants. These vested interests mounted a strong campaign to block EPD from doing this, and so ARC was left with even fewer options.

Finally, EPD promoted a new statewide air quality plan which requested that EPA allow EPD to meet the statewide emissions goals, including Atlanta's attainment with ozone, by 2003. [The original deadline for Atlanta's attainment, set in 1990, had just passed.] The plan required Georgia Power to clean five of its coal plants (Goldberg, 1999c). Additionally, EPD put new emissions controls on industries in 47 counties across northern Georgia. In Atlanta, EPD would oversee annual emissions testing for all automobiles and trucks, replacing the previous biennial testing program. Each motorist, regardless of the level of pollution from the vehicle, would be required to pay \$25 a year per car. A "voluntary ozone alert program" (VOAP) was also proposed (Goldberg and Soto, 1997). The program expected businesses to find ways to get workers to not drive alone on days forecast to have smog. EPD would help finance media advertisements urging the use of public transit, telecommuting, and carpooling during episodes of smog (and not year-round).

Lastly, EPD proposed a cheaper variation of the designer fuel pushed by ARC and proposed that the cleaner gasoline be mandated in 69 counties by 2003. Zell Miller, who opposed the increase, was no longer governor of Georgia, and the new governor, Roy Barnes, was open to the reformulated gasoline. The designer fuel was significantly less clean than the fuel originally proposed by the ARC and would still amount to an increase in the price of gasoline. British Petroleum, which aggressively lobbied for the cleaner gasoline, promised that the increased cost would make the average gallon of gasoline only cost as much as Premium gas. [British Petroleum, unlike most fuel providers, sought to "get ahead" of its competition, and thus supported designer fuels (Soto, 1999).]

Within months of the plan, EPD was criticized from all sides (Seabrook, 1999b). Physicians from Emory Medical School and Grady Hospital chided the EPD and EPA for extending the deadlines for cleaner air to 2003, while environmentalists and public health advocates said that the emissions from Georgia Power's plants were still too high. Georgia Power said that the restrictions EPD proposed "defied logic" and would hurt consumers. The utility warned that it would pass on the costs of cleaning its plants to consumers, and the likely increase to the average household electric bill would be \$1.92 a month. Rural counties protested the proposed emissions on industries. They argued that the plan would stifle economic growth because it would be harder to recruit new industry. Oil companies, with the exception of British Petroleum, demanded that the requirement for designer fuels be limited to only 25 counties, instead of 69 (Soto and Ledford, 1999). Suburban Republicans protested the annual emissions testing on motorists in the Atlanta area and invoked a populist rhetoric that the program unfairly impacted the working class and took away freedom (Wooten, 2000a). Finally, the EPA notified EPD by letter that

the set of proposals would not meet EPA requirements and that deeper cuts in emissions were needed (Seabrook, 1999c).

When the Department of Natural Resources, which was a board appointed by Georgia's governor and which set EPD's agenda, deliberated on the EPD air plan it noted that the next logical step for emissions cuts was in Atlanta's transportation system. The board approved the EPD plan, aware that EPA did not approve of it, but with the mandate that EPD got tougher on emissions from automobiles in Atlanta. The ARC executive director, Harry West, reacted by saying that the ARC had done all it could legally do to reduce pollution. West said the next step would be for the Georgia General Assembly to give someone the authority to restrict driving, the ultimate way to clean air in the region. However, no one wanted to touch that possibility, for restricting driving was out of the question politically. The impasse over how to clean Atlanta's air deepened.

The *Atlanta Constitution* (1999b) editorial staff summed up the impasse as a fundamental lack of political will to get people out of their cars. The editors pointed out that political leaders had spent the last decade avoiding reality and that the attempts to regulate industry further and try cleaner fuels was futile because the ARC board continued to push for the Northern Arc and an RTP stacked with road widenings. The *Constitution* called on Georgia's new governor, Roy Barnes, to provide leadership and criticized Zell Miller for making the problems worse while he was governor for eight years. Atlanta had 69 smog days during the summer of 1999. Instead of taking the approach of containing automobility, the EPD pursued further emissions reductions from other sources (Seabrook, 1999c). It proposed that higher take-off and landing fees at Atlanta's Hartsfield Airport would encourage airlines to stop using older, dirtier jets,

bringing the airport into the debate for the first time (Seabrook, 1999c). [Atlanta's airport produced between 7-10% of the region's ozone.] The EPD warned that it would regulate freight train locomotives, construction equipment and bulldozers, and would expand annual emissions testing to all 20 metro counties instead of 13. It proposed a tax incentive to motivate consumers to replace older cars, lawn mowers, and leaf blowers and to regulate motorized boats on Lake Lanier and popular all-terrain vehicles.

The EPD staff noted that it could avoid these tactics if there were regionally imposed parking fees and toll roads that would discourage excessive driving and suggested that local police enforcement of speed limits would have a positive air quality impact because higher speeds resulted in more pollution (Seabrook, 1999c). However, these suggestions were not taken seriously, given that no politicians would speak up first.

The refusal to confront automobility as fundamental to the air quality problem was taken to an egregious extreme when the GDOT board asked that schools in metro Atlanta delay their annual start dates until mid-September (Simmons, 2000b). The idea was that this would address the congestion and increased pollution that occurred every year in late August and September as parents drove their auto-dependent children to and from school. Schools resisted, saying it would disrupt education for the benefit of motorists. The fact that the GDOT board was desperately seeking any strategy to avoid directly confronting automobility was not the lowest moment in the political impasse, however.

3.5.3 Scheme 3: If you don't like the rules, change them

While the ARC and GDOT attempted to grandfather roads, and the ARC, GDOT, and EPD debated every possible method to clean air short of restrictions on automobility, metropolitan Atlanta's political leadership persistently pursued a third strategy to defend excessive automobility, namely, changing the rules it did not agree with. The first cut at this was to lobby the Georgia congressional delegation to change the CAA and ISTEA. For example, in 2000 US congressional representatives from suburban Atlanta, including Bob Barr, Johnny Isackson, Nathan Deal, and the now-deceased Paul Coverdell, supported legislation that would reverse the court decision restricting grandfathering. Although the effort failed, it reflected the attitude of many Georgia political leaders that they did not believe automobility should be restricted, and that they would undermine clean air laws rather than restrict road building. Previously, county leaders in Gwinnett, Henry, Fayette, Forsyth, and Clayton Counties pressured both US Senators in Georgia to change the CAA rules linking highway funding to clean air regulations (Goldberg, 1999d). In the Senate, several bills were introduced to decouple highway funding from air quality laws, though none passed.

In 2000, the US representative from Gwinnett County, John Linder, tried persistently to eliminate the link between clean air laws and highway building (Wooten, 2000b; *Atlanta Constitution*, 2000c). He added a rider to the transportation appropriations bill to bar federal agencies from enforcing the conformity standard. Later that summer Linder successfully passed an amendment barring the EPA from listing communities that violated new, tougher clean air standards that had not been adopted (Carr, 2000). These new standards would have placed more counties in north Georgia

into the non-attainment category, including those containing Athens and Gainesville. The Linder rider meant that EPA could only list cities using the older standard (which Atlanta still could not meet). The requirement would be in effect until the EPA developed procedures for implementing the new standard, a procedure that was subsequently delayed after the Bush administration was installed in the executive branch by the Supreme Court in late 2000.

Complementing federal activity, the Georgia General Assembly attempted to weaken environmental rules that impacted automobility. The Georgia House proposed rules to restrict the power of the EPD to enforce emissions standards in Atlanta (*Atlanta Constitution*, 2000a). The rules required that whenever EPD came up with new regulations, it had to solicit the input of the General Assembly. The committees in the House could not block regulations, but if EPD went ahead with them against Georgia General Assembly approval, then the Assembly could vote with 2/3 majority to overturn EPD rules. Born out of a coalition of suburban Republicans and rural Democrats in South Georgia (the Republicans were opposed to EPD regulations on testing cars for emissions annually, while rural Democrats opposed regulations on hog farms, which were being considered by EPD at the same time as the air quality debate in Atlanta), the House bill passed 162-12. Urban Atlanta Democrats, and 1 Democrat from Savannah, were the only opposition. When it came to defending automobile hegemony, most political leaders in Georgia appeared to be willing to undermine environmental protection rather than be complicit in policies that threatened that hegemony.

3.6 Mobility and Contesting Space

Atlanta's political struggle over conforming to federal clean air laws provides a revealing example of how automobile hegemony is defended, challenged, and negotiated through politics. The politics of air pollution in Atlanta and the maneuvering in defense of unfettered automobility affected the politics of possibilities for challenging that hegemony. In outlining this political struggle, a number of salient points can be drawn from the above narrative. Perhaps the most significant is that while the debate over growth is arguably place-based for many contenders, a more nuanced exploration (provided in the next chapters) reveals that place-based struggle intersects with the struggle over *how* space should be configured in toto across all space (for example, should the urban landscape accommodate cars or mass transit?).

Thus, in terms of place-based conflict, there are two prominent coalitions engaged in a protracted struggle over the future of the Atlanta region, and on the surface it may appear to be an outer suburb v. inner suburbs and central city conflict. On the one hand, there is the Vision 2020 coalition of corporate business elites, environmentalists, civil rights advocates, and urban liberals inside of I-285. These groups, generally speaking, expressed a desire for recentralization, increased transit, and more compact urban development, especially around transit stations. While their underlying motivations to engage in the debate, which will be explored in detail subsequently, are different, there is a local unity in defending place that was expressed in Vision 2020. Thus, to some extent the motivation to engage was place-based and mirrored local dependency theory in that downtown-based corporate elites and groups sometimes in conflict with corporate elites appeared to be suspending conflict over the issue of automobility. They openly challenge

the hegemony of automobility and in Vision 2020 outlined a very controversial strategy that would have changed the daily mobility of millions of people in the future. Changing this mobility would have required spatial reconfigurations that disabled unfettered automobility. They were aided in this vision by federal policies that empowered local advocates while also increasing the regulation of clean air and transportation.

On the other hand, a ring of suburban counties encircling the entire region controls the regional transportation planning process and is strongly allied on transportation policy issues with the GDOT and highway lobby. It uses its political power to sustain automobile hegemony and, as I showed, it attempted to circumvent clean air laws to preserve this hegemony in many ways. Hence, it sought to circumvent federal law with grandfathering, sought to redistribute the burden of air pollution to allow for more automobile pollution at the expense of powerplants, and sought simply to change the law. On all three counts the results were mixed, but did reveal that automobile hegemony could be challenged and that perhaps there are weak spots in its foundations. The grandfathering settlement, while leaving much to desire for the environmentalist/intown coalition, nevertheless hampered the excessive road building the GDOT was pursuing. The Southern Company did not want further intrusion into its capital accumulation by having to build scrubbers for its power plants to balance out the accommodation of Atlantans' propensity to drive over 35 miles a day, and therefore fought off attempts to make it do so. Moreover, despite their best efforts, defenders of automobility have not yet forced the US Congress to change the Clean Air Act in a way that decouples highways from the ozone standard.

However, a critical analysis of the sprawl debate in Atlanta reveals that it is not exclusively a geographical conflict from a "place-based" locality context, that is to say an inner city v. suburb conflict. True, all of the actors engaging in the debate are rooted in specific places, but for many, as I reveal in the next four chapters, the struggle is about *how* space should be organized in all places and across all space. Members of competing visions of how the region should grow live among one another, in the same neighborhoods, unincorporated areas, municipalities, and counties that make up the metropolitan region. Within all sections of Atlanta, one will find those who oppose sprawl as well as those who conceptualize it as an inevitable, necessary, and beneficial form of urban expansion. Within all reaches of the metropolitan region there are those who express a vision of no further growth in Atlanta, or a vision that allows 1 million, 2 million, or even 3 million more people into the region. There are those who believe that all this new growth should be in a compact high density urban form, and those who believe it should expand geographically between Alabama and South Carolina to the west and east, Tennessee and North Carolina to the north, and Macon, Georgia, to the south. There are those who believe that the region's air and water cannot absorb any more growth, and those that believe that cleaner cars and pipelines supplying water to Atlanta from the Tennessee River and Savannah River will allow millions more people to move to the region and sustain the same level of consumption.

In the following chapters, then, I will establish in detail the main differences between seven visions of mobility identified from intensive archival analysis, participant observation, and 47 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in Atlanta's sprawl debate (for a discussion of methodology, please see appendices A, B, and C). These mobility

visions approach issues of the urban landscape from the perspective of how it should be configured to meet a variety of goals that are inextricably bound with specific forms of mobility, and which are not necessarily "place-based" or designed simply to defend particular localities. For each vision, I will start with a background that discusses key theoretical themes that underpin the vision, and then discuss who in Atlanta expresses the vision. I will then focus on the motivations for the articulators of competing mobility visions to engage in the debate and take the positions they take.

CHAPTER 4

THE METRO GROWTH MACHINE MOBILITY VISION

4.1 Purpose of Chapter

Molotch (1976, 1999), Logan and Molotch (1987), and Jonas and Wilson (1999) have discussed the role of local "growth machines" in producing urban space. Growth machines are an interlocking network of business elites and local government officials who attempt to control local politics in order to accumulate wealth (Molotch, 1976). The main focus of growth machine theory is on developers, realtors, banks, and firms with interests in the exchange value of property. These landed capitalists, or the "rentiers," are supported by the local media, utilities, chambers of commerce, and other place-based capitalist interests. Invoking this literature, the first mobility vision I discuss is what I call the "metro growth machine mobility vision." My intention here is to show that, at least in the arena of transportation policy, there is a distinct metro-wide growth machine vision of mobility in Atlanta that actively inserted itself into the sprawl debate.

I have chosen to discuss this vision first because this vision fits closest to the logic of capital framework I described in Chapter 2 and, further, it reflects how some factions of capital have begun to grapple with some of the contradictions manifested in the spaces of automobility and *how* space is organized. I will first describe what I mean by "metro growth machine" and then discuss the underlying capitalist logic that shapes this particular mobility vision. Specifically I argue that the vision emerges out of a contradiction between, on the one hand, the imperative for speed and volume that

characterizes capitalist visions of mobility and, on the other, the undermining of the exchange values of land and region by the consequences of these imperatives. I will detail who in Atlanta expresses this vision and what motivates them to engage directly in the sprawl debate. I will end the chapter with a brief discussion of the newly created Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), which materialized out of the metro growth machine's negotiation of automobile hegemony and its problems. The emphasis will be that the metro growth machine negotiates, rather than explicitly challenges, automobile hegemony, which reflects its inability to overcome certain contradictions. Although a place-based faction in the sprawl debate, the metro growth machine seeks to address *how* the metropolitan region is configured in order to sustain future population growth and economic expansion. As I show, this *how* is focused on negotiating away from spaces of full automobility and towards a region with diverse mobilities.

4.2 Growth Machines and Mobility

By necessity of their interest in land for exchange value, growth machines must concern themselves with transportation policy, which effectively enables access to land parcels. Elites with land interests formulate local policy agendas such as transportation and land-use planning, negotiate with other locally dependent interests like labor, and work through local governments, who may enact policies on their behalf. In Atlanta there is a small but powerful group of elites who have considerable influence on transportation policy and mobility. I label this the "metro growth machine" because, as Atlanta's transportation/ sprawl crisis erupted in the second-half of the 1990's, a small cadre of corporate leaders unified on key transportation issues and actively utilized the

state to achieve their ends. Having funded and actively participated in the Vision 2020 process outlined in the previous chapter, Atlanta's business elites were somewhat disorganized on transportation issues when the crisis emerged. Part of this, I have argued in reference to Keating (2001), was due to the decline in the power of the downtown elites because of massive suburbanization coupled with racism and strong anti-urban sentiments in the counties circling Atlanta. Atlanta's downtown business elite found that control of transportation policy was nestled in the GDOT, which was heavily influenced by the suburban development cabal situated in Gwinnett County (interview #33). To wrest at least some control of transportation policy, they actively backed a "smart growth" gubernatorial candidate (Roy Barnes) in 1998, while establishing a corporate entity to direct transportation policy upon his election in late 1998 (Saporta, 1998b).

In terms of transportation policy, the underlying mobility vision for Atlanta's growth machine is centered on the capacity to access land. Borrowing from Dittmar (1995), "capacity to access land" is the ability to access specific parcels of land, and "capacity" emphasizes a measure of volume. Higher valued land is land that has the best access to higher volumes of flows of people and goods, such as good freeway access or land that is adjacent to a rail station. Land with several freeways converging nearby, or adjacent to two rail lines crossing, allowing multi-directional access, is even more valuable. Capitalists in the growth machine engage in actively producing access to their land by leveraging highway and transit projects that serve their interests. They speculate on land near proposed roads, but also seek to shape transportation policy such that roads get built in certain places to their benefit. Capitalists will also speculate on land where a proposed rail line is forecast, but also seek to steer investment in rail towards specific

locations where they have sunk costs in land. A central imperative of the growth machine, then, is to seek control of the state. As I outlined in Chapter 3, Atlanta's business elites have had a history of active engagement in the transportation planning process, with the Vision 2020 process and its aftermath being an example.

In Atlanta, the vision of the growth machine is characterized by support for both improving the road system and building rail. It supports building high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, fixing congested interchanges, and widening certain arterials, while simultaneously seeking to expand the heavy rail system, to build light rail in denser inner areas, and to build a commuter rail network centered on downtown. The growth machine also engages in efforts to make the region accessible within the national and international capitalist space-economy by leveraging airport and highway improvements that increase the competitive advantage of the metropolitan region. For example, Atlanta's growth machine actively lobbies for a national high-speed rail network that mirrors the national airport and Interstate Highway policies that made Atlanta a focal point in the national space-economy.

The way that the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (MACOC), the primary public face of the metro growth machine, promotes high-speed rail is a good example of how it seeks to reinforce Atlanta's prominence in the capitalist space economy through transportation policy.¹⁴ The interest in high-speed rail reflects the vision of mobility as capacity to access the region and has recently become the focus of business concerns over the circulation of capital and the movement of goods and people in the Southeastern US,

¹⁴ This system of high-speed trains, modeled on the French TGV or similar European electric trains, would service trips limited to within a 500-600 mile range of downtown Atlanta and act as a compliment to, or substitute for, shorter airline flights.

where even in remote areas congestion on interstates occurs regularly and airports are nearing capacity.

Like the airport, high-speed rail was conceptualized as essential for the future integration of the Southeast into the national capitalist space-economy. Consequently, the MACOC actively pursued the formation of the Southeastern Economic Alliance (SEA), an alliance of chambers of commerce set up specifically to lobby Congress for high-speed rail. The chambers of commerce involved included Atlanta, Chattanooga (TN), Norfolk-Hampton Roads (VA), Birmingham (AL), Greenville (SC), Columbia (SC), Macon (GA), Spartanburg (SC), Savannah (GA), Winston-Salem (NC), Raleigh (NC), Charlotte (NC), and Richmond, (VA) (Saporta, 2001c; Barry, 2001; Simmons, 2000c). The retired ex-CEO of Bank of America, based in Charlotte, led the SEA, and the president of the bank's MidSouth division, based in Atlanta, led a delegation to Washington to lobby for high-speed rail. The SEA emphasized a "Southeastern Economic Union" with mutual economic interests in guiding the Southeastern US into global competition. While many of these cities compete with Atlanta, the MACOC does not see them as just competitors, but, rather, as partners in regional cooperation that puts the Southeastern US against the Pacific Northwest, Southern California, and the Northeastern Corridor. MACOC also sees the Southeast competing globally with Japan and Western Europe. What all of these competing regions have, says the president of the MACOC, is strong regional support for high-speed rail (Barry, 2001). Without high-speed rail, the chamber president sees the competitive advantage of the Southeast being lost because of congestion on roads and at Atlanta and Charlotte's airports (Saporta, 2001c).

The vision of high-speed rail reflects the central theme of mobility as the capacity to access land (and region), moving very large volumes of people and goods at high speeds to specific places. This is part of the wider drive within the capitalist order, which seeks to "annihilate space by time" by ever-decreasing the circulation time of capital. Higher speed and inter-connectivity reduces the travel times for the movement of goods, information, and people. However, the means to these ends can be destructive, and even contradictory, to the ends of a place-based capitalist growth machine. For example, the focus on capacity, or volumes of flow into small areas, may result in the destruction of the characteristics of the area that made it attractive for investment in the first place. Indeed, there are significant underlying tensions in growth machine visions of mobility.

First, the prosperity of a locality, such as a downtown or other area with concentrations of highly valued land holdings, can be overwhelmed by its own success. Providing unfettered mobility in order to access a specific place can cause a congestion diseconomy that ultimately devalues places. This happens, for example, when a successful business runs out of parking and potential customers turn away, or when a downtown's approaching freeway network is congested much of the day, and so firms looking for office space seek less congested locations.

Second, the drive of capitalism for what I call "hard mobility," or the energy intensive, speed-intensive mobility of highway and air travel, comes into brutal spatial conflict with "soft mobility" such as walking and biking in compact built environments. This is significant because in the post-industrial economy that characterizes cities like Atlanta, many high-tech firms, corporate headquarters, and information producing corporations seek urban agglomerations with "quality of life"-oriented infrastructure.

Place matters, but more importantly *how* place is configured around mobility matters more. As I will show in a later section, a vision of mobility that is held by many of the affluent workers in these industries exhibits the desire for soft mobilities as part of a spatial consumption regime.

Together, these contradictions lead the metro growth machine to be concerned with *how* place is configured. The metro growth machine seeks to address these contradictions because in an era of footloose capitalism and competition between metropolitan areas for corporate relocations, *how* place is configured matters greatly. For many corporate elites, aspects of place-configuration that are increasingly important in the competition between cities include soft mobilities such as walking and biking, good public transit, as well as a "sense of community" and neighborhood amenities. These are not necessarily determined so much by a specific location in place as they are by *how* that place is designed and configured. This can often contradict and impede the networks supporting hard mobility, the networks that make those very places accessible in the wider capitalist space economy. Atlanta's transportation/sprawl crisis provides a glaring example of these contradictions, and Atlanta's metro growth machine has actively engaged in the political process in order to mitigate the contradiction between hard and soft mobility. Thus, the metro growth machine has sought to utilize the state to increase the capacity to access key parts of the region while simultaneously minimizing the environmental, social, and economic damage caused by the emphasis on high-speed mobility.

4.3 Who is Atlanta's Metro Growth Machine?

The CEO of the Southern Company, one of the nation's largest energy companies and one which is headquartered in downtown Atlanta, has described the informal mechanism for the business elite to shape public policy in Atlanta as the "Swat team" (Saporta, 2001a). As the label implies, the Atlanta business elite has quietly created an informal structure for responding to possible crises. The label emerged in 1999, in the early stages of the debate over removing Confederate symbols from the Georgia state flag and just after a cadre of the business elite helped push legislation creating one of the most powerful urban transportation authorities in the nation (that agency will be discussed later in this chapter).¹⁵

The Swat team was an outgrowth of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (MACOC). Since 1997, when the transportation/sprawl crisis became impossible to ignore because of national media, federal intervention, and litigation, the MACOC has been a caricature of the growth machine thesis outlined by Molotch (1976). Formerly known as the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce because it represented business interests in the city of Atlanta, as the transportation/sprawl crisis loomed the chamber added "Metro" to its name and promoted itself as a regional chamber, representing more than just the city of Atlanta. Although suburban business interests continue to call the Metro Atlanta

¹⁵ The Swat team met in secret with the Governor of Georgia to negotiate the strategy for the state flag change (Saporta, 2001a). To the admonishment of extreme right-wing organizations who sought to preserve the Confederate Battle Flag as the dominant symbol of Georgia, the Swat team secretly brokered a deal between the governor, prominent black leaders, and corporate interests who wanted to remove the blemish of the Confederacy and white supremacy. The legacy of the Confederacy, Jim Crow, and the "Lost Cause" was bad for business. Traffic and smog was bad for business, too.

Chamber of Commerce a "downtown chamber," it would be remiss to ignore the chamber's regional and statewide influence.

MACOC was considered the most powerful civic organization in Georgia, and the chair of the MACOC Board was considered the most powerful individual civic position in Georgia (Saporta, 1999a). Working with Georgia's pro-business governor, Roy Barnes, the MACOC led the process that created a new transportation authority, statewide education reform, the change of the state flag, and the creation of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, which has been charged with securing water for Atlanta's future growth. The cementing of the power of this elite was not through controlling Atlanta's City Hall but by controlling Georgia's State Capitol. In Georgia, Atlanta's metropolitan area accounts for more than half of the state's population. This role as premier city means that Atlanta's growth machine often acts as a proxy as the state's growth machine, such that Governor Roy Barnes, a strong ally of many of the CEOs that led the growth machine, has been called the "surrogate mayor of the Atlanta Region" (Saporta, 2001b). Indeed, it can be argued that a key figure in the metro growth machine is, in fact, Governor Barnes.

The shape of the Atlanta region was actively produced by a downtown-centered growth machine until the 1960's, when racism and economic restructuring weakened downtown (a good history can be found in Stone, 1989; Pomerantz, 1996; Bayor, 1996). Even though the original vision for downtown Atlanta as the vital center of the South had yet to materialize, it was a vision still held by many Atlanta leaders, exhibited by the participation in Vision 2020, among other things. Hartshorn and Fiji (1996), in analyzing growth patterns in metropolitan Atlanta, argued that instead of viewing Atlanta's

subcenters in isolation as stand-alone downtowns that compete with each other, they should be understood as part of an integrated multinucleated urban economic system that includes the downtown and new edge cities. This hints at a regional restructuring of Atlanta's corporate elite away from a downtown-centered to a more region-wide focus. It also hints at a geographic expansion of the definition of the "vital center" to include the entire "favored quarter" – a term referring to the region to Atlanta's north which incorporates a high degree of executive housing, a demographics of mostly white, affluent families, and a favored location for corporate headquarters, branch offices, and upscale malls (Leinberger, 1997). In terms of mobility, these areas were popular for upscale executive housing because they reduced commute times by automobile for those that could afford to live there.

As downtown, midtown, and even Buckhead became more congested and commute times increased, executives moved offices closer to their homes located to the north of downtown. Initially, the favored quarter was in a trajectory in a 90-degree arc from downtown and midtown, north through Buckhead and into Eastern Cobb County-Sandy Springs-Dunwoody-Western Gwinnett County and along the Chattahoochee River (see Figure 4-1). Today, the favored quarter extends further north following GA 400 and the Chattahoochee River into Forsyth and Cherokee Counties (Leinberger, 1997). It includes Roswell and Alpharetta, and affluent subdivisions along the Chattahoochee River and along the shores of Lake Lanier. In the favored quarter houses start at \$350,000 and higher, and Lexus and Land Rover dealerships sell \$75,000 cars and SUV's briskly (Soto, 1997; Leinberger, 1997).

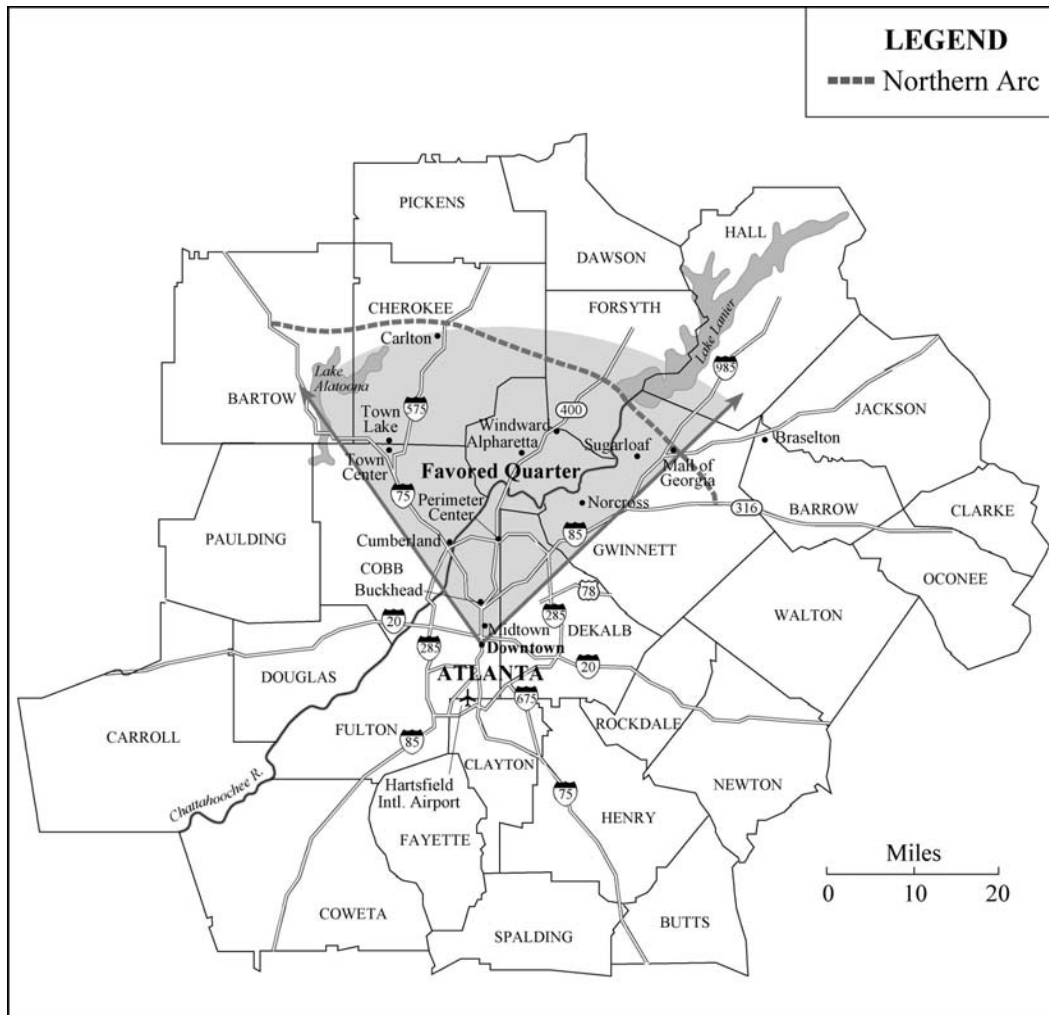


Figure 4.1: Atlanta's "Favored Quarter"
 Source: Leinberger (1997)

The MACOC and its corporate members exhibit a coverage strategy of the favored quarter. The companies that constitute the MACOC have headquarters or major offices in Downtown or Midtown Atlanta, but all of them also have important offices throughout the region. The Southern Company located its energy trading division in Sandy Springs, while Coca-Cola has corporate offices in both Perimeter Center and Cumberland, as do BellSouth and most banks. GoldKist has located its corporate headquarters in Perimeter Center, and Hewlett Packard has a major division headquarters nearby. Other major corporations such as UPS, MCI World Com, Home Depot, Delta, and GE Power Systems have headquarters and divisional offices in suburban areas. All of the powerful banks, such as Wachovia, Sun Trust, and Bank of America, have financial interests and offices throughout the region's northern section.

Located within the same building as the MACOC in downtown Atlanta is the Regional Business Coalition (RBC). The RBC was born out of 15 years of efforts to get suburban chambers of commerce to think regionally. It focuses on transportation, land-use, and water issues. First proposed in 1984, the idea of regional cooperation among chambers was finally taken seriously when the transportation/sprawl crisis loomed in the 1990's. The RBC was incubated by the MACOC and, in effect, the downtown-centered corporate elite. Started with seed-money from MACOC, in 1999 over half of its \$250,000 budget was supplied by the MACOC, although MACOC was only one of the 11 member chambers of the RBC (Saporta, 1999b).

The decision-making board of the RBC has been headed by developers, including Gwinnett County-based Ray Weeks of Duke-Weeks Realty, hence its sobriquet "the developers' chamber." Like the MACOC, the RBC board drew from local corporate

interests such as BellSouth and Georgia Power (a subsidiary of the Southern Company). According to its mission statement, the RBC is designed to move beyond the missions of individual, parochial chambers to address regional issues like air quality. Together, the MACOC and the RBC make up a small, wealthy, and formidable force in shaping transportation policy and implementing a capitalist vision of mobility in Atlanta.

4.4 Motivation of Metro Growth Machine

One of the unifying points of the metro growth machine has been the vision of mobility as capacity for access. Put another way, mobility is seen as an issue of the carrying capacity of the transport network to accommodate continued capital accumulation while simultaneously sustaining the region's carrying capacity to absorb the demands of intensive mobility, including air and water pollution. Atlanta's corporate elites have been made increasingly aware of the limits of the metropolitan region's economic and ecological carrying capacity by the transportation/sprawl crisis, and they have become more concerned about the organization and utilization of natural resources such as water and air, and of congestion of the highway network. Smog is seen as exceeding the carrying capacity for the region's atmosphere to absorb excessive automobility, while excessive reliance on automobility is considered unsustainable economically because of congestion.

In dealing with Atlanta's congestion and smog problems, then, the objective of the metro growth machine has been to allot across space the region's carrying capacity, sorting out who would absorb what part of it. Within the metro growth machine, there have been three broad interests that have negotiated the region's transportation and

ecological carrying capacity. These are corporate elites motivated by concern for the image of the region and its competitiveness in the national economy, developers concerned with access to their properties, and the major utility in the region, Georgia Power, which has been concerned over the region's carrying capacity to absorb air pollution from its plants. Although all have the ultimate shared vision of "mobility as capacity for access," there are nuances that should be highlighted to understand the motivations for political involvement and how that determines how they interact in the debate.

4.4.1 Corporate Elite

Almost all of the interviewees who expressed anti-sprawl sentiments said that the MACOC was a key ally in their efforts. In referring to the MACOC, many pointed out that the underlying allies in the debate were corporations whose business was not fundamentally land development, and this is how they viewed the MACOC. Such blue chip corporations like IBM, Bell South, and Georgia Power were often named. These were firms whose main concerns in the region were low cost of living coupled with a relatively high quality of life. They had sunk costs in headquarters or divisional headquarters servicing the rapidly growing Southeastern US, but did not directly profit from developing land, especially peripheral, highway-oriented land. There were also some developers, such as Post Properties, which announced that they would only develop urban infill within a new urbanist framework. These interests were mainly concerned with attracting the best talent from a national and international labor pool in the high-tech sector and producer services, reflecting the emergence of Atlanta as a major node in the

postindustrial economy (many of these workers reflected the "new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision" I outline in the next chapter). Many interviewees felt that the MACOC had a longer-term vision than firms that made their direct profits from the development of land.

In terms of the carrying capacity of mobility, the MACOC viewed reducing excessive automobility as key to expanding the region's carrying capacity, thus the MACOC emerged as one of the strongest proponents of new urbanism and smart growth for the Atlanta region.¹⁶ Hence, one key representative of business interests said that reducing automobility through reconfiguring urban space would allow for continued growth without compromising the environment by adding another one million people into existing areas of the metropolitan area such as by developing existing surface parking lots and redeveloping commercial and industrial sites throughout the region. Atlanta was an attractive place to live because of its warm climate, relatively low cost of living, and proximity to all parts of the US by air. "Quality of life" was a marketing tool for attracting more growth, but the competitive advantage of Atlanta was threatened by a perceived and real package of problems stemming from sprawl, as well as bad press.

By 1998 Atlanta had secured for itself the image of national "poster child of sprawl," prompting the *Wall Street Journal* to ask "Is Traffic-Clogged Atlanta the New Los Angeles?" (Jaffe, 1998). Atlanta's sprawl problem was bounced around the nation by the national media. In September 1998, ABC Nightly News pegged Atlanta as poster

¹⁶ "Smart growth" is a term that has contested meaning just as does the term "sprawl." In this dissertation I use smart growth to describe a higher density, compact, less automobile- dependent pattern of growth. The key meaning of "smart growth" is that economic and population growth are possible in ways that differ from the traditional low density, automobile-oriented model.

child of sprawl, and in March 1999 *Time Magazine* ran a feature story on sprawl, with Atlanta on the cover (Lacayo, 1999). The negative coverage highlighted uneducated county commissioners and good old boy networks, tainting the image Atlanta had nurtured for the Olympics of a sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and enlightened world city. The *Economist* (1999) blasted Southern white racism as an underlying problem related to sprawl. A *New York Times* correspondent wrote that Atlanta's "car culture" was combined with a sort of selfishness and racist Southern culture (Firestone, 1999). CNN followed with a disparaging television interview with a Cherokee County family that preferred a long commute instead of living closer to the city, so they could avoid "drive-by shootings." The family said that they moved to Cherokee County because they felt transit would never come to the county, and to them that was "a good thing."

Across the sunbelt, rivals of Atlanta made issue of Atlanta's sprawl. In Jacksonville, Florida, the mayor ran a television ad in which he said: "There's a word for a city that doesn't plan for its future: Atlanta" (Chapman, 2000). The ad was meant to get voters to support a referendum to raise taxes for infrastructure and used Atlanta as symbol of sprawl and congestion. The ad concluded "We can't let Atlanta happen here."¹⁷ In Nashville, Tennessee, candidates in the city's mayor's race accused each other of wanting to turn Nashville into another Atlanta, and in Charlotte, North Carolina, the *Charlotte Observer* asked "is Charlotte becoming Atlanta north?" (Pinkston, 1999; Hudson, 2001)

The bad press multiplied, with real estate think tanks and trade journals adding to the criticism. The Milken Institute, surveying the growth in high-tech jobs around the

¹⁷ Ironically, and somewhat hypocritically, the mayor was driving an SUV in the ad while talking to the camera about traffic, smog, and sprawl.

nation, pointed to traffic and water pollution as major barriers to Atlanta's ability to attract future investment from firms looking for quality-of-life benefits (Geewax, 1999). A report by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), the think tank for the national development industry, concluded that Atlanta devoted too much of its transportation investments for the gain of private development interests instead of the region as a whole (Dunphy, 1997). ERE Yarmouth, formerly Equitable Real Estate, ranked Atlanta 15th in the nation for investment prospects in 1998 (Goldberg, 1998k). In 1996 it had been ranked number one. The report said Atlanta epitomized the problems of sprawl – suburban traffic congestion, poor regional planning, a weak urban core, and overbuilding in real estate markets. PricewaterhouseCoopers concluded that Atlanta was losing its attraction to real estate investors because of sprawl (Wilbert, 2000). Two years later the same real estate advisors said auto-centric developments would suffer in the future and that building more roads and widening others would not make life easier in the suburbs (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2001).

Atlanta lost a Harley-Davidson manufacturing plant to Kansas City, and the company cited air quality as a reason for the decision. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that housing prices in suburban Cobb County were stagnant with worsening traffic, and luxury apartment developer Post Properties said that some suburban developments it owned had not appreciated in five years (Jaffe, 1998). Hewlett Packard chose not to expand in the area because of congestion (Jaffe, 1998). The threat of regional devaluation alarmed Atlanta's business elite. Embarrassed, the president of the MACOC said that congestion had not yet cost Atlanta new growth but that it would soon if the region did not confront it realistically (Simmons, 2001). With the fear of a regional

diseconomy looming, MACOC would be joined by powerful development interests concerned about metropolitan-wide devaluation.

4.4.2 Developers: "Coverage Strategy"

The conventional wisdom that developers play a dominant role in shaping transportation policy in metropolitan Atlanta is not off the mark. For Atlanta's developers, mobility as the capacity to access land was literally their bottom line. As the transportation/sprawl crisis evolved into the withholding of federal highway funds, a faction of the growth machine was particularly concerned. This faction, expressed through the regional business coalition (RBC), was mainly those with interests in real estate investment trusts (REITs).

A REIT is a publicly traded stock company that owns real estate such as apartments, shopping centers, offices, hotels, and warehouses.¹⁸ In the 1980's the laws were changed to enable REITs also to develop and operate properties, and as the savings and loan industry collapsed, a large amount of capital was directed towards REITs. By the 1990's, these became very strong industries in which to invest. Many privately held development firms transformed into REITs in the late 1980's and 1990's (NAREIT,

¹⁸ Investing in a REIT is a combination of investment in real estate and stocks, and shareholders profit from the production of income from real estate ownership. REITs were created in 1960 by the US Congress as a tax shelter, and today there are about 300 REITs nationwide, with about \$300 billion in assets (NAREIT, 2002). A REIT must distribute 90% of its taxable income to shareholders. Most REITs are exempt from state income taxes as well. A REIT deducts dividends that it pays to shareholders from its corporate taxes. According to the National Association of REITs (2002), most REITs remit 100% of their taxable income to shareholders and therefore do not pay any corporate taxes. Instead, taxes are paid by individual shareholders through personal income taxes and capital gains taxes. The interest in investing in REIT's was originally slow because REITs could not operate property once it was developed.

2002). All of the major real estate players in Atlanta are REITs (Salter, 1998). The advantage of a REIT compared to other real estate is that REITs have a portfolio of diverse real estate investments rather than investments sunk into a single property. The diverse portfolios can be a coverage strategy whereby REITs invest throughout the region, so that if one subregional center declines the overall health of the REIT is not likely to suffer. Most REITs expand this coverage strategy by investing in multiple cities, even cities that effectively compete with each other nationally such as Dallas, New York, or San Francisco.

In 1998 Atlanta became the US metro area with the most property owned by REITs. In 1998 \$14.6 billion was held in REIT portfolios around Atlanta (Salter, 1998). Among the largest REITs in Atlanta was Post Properties, which had \$1.3 billion sunk into the region. Simon Property was second in 1998, with about \$1 billion in metro Atlanta. Other major players included the Chicago-based Equity Office Properties, holding just under \$1 billion, and Duke-Weeks Realty, whose CEO headed the RBC (Salter, 1998).

Like other corporations, REITs have a board of directors and trustees. In Atlanta, REITs, as developers, are active in the debates over transportation policy. REITs are at once the engine of both dispersal of profitable land development in Atlanta, as well as the centralized integration of the Atlanta region into an interdependency of subregional centers (Salter, 1998). They have actively engaged in transport policy decision making to produce a new space that extends the downtown function as "vital center" into a regionally favored quarter following the mobility demands of the corporate elite. The major REITs that have landed interests in Downtown and Midtown Atlanta also have sunk costs throughout the favored quarter, especially in the edge cities of Cumberland

and Perimeter Center. Two-thirds of Atlanta's 132 million square feet of office space is outside of the city. Both Hines and Trammel Crow, two of the largest REITs, have executives that serve on the advisory boards for community improvement districts in Cumberland and Perimeter Center, and both REITs have extensive investments in Downtown, Midtown, Alpharetta, and in the Cumberland area of Cobb County. Simon Property Group, Inc, the largest REIT in America, owns Gwinnett Place, Lenox Square, Phipps Plaza, Town Center at Cobb, and Northlake Mall. Simon also owns 50% of the Mall of Georgia. For its part, Cousins has interests in Paulding, Cobb, North Fulton, South Fulton, Gwinnett, and Cherokee Counties, and in downtown Atlanta.

Atlanta has the second most "suburban-oriented" market in the country (Lang and Galster, 2000). When deciding on the feasibility of any development project, highways and arterial streets have usually been important considerations. Existing and, more importantly, planned future roads are typically considered in the earliest phase of development. Atlanta's first mall, Lenox Plaza, was developed in Buckhead because the highway master plan for Atlanta showed a future Georgia 400 passing nearby. Developers consciously located development northwards as the I-285 beltway was under construction (Hartshorn and Mueller, 1986). They assembled speculative properties adjacent to where the new Perimeter would cross northern radial freeways and arterials. Corporate interests that were not attached to specific properties, such as the Southern Company, Georgia Pacific, and BellSouth, dispersed their offices throughout the metropolitan area, locating in these key highway corridors.

As Atlanta's congestion gained national attention, REITs undoubtedly grew concerned. For a REIT, congestion was not simply the increased cost of the circulation

of capital but a direct devaluation of land that it had developed. For that reason, many of the executives of REITs, among them Post Properties, Duke-Weeks, Cousins, Hines, and Trammel Crow, actively inserted themselves into Atlanta's sprawl debate. The main concern of REITs was that the entire region was going to be devalued, especially the favored quarter (Saporta, 1999a, 1998c; Jaffe, 1998). The withholding of highway funds was critical. As I show below, many REITs expected major road improvements during the late 1990's. In Cumberland, the REITs exerted political influence to grandfather a major interchange, exempting it from building restrictions imposed by the federal government.

The REITs and corporate interests in the Cumberland edge city actively lobbied for the massive Kennedy Interchange on I-75, using corporate political clout to negotiate the project past the air quality restrictions on road building in 1997 (Goldberg, 1998d). The new interchange and access roads opened greenfield sites held by REITs and allowed further accommodations of automobility in an increasingly saturated area. The Perimeter Center Community Improvement District (CID) remains supportive of Collector Distributor Lanes (a stealth capacity expansion of freeways) for GA 400 and seeks an interchange reconstruction that would improve throughput of automobiles accessing the area from I-285.¹⁹ [A CID is basically a shadow government, and in metro Atlanta each CID has explicitly acknowledged congestion and possible future devaluation as the reason they exist (Wilber, 1999c, 2001).] In the Perimeter Center area, the REITs and corporate allies tried to grandfather major circulator distributor roads along Georgia 400

¹⁹ Circulator Distributor Lanes (CD lanes) are lanes constructed parallel to both sides of a freeway to handle on-and-off access to the freeway. They buffer the inner lanes of the freeway from excessive merging traffic common in the outer lanes. Access to the CD lanes would be limited.

but were unsuccessful. For REITs, the federal withholding of funds was a major obstacle to further accumulation and had to be overcome.

With highway funds temporarily withheld and the future expansion of roads like I-285 questionable, the major developers and their corporate tenants explored other visions. Two important localized business groups, Central Atlanta Progress (CAP) and Midtown Alliance, were extensions of the landed capitalist interests within their locality. These organizations envisioned a continuous Manhattan-like corridor of dense high-rise development between them and extending north to Lindbergh City Center, which is often identified as the lower part of Buckhead. [Ironically, conservative newspaper commentators associate the "Manhattan-ization" of intown Atlanta with liberal, "socialist," intown "elitists" and bohemians in Little Five Points. But, in fact, the main proponents of this vision are some of Atlanta's most powerful capitalists (see for example Wooten, 1999a; Shipp, 1999c.)] All of the major subcenters of the favored quarter from downtown to Perimeter Center are on the North MARTA line except for Cumberland. Since they are on the MARTA rail network, they have direct rail access to Atlanta's airport. This has effectively become a spine of higher density growth with the exception of a stretch of land in tony Buckhead. Each of these subcenters has plans for incorporating transit-oriented development (TOD) and new urbanist designs into its fabric (see Goldberg, 1998d; Cumberland, 2001). While place-based defenses, these were also visions concerned with reconfiguring the spaces within place, as well as reconfiguring the spaces of much of the favored quarter.

Each of these sub-centers had a strong commitment from the same firms that were part of MACOC, and each has a CID on which the corporate leadership assembled and

leads. Although downtown had Central Atlanta Progress (CAP) since the 1940's, the other CID's formed in the 1990's under duress. The mission of CID's is sustaining property values by improving traffic and retrofitting the areas for walkability, raising funds for so doing by self-taxing the corporate entities in each district. Each CID lobbies for road improvements, transit access, and funds for making their developments more walkable and bike-friendly. For example, after the failure of the sales tax to fund the \$15 million study of light rail, the Cobb Cumberland and Town Center CID's agreed to fund a study and to extend it to include a MARTA link at Arts Center (Williams, 1999).

4.4.3 The Southern Company & Georgia Power

Complicating the efforts of the REITs and corporate allies was another cog in the growth machine, the regional electrical utility. Consistent with the theory of the growth machine, the interest in Georgia Power was pro-growth because more people and more wealth in the region meant more electricity consumed, and this electricity was produced by a legal monopoly. Yet Georgia Power, and its parent the Southern Company, had another motivation for directly shaping Atlanta's transportation policy, namely that 75% of Georgia Power's electrical generation was coal fired, while the rest was gas fired and, to a very limited extent, hydroelectric. This was significant because the EPA was concerned about the carrying capacity of the Southeastern air mass's ability to absorb air pollution emitted from power plants. Northern states blamed part of their air pollution problems on coal burning in the South and Midwest (Nesmith, 1998). Many leaders in Atlanta not directly tied to the utility, and especially defenders of unfettered automobility, pointed to the Southern Company as the real culprit for smog. This smog drifted from

large coal-burning plants north and south of Atlanta. Other cities, such as Charlotte and Knoxville, also blamed pollution drift for their smog problems (Manuel, 1999).

The Southern Company is one of the largest coal burners in the US, as well as one of the world's largest energy companies. It was quite hostile towards the proposed Kyoto treaty and used its political clout to convince the Georgia State assembly to pass a resolution stating that no Georgia company should be required to abide by the treaty (Herman, 2001; *Atlanta Constitution*, 1999e; Georgia House of Representatives, 1999).

The company was extremely hostile to the EPA under the Clinton Administration because of rules established under that administration governing the transport of air pollution between states. This rule targeted utilities like the Southern Company and, if imposed, would have cost the company over \$1 billion to meet compliance. Specifically, the EPA was planning to sue the Southern Company over pollution emitted from Plant Scherer, in Monroe County south of Atlanta, and Plant Bowen, north of Atlanta in Bartow County. These two massive coal plants had been criticized by environmentalists because of a loophole in the 1970 Clean Air Act that grandfathered older plants from stricter regulations until they were replaced by more modern plants. However, like most large utilities in the US, the Southern Company did not shut down the older coal plants and replace them with newer plants (Seabrook, 1999d). Instead, the company repeatedly expanded the capacity at the plants and wrote it off as routine maintenance. During the 1980s and early 1990s, when the Reagan-Bush administration controlled the EPA, Southern was not pressured to close dirty plants nor upgrade and clean existing plants (Seabrook, 1999d). However, in the second term of the Clinton Administration, in 1996, EPA began to act. EPA contended that utilities like Southern deliberately avoided

installing the best available pollution control technologies when upgrading plants and that the Southern Company knowingly expanded and upgraded its older plants without utilizing cleaner technology (Seabrook, 1999d).

Concomitant with the EPA's 1996 actions concerning the Southern Company directly, the State of Georgia required the utility to convert two powerplants from coal to gas power for summer months during Atlanta's smog season, a requirement that cost the company \$23 million in construction, together with a further \$15 million annually to operate (Seabrook, 1998). In light of such environmental concerns and pressures, the CEOs of both the Southern Company and its subsidiary Georgia Power inserted themselves into the nexus of the transportation-sprawl crisis. They held numerous positions on local boards and worked "behind-the-scenes" on GRTA and Atlanta's water policy (Saporta, 1999a). The CEO of Georgia Power served as the chair of CAP (Central Atlanta Progress) in 1999 and of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce in 2000 (Saporta, 1999c). The role of these CEOs in framing the debate and largely determining what options would be pursued was made clear shortly after Atlanta's transportation/sprawl crisis garnered national attention. Specifically, they wanted to make sure that pollution from Atlanta's transport sector did not affect the allotted budget for powerplant pollution, which, as outlined in Chapter 3, would have forced the company to reduce its output if automobile pollution was not aggressively addressed. As I will show in subsequent sections, the position of the utility was at once hostile to many environmental and social justice advocates who sought to limit the pollution from its plants, while at the same time allied with some of these same interests in efforts to curb the growth in automobile dependency.

4.5 MATI and the Creation of GRTA

Atlanta's metro growth machine actively engaged in the political process in order to mitigate the contradictions between hard and soft mobility and to negotiate the political impasse centered on reducing automobility that I outlined in Chapter 3. In doing so, the metro growth machine facilitated the creation of an institutional structure that has the potential to alter dramatically how the region grows, if so desired. The transportation/sprawl crisis also signaled the reconstitution of Atlanta's downtown-based growth machine into a "metro growth machine." For the metro growth machine, the first iteration of confronting the contradictions arising from unfettered automobility was to create a think tank, the Metropolitan Atlanta Transportation Initiative (MATI), in June 1998 to formulate a business-led solution to these contradictions. Facing possible regional devaluation and increases in the circulation times of capital because of congestion, together with a worsening national image, the leadership of the MACOC, including the CEO of the Southern Company and key CEOs of REITs, convened a special think tank to create policies to deal with the problems of sprawl. The MATI was composed of 32 representatives from business, government, and colleges. Developers, bankers, and corporate CEO's made up the bulk of the panel. The MATI represented the first time the regional business elite intervened to confront transportation problems from a regional perspective. It also signaled the intervention of the growth machine into other arenas, such as changing the Georgia flag and confronting a future water crisis (Saporta, 2001a).

The MATI chairman was Pete Correll, the CEO of Georgia Pacific corporation, a major paper and timber conglomerate headquartered in downtown Atlanta. Correll was

on the board of directors of the Southern Company, had served as chair of the MACOC that year, and was a strong political supporter of Roy Barnes when he ran for governor (Saporta, 2001a). In initiating MATI, Correll proudly invoked the past role of Atlanta's business community during the Civil Rights era and in luring the 1996 Olympics as monumental achievements comparable to the transportation/sprawl crisis (Goldberg, 1998l; Saporta, 1998c). Business created the broad consensus to solve problems, and a problem went unsolved if the business elite did not address it. The formation of MATI revealed that the metro growth machine was convinced that existing institutional structures, especially the ARC, were parochial and gridlocked and unable to solve the region's air and transport problems. Big business would force change.

In the spirit of appearing regionalist, MATI invited two powerful suburban county commissioners, Wayne Hill of Gwinnett and Bill Byrne of Cobb, to serve on the MATI panel, even though they openly opposed the concept of a regional government body for transportation.²⁰ The heads of GDOT and EPD, presidents of several local colleges and universities, and one member from the Georgia Conservancy also served. The Georgia Conservancy was considered moderate on the environment and was an organization endowed with corporate sponsors and corporate board members and was therefore considered more legitimate in the eyes of the business elite than were more critical environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club. The unspoken goals of MATI were to influence the 1998 Georgia governor's race and to provide a business-oriented policy platform that the Georgia State assembly could adapt in the 1999 legislative session (Ehrenhalt, 1999; Interview # 44). Although it was not known at the time, MATI was

²⁰ Ironically, Hill and Byrne were invited to serve on the MATI panel to foster a sense of "regionalism" yet the two county commissioners exhibited anti-regionalist ideologies.

where the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA, pronounced "Greta") was born (Interview # 30). For many of Atlanta's powerful leaders, the MATI sessions were eye-opening. Many leaders were not aware of the depth of the problem of sprawl and were surprised to learn of their own roles in perpetuating the problem. Many spoke aggressively for radical change. One panel member said that "incremental change was not going to get us where we need to go" (Goldberg, 1998e).

Many business leaders concluded that emphasis on local control was a major barrier for change and that a stronger state role and forced regional cooperation were needed. MATI members also learned that strong, entrenched suburban development interests did not take the problems facing the region seriously. Thus, Wayne Hill, chairman of Gwinnett County, and Bill Byrne, chairman of Cobb County, both announced that, in their minds, the goal of MATI was ultimately to free-up the federal highway money that was being withheld, so that more roads could be built. For both, the Clean Air Act was an obstacle in the way of their county's growth while MATI, in their minds, was supposed to figure out a way to appease the EPA so that road building could continue. The two county commissioners openly rejected the possibility of a regional transportation agency for Atlanta, although they were out numbered at MATI meetings, with CEOs demanding more regional cooperation and adopting, in some cases, strong anti-sprawl rhetoric (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1998b; Goldberg, 1998f).

In November 1998, MATI made final recommendations (Goldberg, 1998m). These focused on institutional and planning breakdowns instead of a list of recommended transportation projects. One of the recommendations was to start "aspiration-based" planning modeled in part, on Portland, Oregon's planning process. The concept of

aspiration-based planning was to think "outside of the box" and envision future goals and then plan to achieve those goals. The irony that this was exactly what the ARC attempted in Vision 2020 was not mentioned. The MATI panel was cautious about explicitly endorsing particular projects, especially since there was division over some major projects such as where MARTA heavy rail should be extended and whether to build the Northern Arc (Goldberg, 1998m). MATI also shied away from addressing the low gas tax in Georgia or urging that it be opened to funding transit and "soft" forms of mobility (Goldberg, 1998g).

MATI ran ads to influence public opinion and the Georgia legislature. The debate over GRTA was expected to be an intense struggle in the General Assembly and a spectacle, but it turned out that very little debate was public (Ehrenhalt, 1999; Baxter, 1999). Instead, the creation of GRTA was a behind-the-scenes deal brokered by influential business elites. To thwart attacks from vested interests at GDOT, ARC, and local governments, newly elected Governor Barnes deployed a rhetoric describing GRTA as a "referee" and not an additional player that would usurp power from other agencies. Barnes stressed that if the existing agencies followed through on their duties, particularly regarding cleaner air, GRTA would actually do very little. Thwarting attacks from environmentalists, Barnes regularly promised that he did not want sprawl to spread out "another level" and that commuter rail was essential for Georgia's future (see GPTV, 1998). Barnes did not need to placate the business community, for GRTA was devised by them. In the end, the Sierra Club, Georgians for Transportation Alternatives (GTA), Metro Atlanta Chamber, ARC, and even AAA Auto Club South and GDOT remained silent or spoke in favor of forming GRTA (Goldberg, 1999e).

4.5.1 GRTA

The final product of MATI and of the behind-the-scenes influence of Atlanta's metro growth machine was a new regional transportation authority (GRTA) with jurisdiction over counties declared to be in non-attainment by EPA. Other counties across Georgia could be declared in non-attainment and would then come under GRTA jurisdiction, but the likelihood of that diminished in 2000 when George Bush became President and the EPA retreated from enforcing clean air rules (this is discussed in Chapter 8). Relative to the previous regime of regional planning and governance under the ARC, GRTA had more powers. All transportation plans devised by the ARC had to get two-thirds approval from the GRTA Board. If GRTA rejected a plan it could either modify it or enact a substitute plan. GRTA was mandated by the state General Assembly to evaluate developments of regional impact (DRIs) in the 13-county non-attainment area. Unlike the ARC, which had reviewed DRIs since 1984, GRTA was empowered to withhold state and federal transportation funds if the board disapproved of the development.

GRTA was also mandated to expedite a DRI if it was in an area with good transit service. The spirit of this power was that new development should not overburden local roads or contribute to worse air quality. However, only 5% of all new development in Atlanta met the DRI thresholds. That meant that 95% of all development was not going to be scrutinized by GRTA.²¹ Moreover, GRTA's decision to withhold state and federal

²¹ Thus far, DRI's have been defined as Office - 400,000 sq. ft.; Commercial - 300,000 sq. ft.; Residential - 400 units; Industrial - 500,000 sq. ft. or 400 acres, or 1,600 workers; Wholesale distribution - 500,000 sq. ft.; Hotel - 400 units; Mixed Use - 400,000 sq. ft. or 120 acres (for perspective, a new suburban shopping center in Gwinnett County with a Target, Publix grocer, and a collection of stores such as Bed Bath and Beyond and

funds could be reversed if a local county commission voted by a two-thirds majority to disregard GRTA conclusions. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the legislative struggle to create GRTA but, in sum, the powers of GRTA reflected a negotiation of automobile hegemony rather than an explicit challenge. Moreover, the excessive delay in defining and implementing what powers GRTA did indeed have reflected this negotiation of automobile hegemony.

Although GRTA had some relatively strong regulatory and enforcement powers, the power of GRTA was only as strong or as weak as its board, which was appointed directly by the Governor. [The GRTA Board was comprised of 15 members appointed for 4-year terms.] The Governor could replace a board member at any time. There was no provision for citizen involvement with the board, and no specifications as to the make-up of the board. An understanding of transportation or urban planning was not a prerequisite. It was entirely up to the Governor, and GRTA was jokingly called "Give Roy Total Authority" by some skeptical members of the General Assembly (Shipp, 1999d).

The make-up of GRTA was decidedly divided. Some argue that the Governor simply recreated the ideological and geographically-based stalemates that existed before GRTA (Interview # 42). One member of the GRTA board pointed out that in terms of mobility, roughly one-third of the board was pro-automobility, about one-third was anti-automobility, and about one-third was "clueless" (but mostly voted with the pro-automobility side). The original make-up of the board was three developers, two

Carmike Cinemas is 492,000 sq. ft (Cousins, 2002a)). A 50-story office building in downtown Atlanta is approximately 1.2 million sq. ft. and a suburban low-rise office building is 188,000 sq. ft. (Cousins, 2002b).

bankers, an attorney for developers, an oil company owner, and an owner of a construction equipment company, as well as three chamber of commerce representatives, two of whom were associated with development interests. There was only one environmentalist appointed, and he came from the business-oriented Georgia Conservancy. No homeowners groups or neighborhood associations were appointed to the board, nor were members of advocacy groups like Georgians for Transportation Alternatives (GTA). Environmentalists also complained that no public health advocates were appointed (Interview # 5, 16, 20). With pressure mounting against Barnes from environmentalists and community groups, a neighborhood activist was put on the board to replace a member who resigned to run for mayor of Atlanta. The structure of GRTA also included three advisory councils appointed by the Governor. The three councils were meant to broaden participation in advising GRTA policy and were seen as a political move by Governor Barnes to get more people involved, since the GRTA board was limited to fifteen members. The councils included a panel of local elected officials, an environment and land-use council, and a business council. These councils were generally seen as ineffective and inconsequential.

Although GRTA got national attention as a possible solution to sprawl, it quickly fizzled into another bogged-down political institution. This was reflected in the inability of the GRTA board to adopt standards for assessing DRI's and for taking very slow approaches towards devising performance measures for assessing transportation and development plans. Like the ARC and GDOT, the GRTA funded further expensive studies of ongoing problems, feeding what McCann (2001) has called the "consultocracy." GRTA resembled the ARC in that there was a relatively enlightened

and even activist professional staff but a gridlocked and conflicted decision-making board. One of GRTA's first major actions was to rubber-stamp the new, and contested, 2025 long-range regional transportation plan (RTP) drafted by the ARC. The approval of the RTP in 2000 was seen as a major defeat by environmentalists and other activists for the original expectations of GRTA in dealing with sprawl (interviews # 1-6, 11-16, 20). The 2025 RTP was controversial because of the data used to calculate air pollution and because it contained the Northern Arc, a road that anti-sprawl advocates from around the country saw as the litmus test for a lack of political will for change in Atlanta.

4.6 Negotiating Automobile Hegemony

The creation of GRTA and the wider metro growth machine vision reflects a negotiation of automobility rather than a direct challenge. This means that rather than confronting contradictions in the mobility imperatives of capitalism, the metro growth machine has likely only temporarily avoided harder choices that would require more aggressive intervention and utilization of the state. Effectively designed by metro Atlanta's growth machine, it took almost two years for GRTA to establish objectives and goals. This is not representative of an agency with direction and will but, rather, reflective of an agency whose mission is contested and whose willingness to aggressively confront automobile hegemony is questionable. When the goals and objectives of GRTA were finally outlined in Spring 2001 they were ambiguous. Goals to improve air quality, improve mobility and accessibility, improve coordination of land-use and transportation decisions, and to improve equitable transportation were not accompanied by a set of "performance measures" explaining how it would be apparent if any one of the goals is

being met. These performance measures would spell out exactly what GRTA expects from the ARC as it revises the long-range transportation plan and as it annually updates the short-range funding plans (TIP). Already ARC had made several revisions without GRTA having performance measures, and this meant GRTA "rubber-stamped" whatever came its way. For example, the GRTA board approved of the controversial 2025 RTP even as its own data eventually showed that the air quality modeling conducted by ARC was faulty, because GRTA had not, at the time, a performance measure specifying what air quality goals should be attained (Ledford, 2000b; Simmons, 2001c).

Many environmental and community activists saw performance measures as the real teeth of GRTA and were outraged at the slow pace of the GRTA board and the Governor, because the board was indecisive about performance measures (Simmons, 2001d and 2001e). Performance measures would theoretically define *how* space should be organized and configured, and not simply where in the metropolitan region transportation investment should go. The loose place-based coalition between the metro growth machine and the organizations and advocates who participated in Vision 2020 and who encouraged the creation of GRTA crumbled. Performance measures were finally adopted in the summer of 2001, but baselines were not established, further weakening the integrity of GRTA as an institution capable of decisively challenging automobile hegemony.²² This inability to agree on performance measures and, thus, on *how* the

²² The baselines included measuring the number of unhealthy smog days, the level of transit ridership, the miles of HOV lanes built, the miles of bike lanes built, and the percentage of population within one-quarter mile of rail or bus transit (there were 16 baseline measures in total). Yet GRTA did not specify how many smog days were considered a success or failure, or how many miles of HOV lanes built by a certain time was considered success or failure, or how many people living within a quarter-mile of transit was a success or failure.

region should be organized and configured, together with the apparent internal divisions on the GRTA board, was a reflection of the wider sprawl debate and contestation of the spaces of automobility. Quite simply, the GRTA board is divided, for its members reflect the wider competing mobility visions in Atlanta. It is up to the examination of these competing visions that I now turn.

CHAPTER 5

CHALLENGING AUTOMOBILE HEGEMONY

5.1 Purpose of Chapter

As discussed in Chapter 3, a coalition of environmental organizations, neighborhood groups, and civil rights groups supported Vision 2020 and were empowered to challenge automobile hegemony in Atlanta. The challenge was partly enabled through changes in federal policy, specifically changes in the federal Clean Air Act and ISTEA (now called TEA-21, for "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century").²³ These organizations also had the assistance of national mobility reform groups such as STPP, which viewed Atlanta as an important arena in the South for the challenge to automobile hegemony. In this chapter I will elaborate in more detail on who challenged automobile hegemony in Atlanta. While these groups are generally associated with intown-based advocacy and thus exhibit place-based motivations, I will show that these groups are broadly concerned with *how* space is configured and organized regardless of where in space. I have sorted the groups into three broad categories based on the different values and ideologies that I identified as motivating their respective involvement in Atlanta's transportation/ sprawl debate. These are an "accessible mobility vision," an "ethical mobility vision," and a "new urban bourgeoisie vision." While these

²³ Federal transportation policy is reauthorized every six years beginning with the ISTEA in 1991. TEA-21 was the reauthorization of ISTEA, and was supposed to have been implemented in 1997. However, there was considerable political debate surrounding reauthorization and therefore TEA-21 was not implemented until 1998. The next reauthorization is scheduled for 2003.

groups generally share in a conceptualization of mobility that challenges automobile hegemony, and advocate spatial configurations that would limit automobility, they have rather different underlying motivations that make discussing them as separate mobility visions appropriate.

5.2 The Accessible Mobility Vision

For the articulators of an accessible mobility vision, the traditional litany of "urban problems," such as racism, concentrated poverty, unemployment, pollution, crime, homelessness, and others, have a mobility dimension. Such articulators see improving mobility as crucial to accessing greater societal goals of alleviating poverty, ending racial injustice, and providing greater equity. Because automobility inherently puts constraints on other forms of mobility, many people do not have equal access to mobility itself, and thus have barriers placed in the way of their access to the city. Those who cannot afford or who can barely afford a car, those who are unable to drive for health or age reasons, and children are examples of the mobility disadvantaged in a system centered on automobility. The accessible mobility vision, then, considers access to jobs, urban services, and amenities as a social justice concern and a civil right, and it is a vision that includes undertones of class struggle and the conflict over social relations of the production and consumption process. Additionally, the articulators of the accessibility mobility vision are concerned that African-Americans, and increasingly Latinos, are absorbing a disproportionate share of the pollution stemming from excessive automobility.

Significantly, to articulators of the accessible mobility vision "improving" mobility does not mean "increasing" mobility, and this distinction must be understood. At a fundamental level the accessible mobility vision directs its attention to how urban space is organized for the worker rather than for the speedier circulation times of capital. The accessible mobility vision is centered on improving soft mobilities such as walking and biking and their supporting land-uses, and configuring these soft mobilities around a greatly improved bus and rail system. Proximity to jobs, services, and amenities is more important than long distance, high-speed automobile access or express bus rides. The accessible mobility vision is not about simply extending mass transit from inner cities to far-flung suburbs. Instead, the vision is about containing further sprawl and concentrating on urban infill and revitalization in order to create jobs in close proximity to where they are needed most. In the case of Atlanta, this means rail transit extensions should be constructed on the near south side where rail would be an important economic development tool for the large concentration of lower class African-Americans (many of whom have been excluded from the economic growth found on Atlanta's north side (see Brookings, 2000; Bullard, 2000)).²⁴ Additionally, the vision is about breaking down the exclusive zoning barriers that keep minorities and the working poor from being able to live near jobs. Such exclusionary zoning practices as minimum residential lot sizes or minimum square footage in houses, and the banning of apartments, results in affordable housing shortages in many areas where there are otherwise employment opportunities.

²⁴ I emphasize "near south side" to distinguish the inner-city south side neighborhoods in Atlanta, South DeKalb County, and Northern Clayton County from the "far south side" which is generally white and more affluent, such as Fayette County and Henry County. Accessible mobility advocates consistently point out that any extensions of MARTA heavy rail should go to the south side of Atlanta and not to the north, as had been the case for the last decade.

The most prominent spokesperson for an accessible mobility vision, Robert Bullard, has been critical of a city-form that requires owning a car (Bullard, et. al. 2000), suggesting that the "automobile culture" was government subsidized and that mass transit was consciously being allowed to decline. Provocatively, Bullard has called the funding of roads in counties without good transit service a form of "transportation apartheid" designed to keep out low-income blacks and other minorities (Bullard and Johnson, 1997). Prominent black leaders in Atlanta have begun to echo that sentiment, most importantly Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and Congressman John Lewis, who represent the 4th and 5th Congressional districts respectively, districts which made up the bulk of Atlanta's urban core. Indeed, Congressman Lewis has identified transportation as the region's greatest problem, suggesting that racism was part of the underlying reason that suburban roadbuilding got funded generously while transit was neglected (Bullard and Johnson, 1997). With that, there is an emerging understanding among advocates of an accessible mobility vision that the system of automobility is inequitable, and that the working poor are disproportionately exploited under a social structure of automobile hegemony.

5.2.1 Household Costs of Automobility

The fundamental issue in the accessible mobility vision is the class struggle dimension of automobility and its spaces. In 1998, 62% of America's working poor lived in a household with a car, but expended 36% of their income on that car (STPP, 2000). The cost of owning a car was second only to housing for most households. Middle and low-income households, if they bought the cheapest new car on the market, spent \$6,000

a year for a Ford Escort (Duany, 2000; STPP, 2000). Depending on the type of vehicle, between 80 and 90% of the user cost of driving was fixed in the form of insurance, debt payments, maintenance, repairs, and the car itself (Vuchic, 1999). The remaining user costs were direct, out-of-pocket costs, like gasoline, that the driver considered when choosing to make a trip by car. With the direct operating costs so low, due to relatively cheap gasoline, it was easy to see why car owners choose to use them so frequently. They had already "bought" into the system and to not use it incurred even more costs.

Yet the privilege of moving around cities by car has a relatively high, if poorly understood, cost to households. In Atlanta, the average household spent \$8,513 in 1999 on automobility and for many households this was actually more than they spent on housing (STPP, 2000). According to STPP (2000), using Labor Department data, this was equal to 21.7% of total household expenditures in Atlanta. More was spent on driving than on healthcare, food, or education. For lower-wage, working families in an automobile dependent landscape, up to one-third of household expenditures went to automobility (STPP, 2000). In the late 1990's, Atlanta was the second-most expensive city in the nation in terms of automobility as a household cost (only Houston, Texas was higher). Clearly, the cost of participating in everyday life, including accessing work and urban services, in places like Atlanta was extremely high.

The STPP report showed that within metropolitan areas, the highest household mobility costs were in areas on the sprawling periphery where there was no transportation choice, while the areas with lowest household transportation costs were in denser, more compact areas with good transit and walkability. Litman (1999a) showed that household costs went up with decreases in density – the lower the density, the more a household

spent on transportation. An average home on a 5-acre lot had 3.4 cars and spent \$12,900 per year to travel, while a household in an area with 4.5 houses on 5 acres lot spent \$6,000 on 1.6 cars (Litman, 1999a, p. 20). Additionally, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) was far less in denser areas, which meant lower operating costs and less time wasted in travelling.

Auto-dependent areas had more than twice as much household expenditure on transportation than in the compact urban form. This was true even in compact areas with high incomes, which showed that income was not the key factor in household expenditure on transport. However, for the poorest households, even the compact urban form still took up to 36% of expenditures if that household owned a car (STPP, 2000). STPP (2000) stressed that the implications of this were that many households were throwing money into a depreciating expenditure that could otherwise be used for an investment in housing or other investments that appreciate in value. In fact, outside of housing, automobiles were the single largest cause of household debt in the United States (STPP, 2000).

Aside from the direct costs of owning and operating cars, there are a number of stealth costs (i.e. externalities). Although many employers provide "free parking" the costs are simply placed somewhere else, in wages or in costs of doing business (Shoup, 1998). Grocery stores, for example, balance the costs of free parking in the prices of groceries. In suburban areas, an unstated assumption is that all parking will be provided at no direct cost to the motorist. Therefore the developer either passes the cost of parking on to the tenant or bears the cost. At any rate, the motorist who parks for free is subsidized, while those who walk, bike, and use transit are not (Willson, 1995). For a

home, the average residential parking space costs \$600 a year, and an average resident has 2 spaces (Litman, 1999b).²⁵ For low-income households, this takes up to 12% of annual income if there are spaces for 2 cars, and 6% if there is one car, in the form of a portion of rent. This is regardless of whether the resident owns a car or not –the cost of car storage is incorporated into the rent no matter what. Meanwhile, because motor fuel taxes do not pay the true costs of road building, state revenue raised from income and sales taxes funds the shortfall in road building. In 2001, the GDOT got \$700 million from motor fuel taxes. This equaled 40% of GDOT's overall budget (Simmons, 2001f). The motor fuel tax could only go to administrative costs and road construction and maintenance (not operations for transit, for example). Because GDOT could not meet the annual funding it sought for massive road building undertakings, it used bonds. This meant that every year part of the gas tax was used to pay off bonds. In 1999 that amounted to \$60 million to service debt. Much of the shortfall simply comes out of the state's general fund, which is financed by state sales taxes, income taxes, and other sources not directly charging motorists (Simmons, 2001f; Quinn, 2001). Moreover, all local governments must match state road money, and almost every local government in Georgia does this through regressive sales taxes. Hence regardless of how much one drives or not, the sales taxes, property taxes, and other county and municipal taxes go towards a system of automobility that is not funded by "user fees."²⁶

All of these direct and indirect costs of automobility have been noticeably absent from most discussions of transportation policy and yet have a profound impact on

²⁵ Using data on developing affordable housing, Litman (1999b) estimated that the rental cost of one off-street parking space averaged \$50 per month.

²⁶ This is a very important point because in the ideologically driven defense of automobility, devotees argue that roads are paid for by user fees in the form of gas taxes.

people's everyday life. In attempting to construct a more inclusive coalition, articulators of the accessible mobility vision include concern for the jobs-housing imbalance and minimizing long commutes for both the working poor and the middle-class. It has also expressed concerns about the burden of long automobile commutes on working mothers who are chauffeuring children. It is a vision that includes improving the mobility and access of two-worker households with children, who may be middle class or working class, and who are spending more and more time in their automobiles, with less time doing something else. It seeks to confront the very real household costs of owning and operating automobiles and living in low-density sprawl –costs that impact the middle class as well as the poor. The accessible mobility vision also includes a growing awareness of the limited accessibility to urban services and recreation experienced by the elderly and children in a car-centered built environment.

In Atlanta, one working-class neighborhood activist understood the social justice implications of excessive automobility:

To me, the most obvious problem is that the political/economic system that dictates how metro Atlanta develops has resulted in a city whose residents drive 30 percent more than the national average and more than any urban civilization on Earth. The economic consequences of this are significant, to say the least. Estimates of the costs of driving a car range from about 30 cents per mile (per the IRS) to 44 cents (for a new car, per AAA). Multiply this by the 130 million or so miles per day metro Atlantans now drive – that's \$15 to \$21 billion per year, \$5000 to \$7500 per person. Now imagine if we drove only 15 percent more than the national average. That would divert \$2-3 billion into the general economy, enriching not only citizens, but most businesses as well.

The net result of Atlanta's spatial configuration around full automobility is that both middle-class and working-class households have to pay a high entry-fee to participate in everyday life, while the poor, and those who cannot drive, face a high

degree of exclusion. Mobility, for many, was inaccessible. Further, in Atlanta there is a profound racial dimension to this conundrum.

5.2.2 Automobility and Racism

In discussing the relationship between capitalism, housing, and transportation, Sheppard (1990) argued that the structure of the contemporary US capitalist space-economy allowed the capitalist class to worry less about transporting workers to and from work. Just as manufacturing firms no longer needed to locate near resources, so office, retail, and manufacturing did not need to locate in the urban core. Because of advances in transportation technology that sped up the circulation of capital, and the intervention of the state in subsidizing transportation infrastructure, the private sector could locate its economic activities wherever entrepreneurs decided it was most profitable. In Atlanta, the decline of the downtown commercial core and older manufacturing centers has reflected this trend. Many retail, office, warehousing, and other service and manufacturing jobs have been relocated to suburbs and peripheral areas where there is ample room to store automobiles and trucks, and to build large auto- and truck-oriented facilities. Concomitant with this, however, is the reality that low-income blacks have frequently not been able to live near these workplaces because of a package of exclusionary zoning practices, income, and racial discrimination (Jackson, 1985; *Atlanta Constitution*, 2000; Keating, 2001). Out of this has emerged the mobility problem of "spatial mismatch," which has become a major focus of scholars and activists concerned with the African-American urban underclass (NACCD, 1968; Downs, 1968, Kain, 1968; Wilson, 1987; Hughes, 1995).

Essentially, theories of spatial mismatch hold that the economic prosperity gained by many whites during the last 30 years of economic restructuring was not extended to blacks because most growth occurred in automobile-oriented suburbs with restrictive zoning against the poor and, especially, blacks. Consequently, inner-city residents have been largely denied the opportunity to access suburban job markets at a time when urban job markets have been in decline. Thus, in the case of Atlanta, the city's northern suburbs grew from a combination of racism and functional decongestion. As blacks gained political empowerment in Atlanta, and pressed for fair housing and school access in Atlanta, whites, and jobs, fled north. The trajectory towards the north was also fuelled because politically and economically empowered blacks expanded in a trajectory to the south of downtown (because they could not move north), which merely encouraged whites to go in the opposite direction (Bayer, 1996). As whites spatially separated themselves from newly empowered blacks, they also fought attempts to expand mass transit into fast growing counties like Cobb and Gwinnett. This ensured that working-class blacks would not access lucrative warehousing, retail, back office, and service jobs. Meanwhile, each new development brought with it congestion, and thus a process of functional decongestion set in on the north side of Atlanta. As Downtown, Midtown, and even Buckhead became more congested and commute times increased, executives moved offices closer to their homes, which were often further north. Huge edge cities emerged, such as Perimeter Center and the Platinum Triangle. Both of these edge cities had well over 100,000 workers by the year 2000 and, yet, were far removed from the concentrations of low-income African-Americans on Atlanta's near south side (Leinberger, 1997; Brookings, 2000).

Unlike Downtown or Midtown, the value of real estate in these new edge cities was not impacted by the proximity to blacks or concentrated poverty. Instead, these privatized downtowns were surrounded by posh subdivisions with homes averaging over \$350,000 (Leinberger, 1997). Surrounding these office and retail cores was some of the most expensive housing in the Southeast. For the support staff and service workers in these cores, a jobs-housing mismatch resulted in lengthy, automobile-only commutes, while the executive class had only a short drive to and from work (Cervero, 1986). Over time, sparse transit access was extended to some suburban points as capitalists recognized the labor shortages produced from their own spatial decisions. While this improved the inner-city working poor's access to low-wage jobs in places like Cobb County, these commute trips remained very long. Many low-wage workers who used transit in metro Atlanta found that the bus-rail-bus trips from the south side to the affluent north side could take 3 hours a day. Increasingly, articulators of the accessible mobility vision recognize that a transit-only solution is insufficient for improving accessibility and addressing spatial mismatch.

The extension of rapid transit to far flung suburbs to the north was viewed (by Interviews who expressed an accessible mobility vision) as a stop-gap measure that ultimately reinforced sprawl and automobility and did little to address the long commute times and lack of social networks and job information experienced by the urban poor (Interviews # 3, 4, 11, 28). Indeed, some even recognized that the real beneficiary of extending bus transit into the outer suburban counties was suburban and exurban business interests, because they could tap the inner-city labor market without having to provide low-income housing in their sector of the metropolitan region. Moreover, in the capitalist

structure of the journey-to-work, the imperative is to have the employee pay as much of that travel cost as possible. Requiring the working class to buy into automobility and to make the long commutes effectively achieved this end.

For the urban poor, access to these edge cities was even more cumbersome. Long bus-train-bus trips were possible in the case of some of these auto-centric nodes, but for the most part Atlanta's northward sprawl was completely inaccessible without an automobile. In essence, in Atlanta the automobile soon became a precondition for citizenship from which many inner-city blacks were excluded. Hence, in 1990 39.2% of black households in Atlanta did not own a car (Keating, 2001), while by 2000, only 48 % of jobs and 28% of residences were within walking distance of a bus stop in metropolitan Atlanta (ARC, 2000). Moreover, only 34% of the region's jobs were within a 60-minute mass transit ride for persons with annual incomes less than \$20,000 (Bullard and Torres, 2000).

5.2.3 Environmental Justice and Accessible Mobility

By the 1990's the concern for social justice and mobility expanded to include environmental justice (EJ) issues. This was because air and water pollution from automobility was recognized as a major health problem in poor, black, inner-city neighborhoods. Bullard and Johnson (2000) have defined the EJ movement as an extension of the struggle for basic human rights, wherein African-Americans and other minority groups have increasingly come to demand, as a civil right, the opportunity to live in an unpolluted physical environment. Whereas the early EJ movement focused on the link between racism and the location of toxic waste facilities or polluting industries,

Bullard et. al.'s vision of EJ is more expansive, including the links between housing, transportation, air and water pollution, and basically all that has encompassed Atlanta's sprawl debate. They have linked, for example, this social justice aspect of mobility to the disproportionate rates of asthma and other forms of respiratory illness among minorities which have been caused, they claim, by excessive automobility.

The three main concerns of EJ in transportation planning have been to ensure low- income minority participation in the planning process, to prevent disproportionately adverse impacts on low-income minorities, and to assure that low-income minorities receive a proportionate share of benefits in transportation investments (FHWA, 2000). These three EJ principles were formerly institutionalized in 1994 with the signing of executive order 12898 by then-President Bill Clinton. Like the previously discussed CAA and ISTEA, the change in federal policy provided a degree of local empowerment that had been missing. Before the executive order, claims of injustice and inequity in transportation funding would fall on deaf ears at the GDOT and the ARC (Interview #4; Bullard and Johnson, 1997). The executive order, however, required that all projects (not just transportation) receiving federal funds include the principles of EJ. As a consequence of President Clinton's action, all federal agencies and any entity that received federal funding, including state DOTs and metropolitan planning organizations (acting as the local conduits for federal funds), were required to incorporate EJ into overall mission statements, thereby making EJ an explicit component of federal policy and, by default, local policy.

With legitimacy for EJ established by the Clinton Administration, the Environmental Justice Resource Center (EJRC), led by Robert Bullard, was established

in 1995 at the Clark-Atlanta University Center, an historically black college on Atlanta's west side. There, "environment" was redefined to mean where people live, work, play, worship, go to school, and the natural ecosystem, and how they got around (i.e. their mode of mobility). Underlying the sprawl debate, in Bullard's view, was continued racism and the EJRC forcefully inserted this perspective into the debate.

The EJRC administers the Atlanta Transportation Equity Project (ATEP). ATEP's purpose includes research, policy analysis, and acting as an information clearinghouse offering technical assistance to community-based organizations in Atlanta. It was funded by the Turner Foundation (\$500,000) and the Ford Foundation (\$300,000). As part of its program, the ATEP commissioned 10 policy papers to be authored by local experts. Examples of research projects under ATEP include the failure of welfare-to-work programs, the disproportionate impact of air pollution on the inner-city poor, issues of minority and lower income participation in the transportation planning process, and the costs of sprawl on low-income minority communities (ATEP, 2000). Among the academics involved in the research project were professors of planning from Georgia Tech and from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ATEP has also acted as a conduit for bringing information from other parts of the country to Atlanta.

The ultimate goal of the EJRC is, of course, to overcome racism by having those minorities who have been traditionally excluded involved in the decision-making process. With that, the EJRC coordinated the merging of the concern for access and mobility with EJ concerns about automobile pollution. It did this by organizing a plethora of grassroots civil rights groups scattered throughout Atlanta's southside. Under the ATEP's aegis, a grassroots coalition was organized into the Metropolitan Atlanta Transportation Equity

Coalition (MATEC) in the Fall of 1999. This organization was a partnership between EJRC and the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice (SOC).

"SOC" describes itself as an anti-racist, anti-war organization concerned with economic justice and environmental racism issues. Before involvement explicitly with the sprawl debate, SOC was involved in the EJ movement with a focus on combined sewer overflow (CSO). CSOs occur when stormwater runs off into the sewer system but then overflows after a heavy rain. In intown neighborhoods across Atlanta, aging infrastructure was contributing to more CSOs, especially in black areas (Bullard et al., 2000). Both untreated sewage and toxic runoff from roads and parking lots were washing through black neighborhoods. While involved in the toxic runoff issue, leaders of SOC learned that a major source of the CSO problem was highway runoff. Over time, SOC began to understand that highways like I-20 and the Downtown Connector were part of the problem. Yet no road money was going to mitigate the problems created by roads. SOC leaders demanded that road money be used to address toxic runoff, but were unsuccessful. GDOT considered it a city problem and not a state problem, even though all of the major freeways and many major roads were state-owned and maintained. In time, then, SOC grew critical of the entire transportation planning process.

MATEC, led by the EJRC and SOC, subsequently grew into a coalition of 25 organizations concerned with transport, land use, and equity. These include the Georgia Coalition for a People's Agenda, the Center for Democratic Renewal, Rainbow/Push Southern Regional Office, Save Atlanta's Fragile Environment, North Georgia African-American Environmental Justice Network, Rebel Forest Neighborhood Task Force, the Southwest Atlanta Community Roundtable, and the Concerned Black Clergy of Atlanta.

The coalition held community meetings and distributed information to membership organizations and received logistical support from national organizations such as Environmental Defense (ED), which placed EJ in Atlanta at the top of its national agenda.²⁷ MATEC's inspiration in this struggle came from Los Angeles, where a coalition of labor and minority groups had sued the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA) in 1996 over civil rights and EJ concerns. Represented by the Labor/Community Strategy Center, a bus riders' union and civil rights groups eventually settled the suit. The settlement concluded that the MTA was generously funding expansion of rail to suburbs while cutting bus service and raising fares. Hence, suburban whites were benefiting from new commuter rail service while the working poor paid higher fares for inferior service (LCSC, 2000). The settlement forced MTA to reprioritize its funding. As part of the settlement, MTA agreed to spend \$1.5 billion on cleaner buses, improvements to bus service, and lower fares. MTA also cut back on funding its vision for rail. The success of litigation in Los Angeles inspired MATEC and other members of the EJ movement in Atlanta to ally with environmentalists and attempt litigation as a means of influencing how space was produced. This alliance involved a core group of advocates from environmental, neighborhood, and transportation advocacy organizations who displayed what I call an "ethical mobility vision."

²⁷ ED is a national non-profit environmental organization incorporated in New York. ED has 300,000 members nationwide and claims "several thousand members" in Georgia. As outlined in chapter 2, in November 1997, ED complained to federal officials that Atlanta's local officials were trying to evade pollution rules in metro Atlanta.

5.3 The Ethical Mobility Vision

In *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, David Harvey (1996) wrote that moral responsibility meant that if one expected high environmental quality and social justice, they could not insist on living at a level of consumption that necessarily implied polluting the environment somewhere else (Harvey, 1996, p. 233). Reflecting this synthesis of environmental awareness, social justice, advocacy, and spatial praxis, one of the most vocal advocacy organizations in Atlanta, Georgians for Transportation Alternatives (GTA), promoted the slogan "How we get there matters." This slogan reflects how articulators of an ethical mobility vision conceptualize automobility as part of a wider moral-social problem of over-consumption and excessive materialism. Among those expressing an ethical mobility vision are transportation advocates, environmentalists with equal concern for both the ecosystem and the human condition, and some academics and professionals. They believe that there can be too much mobility, and excessive mobility results in both environmental degradation and major social inequality at the local, national, and global scale.

Before describing in detail the ethical mobility vision, it is appropriate to clarify what led me to use this term and what distinguishes this vision from the other two visions that are openly critical of automobile hegemony. The key indicator for categorizing someone as an articulator of an "ethical" rather than "accessible" or "new urban bourgeoisie" vision of mobility is that they describe themselves as being motivated to engage in the sprawl debate primarily by a deep moral or ethical concern for the environment and social justice. They considered both environmental and social issues to be inextricably bound. Interviews who fit the profile of ethical mobility advocates spoke

of an "environmental ethic" involving personal travel behavior changes to conserve energy and a desire to create a more compact urban form. This is not to imply that, for example, articulators of the accessible mobility vision do not have strong moral or ethical purpose. Rather, the articulators of an ethical mobility were self-defined as explicitly motivated by a distinctive environmental and social ethic that set them apart mainly because of their emphasis on issues of over-consumption and personal responsibility. To be sure, the articulators of an ethical mobility vision held all of the same views as the accessible mobility vision, but extended them into wider questions about material consumption and personal responsibility.

To date, an open and legitimate discussion of the concept of an ethical mobility has been limited to Europe, Canada, and Australia, with works by Whitelegg (1993, 1997), and Newman and Kenworthy (1999) as examples. I stress "legitimate" because, in the US, and especially in Atlanta, open discussions of personal responsibility and mobility are often cast as utopian and idealistic, and thus not practical in day-to-day politics. Many proponents of an ethical mobility vision are dismissed if they openly argue for an ethical standpoint in public meetings or other venues, a dismissal which flows out of the embedded ideology that automobility is here to stay and there is no realistic way to even reduce it slightly. The comments of Vice President Dick Cheney, chiding that there was no room for "personal virtue" in US energy policy, reflects a widely held view among Atlanta decision-makers that reducing automobility is not an option on the table in the near future (Deans, 2001). In the context of many European cities, in contrast, it is a legitimate component of political discourse (see for example, Cervero, 1998, North, 1998, and Beatly, 2000) and even in the United States there

appears to be a growing movement with a strong moral position arguing that society cannot ignore the relationship between personal behavior, the environment, and social justice (for example, see Brewer, et al.2002; Kay, 1997).

In asking stakeholders in Atlanta's sprawl debate about their underlying motivation to engage in the debate, a strand of ethical mobility was pervasive. Those who articulated an ethical mobility vision were often compelled to be community activists. Some were in the unlikely position as advisors to business interests, and felt that their role was to educate and influence Atlanta's business community. They believed that it was their own personal responsibility to modify their own behavior and to inform others of how personal transportation behavior impacts the bigger issues that they care about. It did not mean that moral judgement or a vindictive sermon was deployed, but it is important to understand that ethics was a profound motivating factor for a lot of vocal participants in the debate.

The concept of "ecological footprint" was key to the ethical mobility vision. This concept focused on the extended geographical coverage of automobility, not just its local impacts. The level of consumption to sustain a low-density, automobile-oriented lifestyle, critics say, had impacts far beyond simply the amount of developed land or lost farmland in Georgia's verdant Piedmont. An ecological footprint meant that the environmental carrying capacity of a city was geographically set in a much wider context than simply the local region and resources. The materials used to provide the infrastructure for automobility, the impact of automobility on river basins, the sources of fuel for automobiles and trucks, and the impact of air pollution on local and global climate cumulatively made up the real ecological footprint of automobility.

Articulators of the ethical mobility vision identified automobility as complicit in, or the cause of, problems ranging from lack of affordable housing, job accessibility barriers for the working poor, war in the Middle East, totalitarianism in places like Indonesia and Nigeria, water and air pollution, as a barrier to educational access, and as a destroyer of wilderness and natural habitat. Implied in the ethical mobility viewpoint was the belief that the world could not support its population if everyone lived like middle- and upper-class Americans. Fundamentally, said one interviewee,

it was immoral for Americans to assume that the rest of the world would not attempt the same level of mobility centered on driving, while Americans consumed vast quantities of the world's resources just so they could move around cities (Interview # 18).

Many Interviewees (and participants in the sprawl debate who were not interviewed) pointed out that mobility for the sake of mobility should not be considered a social goal. Instead, the Interviewees stressed proximity and access, but noted that these were bound with the concept of mobility. Said one advocate for mobility reform:

What we really want is accessibility and proximity, not mobility.....Mobility means we are moving people around, and is mainly measured by the car.... Proximity means you are where you need to be. So the grocery is nearby and we walk to it. It is proximate. You don't need a car for the same trip. In Georgia, accessibility is defined as going to a destination by car. You can get in front of the building. You had mobility. You get in front of the building, and you have proximity. But you cannot access the building. So you have to go park the car. It is all messed up (Interview # 18).

5.3.1 Who articulates the ethical mobility vision?

The stakeholders that express an ethical mobility vision described themselves as compelled to be community activists. Many of them attained leadership positions in advocacy organizations or community groups. These included leadership roles in explicit transportation advocacy organizations like the Atlanta Bicycle Campaign (ABC),

Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety (PEDS), and Georgians for Transportation Alternatives (GTA). It is important to differentiate between the organizations' leadership and the wider membership or organizational boards. In this research, many of the leaders of advocacy organizations reflected the ethical mobility vision, but this does not necessarily mean that all members of the organization shared the ethical position.

Among environmental organizations, the Challenge to Sprawl Campaign of the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club, Environmental Defense, and some members of other environmental organizations exhibited an ethical mobility vision. The organizational structures of all of the above was grassroots, and although all of them had a paid staff person, they relied heavily on volunteer work for almost all activities. Such organizations sometimes invited national and international figures to make presentations at educational forums. For example, PEDS hosted David Engwicht, an Australian anti-roads activist and supporter of traffic calming.²⁸

5.3.2 Automobility as Anti-social and Anti-city

In the ethical mobility vision, excessive automobility was conceptualized as inherently anti-social and anti-urban. For instance, Gorz (1973, p.1) has suggested that automobility represents the "absolute triumph of bourgeois ideology" over the masses and their daily lives. Those who drive have the illusion that they can seek their own benefit at the expense of everyone else –others in the street, including pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists, are merely obstacles in the way. This is similar to what Sorkin (1992, p. 218) has said about driving:

²⁸ Engwicht used an argument of ethical mobility to argue that the spaces of automobiles should be severely constrained by policies that force cars to move slower through cities and that people should reclaim their streets from automobiles.

It is at once an intensely private and very public activity: on the road, one is both isolated and fully visible.

The requirements of driving under conditions of hegemonic automobility are competitive aggressiveness and selfishness. This ideology is strong because urban spaces are almost completely configured to exclude the practical use of other forms of mobility. Thus while the public becomes increasingly frustrated with the personal costs of automobility, they do not envision another way of living. Instead of an ideological revolution against automobility and its "way of life," the masses engage in road rage and conscious isolation further from the public realm, retreat, and secession from real urban life.

The ethical mobility vision contends that people who make an excuse of fleeing the city because of too much noise, air pollution, dirt, and social alienation are blinded to the reality that excessive automobility is central to all of those problems. Automobility as an escape from the city is a vicious circle. People drive further out to escape what are mainly the results of problems linked to excessive automobility, and create more sprawl to escape sprawl. Hence, Engwicht (2001), speaking to an audience in Atlanta, has warned of an emerging culture of children with no memories of walking to school, and thus no memories for developing self-sufficiency and independence. In turn, this loss of a lived experience in the city has contributed to an anti-urban ethos, as the next generation of adults have never known real urban life. This has led to a sedentary and virtual lifestyle centered on television, video games, the internet, and cars, a lifestyle that is conceptualized as dangerously anti-social (Interviews # 13 and 20; Kay, 1997).

Building on the anti-social and anti-urban elements of automobility is a conceptualization of automobility as inherently undemocratic. Many interviewees who

articulated this complained of automobility as being a form of bribery for attaining citizenship. Many were especially critical of the tone of television advertisements for automobiles, which portray the car as an essential indicator of American-ness. One interviewee noted that if this were true, the automobile industry would not have to spend \$10 billion annually to brainwash the public into thinking automobility was second nature or essential for living life.

For many espousing the ethical mobility vision, automobility was seen as undemocratic because it occupies scarce space in cities, and forces pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and anyone without automobility to be marginalized. Moreover, the US actively finances and supports violence and totalitarian regimes abroad all for the sake of maintaining an oil supply for automobility. It appropriates the spaces of other mobilities at home as well as the spaces of justice and democracy abroad. Further, as theoretical democratization of automobility nears, the system breaks down with congestion. It becomes less useful for most, whereas the wealthy can purchase greater mobility – they can be driven by chauffeurs and thus relax during an automobile trip, they can install luxury items into their automobiles to make congestion more bearable, they can fly to destinations by helicopter, and, in some places, they can use new special toll lanes, called high occupant toll (HOT) lanes. These new lanes allow motorists who choose to pay higher prices to use the lanes, bypassing all of those who do not pay the higher fee and thus sit in traffic. Similarly, as full automobility approaches, parking becomes scarce, and thus the more desirable parking spaces become more valuable. A system emerges where the wealthy pay to park near the door, while the working class must park further away.

In this view, instead of democracy, what full automobility really represents is an intensive commodification of movement in the city. The working class and poor, having embraced automobility as "freedom," then sit in traffic and face higher and higher operating costs and entry fees for having mobility and the citizenship it is seen to represent. The logic of this conceptualization is that when everyone "democratically" uses a car, the functionality of the car breaks down. While on the surface it appears that everyone in a car-centered society suffers (and in thus a democratic way), in reality the rich can purchase higher mobility and the poor are hit with a disproportionately higher cost of living. Thus, what appears to be a democratic right to mobility is actually a commodity that must be purchased.

The ethical mobility vision, then, sees the automobile as a paradox. It appears superficially to provide limitless freedom of mobility to its user. The mass motorist believes that they will have the mobility of the elite. It makes the user feel superior because he or she is going faster than a pedestrian, cyclist, and can go door-to-door, unlike with most transit service. However, there is a radical dependency built into automobility that cannot be ignored (Gorz, 1973). The motorist depends on abundant cheap fuel, and this has to be supplied with an infrastructure. This also requires political power, brute force, and exploitation of someone else. The majority of motorists also depend on someone else to repair and maintain vehicles. Dealers and specialists are needed. The true relationship of a motorist to a car is not as owner and master, but as consumer who is forced to consume automobility to participate in society. The feeling of ownership and mastery is an illusion. Many Americans actually do not fully own their vehicles and are merely a paycheck away from losing automobility.

Almost all interviewees who focused on the automobile as a major problem lamented that very few people in Atlanta actually understood what the core problem was. They pointed out that most people in Atlanta did not see that dependency on automobiles was a pressing problem. Instead, they deplored that the prevailing attitude among the majority of people was end of the tail-pipe technological fixes. One interviewee sarcastically stated:

Engineers say they can filter and clean up all water, and so why worry about protecting watersheds? They say they can fix pollution with technology. But it makes more sense to protect the water at the source instead of spending huge sums of money on technological fixes (Interview #20).

Likewise, another interviewee said:

We know what the price is, but politicians don't affect pricing, the public won't let them affect pricing. People are not made to confront their impacts, or at least minimize their impacts, on the environment and on greater society (Interview #32).

Another interviewee lamented that the public was extremely ignorant of the true costs of automobility:

People like to smoke, drink, and eat cheeseburgers, things they should not do, at least not in excess, and over time we have limited this and educated the public on how unhealthy it is. But with sprawl, the market has been subsidized for sprawl and [the market] has worked against compact development (Interview #35).

Although no interviewees used the term "hegemony," it was proponents of an ethical mobility vision that understood that profound ideological forces were beneath the maintenance of automobility, and many alluded to hegemony conceptually. Hence, more than any other group of stakeholders, those who hold the ethical mobility vision are likely the most threatening to the status quo. Indeed, that they threaten the status quo of full, unfettered automobility is exhibited in the rhetoric of the extreme ideological defense of automobile hegemony, which consistently invokes patriotism as a strategy, as I discuss in

the next chapter. However, in the meantime, it is an opportune moment to discuss how both the accessible and ethical mobility visions challenge automobility while circumventing an explicit open critique of the American capitalist structure that sustains automobility.

5.4 Accessible-Ethical Mobility Coalition: Circumventing Criticisms of Capitalism

By now it should be apparent that both the accessible and ethical mobility visions have conflicts not just with automobility, but with the underlying mobility imperatives of capitalism. The traditional emphasis in the US advanced capitalist system has been on the technological advancement of transport modes for increasing speeds, which has resulted in an increasing number of trips and longer-distance travel, rather than on what is actually achieved within a given space and time frame. The aggregate outcome of how mobility has been conceptualized is that more physical travel is required over greater distances to achieve anything (Whitelegg, 1993). With more distance but only a finite amount of time, the tendency has been to focus on speed to keep travel time stable. Whitelegg explains that we use technology to permit greater speeds but we still work, eat, sleep, and play in roughly the same proportions as always. We simply do things further apart now. This has been the end result of excessive automobility and the configuration of urban space around automobility and this has led to severe ecological problems and significant social inequities. At the same time, however, this is the conceptualization of mobility that achieves the ends of capitalism's imperative to perpetually decrease

circulation times and "annihilate space with time." This undergirds what the accessible and ethical mobility visions challenge.

In research on transportation and society, there is an increasing awareness of the social relations of mobility and the wider production and consumption process, and scholars are beginning to theorize on how mobility can be reconceptualized. The core issue is speed. For capitalism, speed, or the circulation time of capital, is key. Yet for other social values, the imperative of perpetually decreasing circulation times is disruptive. Hence, many of the visions that oppose unfettered automobility also come into an antagonistic confrontation with a capitalist social order that is inextricably bound with automobility in the US, and this is what the accessible and ethical vision must negotiate. For example, at a joint National Science Foundation/ European Science Foundation-sponsored conference on sustainable transportation, Uri Zeitler (1999) proposed a conceptualization of mobility that focused on social obligation and civic responsibility, realizing natural ecological limits, and becoming more practical in understanding the benefits of low-tech or soft mobility. This mobility vision rejects conventional mobility goals in US transportation planning – indeed, rejects the imperative of perpetually seeking to reduce circulation times. It is this rejection of speed that is the direction in which both the accessible and ethical mobility visions wish to take us.

New conceptualizations of mobility, some say, would have to be revolutionary because of the opposition to the mobility that capitalism requires, which is primarily centered on increasing speeds (Zeitler, 1999). Hence, to challenge automobility is in many ways an affront to the capitalist social order of American cities and can be cast as

revolutionary. I have argued in Chapter 2 that challenging automobile hegemony is to many a subset of wider struggles over the globalization of capital, the questions of whether capitalism as an economic structure is ecologically sustainable while socially just, and whether capitalism as a system itself is sustainable or self-destructive in the long run. It is hard to ignore the fact that the issues of concern for both the accessible and ethical mobility visions, which are strongly linked, are reflections of these wider struggles for social and ecological justice against capitalism. While many workers struggle for "access to mobility" in order to reach workplaces, urban services, and amenities, this is in reality a subset of the wider struggles for a living wage, healthcare, and education that ultimately cannot be balanced with accumulation for accumulation's sake.

From a social justice perspective, the capitalist social structure inherently produces and reproduces social and spatial inequalities (Harvey, 1982; Smith, 1990). One of these major inequalities, as I have touched on here, is in mobility, and mobility is an important dimension of class struggle with spatial implications. This raises some challenging questions for the future of an accessible and ethical mobility vision in places like Atlanta. In my interviews, for example, articulators of an ethical mobility vision avoided a direct critique of capitalism, contrasting the challenge in Europe where unfettered capitalism is openly contested in mobility debates. Some of the Interviews who articulated the accessible mobility vision were more pointed in criticizing the social structure, and some even explicitly stated that exploitation under capitalism was a root problem, yet there was no comprehensive articulation of the relationship between automobility, sprawl, and capitalism. Nowhere in my interviews, or in archival analysis,

or in participant observation, was there even the slightest mention that a "non-capitalist mobility" was possible.

This politically pragmatic avoidance of critiquing the role of capitalism means that, to some extent, the challengers to automobile hegemony ignore the underlying logic of American capitalism for increasing speeds and mobility, and thus avoid getting to the crux of the problems that lead to class struggle and ecological destruction. On the other hand, in the context of Atlanta it allows for the possibility of political alliances with factions in the debate such as the new urban bourgeoisie, which explicitly challenges automobile hegemony but in a way that is not directed necessarily at the wider capitalist structure. To get a sense of how and why the accessible and ethical mobility visions circumvent open critiques of capitalism, it is helpful to understand how their closest ally in the debates over mobility and sprawl challenges automobile hegemony.

5.5 The New Urban Bourgeoisie Mobility Vision

Paul Knox (1991), referring to Pierre Bourdieu, has written of a "new bourgeoisie" and "petit bourgeoisie" emerging out of economic restructuring from a "Fordist" regime of accumulation to a "post-Fordist," postindustrial economic order beginning in the 1970's. The new bourgeoisie was made up of professionals, public administrators, scientists, professors, executives in the private sector, financial analysts, consultants, personnel experts, designers, marketing experts, purchasers, etc. The new "petit bourgeoisie" class fraction included junior executives and management, engineers, medical and social service personnel, and workers involved in cultural production and reproduction such as authors, editors, radio and television producers and presenters, and

journalists. These occupations have expanded dramatically in the US since the 1970s, and have been the engine of economic growth in Atlanta (Hartshorn, 1993). By 1999 the Metro Atlanta Chamber estimated about 160,000 hi-tech jobs were in metro Atlanta (Geewax, 1999).

Knox, again referring to Bourdieu, has elaborated on how analyzing new class fractions in advance capitalist society requires a focus on both production and consumption. The "new bourgeoisie" and "petit bourgeoisie" were not solely based on occupational structure but, rather, also on patterns of consumption. One of the most pronounced of these patterns of consumption was been re-urbanization in the form of gentrification and historic preservation in older cities and towns. In this section, then, I focus on what I call the "new urban bourgeoisie" vision of mobility, centered on issues of urbanism as good quality of life. Hence, I expand Knox's analysis by focusing on a subgroup that seeks the consumption of not just certain spaces, but certain spatial configurations and mobilities. This vision of mobility views sprawl, that is a spatial configuration and organization around automobility only, as anathema to a good quality of life. The new urban bourgeoisie vision includes urban loft living, remodeled older single detached homes in former streetcar suburbs, walkable new urbanist infill developments, and a more urbane lifestyle. For this vision *place making* matters, but where exactly in space is not as important as how that space is configured. The package of consumptive spaces in revitalizing urban cores is considered superior to automobile-oriented sprawl. Arts and music, bars, restaurants, a "café culture," museums, and other traditionally urban amenities are in proximity. These new urbanites were largely childless and educated, and attracted to the city core's cultural resources, architectural

sense of place, and to the concentration of single, nonattached people. They also tend to work in many of the burgeoning "knowledge value" industries, such as new media, graphic arts, advertising, and software development (Kotkin, 1999).

The central theme articulated by the new urban bourgeoisie is that sprawl and excessive automobility are synonymous. Excessive automobile dependency is seen as the main indicator of bad urbanism and as incompatible with concepts of good urban life if it is used excessively. Indeed, one Interview suggested that if society fails to address the true depth of the spatial problems of automobility, we are really simply creating "sprawl with a new paint job" (Interview # 1). To be sure, the new urban bourgeoisie is not anti-automobile but, rather, it bases its vision on an opposition to devoting all urban space to the car. In fact, Interviews who fit the profile of the new urban bourgeoisie often pointed out that they were decidedly not against automobiles per se. In this way the new urban bourgeoisie tend to challenge automobile hegemony while explicitly arguing that they are not challenging the automobile itself but, rather, its spatial dominance. They seek to minimize the automobile's impact on society while continuing to acknowledge its predominance and usefulness. Many articulators of this position considered this to be a politics of practical possibilities.

For example, in interviews, members of this new urban bourgeoisie often compared the sprawl debate in Atlanta to the civil rights struggle. Then, as now, Atlanta was at the leading edge of social change in the South. During the civil rights era a "New South creed" policy towards integration was established through a "race accord" between the downtown business elite and prominent African-American leaders. This was generally frowned upon by racists, who fled the city and helped foster an anti-urban, anti-

Atlanta political ethos in statewide politics. To several interviewees, the process was being repeated in the sprawl debate. The Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and other business interests converged with moderate environmentalists such as the Georgia Conservancy on the sprawl issue, just as they had previously converged with the moderate wing of the civil rights movement in the 1960's. Then, as now, the spatial dimension was city versus suburb and, clearly, the new urban bourgeoisie considered themselves "moderates" with whom big business could relate while the pro-sprawls suburbanites were seen as irrational radicals (even if the majority) with whom big business could not relate.

Several emphatically southern proponents of new urban bourgeoisie mobility spoke of their dismay at how ambiguous notions of Southern culture were being falsely deployed by pro-sprawls advocates in the suburbs who tended to despise the city of Atlanta. One interviewee, a native Southerner, said:

The New South creed is about always being pragmatic, and that has been lost in this debate. Southerners say that any attempt to reduce car travel is actually an attempt to take away their cars. Pragmatism was lost. It is not about no cars or *all* cars. That is complete bullshit. There are no environmentalists that are trying to take away cars (Interview # 30).

This reflects a reluctance to link automobility with the wider social ills attributed to capitalism while simultaneously creating a rhetorical weapon to deploy against the vocal defenders of automobility who tend to invoke notions of Southern patriotism. Relatedly, one of the most common themes of new urban bourgeoisie mobility is the notion of sustainable capitalism. Sustainable capitalism holds that economic growth and environmental protection are compatible and can be achieved with a well-regulated market system. Several interviewees saw themselves as a bridge between

environmentalist and business interests in the spirit of sustainable capitalism. One interviewee defined his/her role as:

...translating technical environmental issues for business interests. The board of the Georgia Conservancy was business, the board of GRTA was business, and RBC is business, and so I specialized in talking to businessmen about the environment (Interview # 33).

The emphasis on urban design as a practical means of making capitalism ecologically sustainable has led many of the new urban bourgeoisie towards an appreciation of New Urbanism. It is thus appropriate, then, to insert into the discussion a description of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) because, in many ways, the core market for New Urbanist developments is the new urban bourgeoisie (see PricewaterhouseCooper, 2001, and CNU, 2001). Indeed, the CNU is one of the most vocal and active organizations in the national sprawl debate, and several of its key leaders have had considerable influence in Atlanta's sprawl debate. Many of the persons I interviewed for this research referred to the CNU as the most influential outside source of information, ideas, and inspiration.

Based in San Francisco, the CNU is self-described as a coalition of architects, urban designers, planners, engineers, journalists, attorneys, public servants, and concerned citizens. The CNU formally organized in 1991, when a handful of nationally acclaimed architects and planners met to draft a manifesto for new ways of growing. The purpose of the new vision was to provide an alternative to sprawl. Many observers have called CNU a reform movement (Katz, 1994; Fulton, 1996). As a reform movement, the core goal was to reconfigure urban space. Fulton (1996) compared CNU to the City Beautiful and Garden City movement of the early twentieth century for, like the CNU,

both of these movements stressed that social and economic problems of cities could be mitigated, but not solved, by physical design.

For the New Urbanists, the central organizing space was the neo-traditional neighborhood grid, which has characteristics of both historic small towns and urban neighborhoods. This grid is characterized by narrow but well-connected streets, with sidewalks on both sides of the street and short blocks. From a traffic engineering perspective, the neo-traditional grid slows down cars while making it safer for bicyclists and pedestrians. Connectivity in the grid spreads automobile trips that in a typical suburban development would be funneled onto one or two arterials. Thus, the neotraditional grid simultaneously contains the automobile while decreasing the possibility of congestion. The driver has more choice for routes through the neighborhood, but must proceed slowly. But, more importantly, the driver could also choose not to drive and still be assured a safe, convenient trip in the neighborhood.

The CNU also rejects the full separation of bikes, cars, and pedestrians from the street. This rejection of separation is the antithesis of 50 years of traffic engineering in the US, which has viewed pedestrians and cyclists as impediments that disrupt the flow of automobiles. The CNU vision contests the underlying ethos of the influential Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), which was primarily concerned with the high-speed through-put of automobiles and which has had a major influence on planners and engineers. Thus ITE has traditionally specified that residential streets should be 50- to 60-feet wide (Ben-Joseph, 1995) and that curved intersections and street standards require good sight distance, which has encouraged higher speeds to more optimally move automobiles. [Many New Urbanists, in contrast, believe a 22-foot-wide street is

acceptable in neighborhoods.] As Duany (2000) has pointed out, the ITE view of streets worked for the automobile and if the societal goal was to move automobiles as efficiently as possible, then this street design was logical. However, this design was incompatible with all other uses of the street, including walking and biking. Moreover, it conflicted with residential living, usurping such activities as children playing on neighborhood streets, neighbors socializing on the street, and the visual aesthetics that make walking and biking more enjoyable. For the CNU, the street was not just about movement but was about social contact and civic activity. The street was public space that had to be recaptured from excessive automobility. Hence, at one level CNU and, by extension, the new urban bourgeoisie have a radical spatial conflict with those who defend automobile hegemony. Yet the tone of many New Urban advocates, at least in Atlanta, is cautious.

By 1995, the ideas of the CNU had surfaced in Atlanta's sprawl debate, but it was clear that the message of CNU was tailored to a more conservative political climate, again reflecting a careful negotiation of automobile hegemony, especially a circumventing any open critique of capitalism. Critics of sprawl like Jim Kunstler and Andres Duany were invited to speak at local conferences. Kunstler was the vitriolic rhetorician of the anti-sprawl movement and was noted for his controversial presentation style and an "in-your-face" attitude (Interview # 15). To many activists opposed to sprawl, Kunstler's diatribes were reassuring and his relatively conservative social stance on issues like crime, race, and political correctness appealed to the new urban bourgeoisie, who sought tougher "law-and-order" stances. Kunstler was by far the most noted individual among the 46 Interviews, most of whom were familiar with his books and many whom were impressed with his rhetoric. Duany, a Cuban-born developer,

inserted a strong neo-liberal anti-sprawl argument into the debate, chiding sprawl as a socially engineered, subsidized, anti-market urban form. This was significant because in Atlanta anti-sprawl activists were consistently cast as radical, and even socialist, by defenders of sprawl. Duany utilized a political tactic of ideological neutrality in criticizing sprawl, which appealed to developers. He called sprawl an "innocent error" that should not be allowed to continue. This tactic appealed to many Atlantans who, while opposed to further sprawl, were not pleased with the more radical approaches of the ethical mobility and accessible mobility visions. This tactic was also geared towards neutralizing explicit political finger-pointing, which many new urban bourgeoisie felt would bog down the debate into personal attacks and ego-bashing.

Duany had a profound impact on one of the most prominent and politically connected local developers, John Williams of Post Properties, who aggressively embraced the CNU principles. Duany's firm, Duany Plater Zyberk (DPZ), designed Post Riverside, the signature development for Post Properties, which was marketed to the new urban bourgeoisie. By 2000, two huge new urbanist-inspired redevelopment projects were in the construction phase as urban infill projects –Atlantic Station and Lindbergh City Center. New developments in Atlanta's sprawling suburbs were also claiming to have New Urban principles as part of their marketing strategy as well, such as the developments called Sphon Town in Gwinnett County and Ridenhour in Cobb County. The people who were expected to live in these developments were the new urban bourgeoisie. That these last two new urban developments were being constructed in the suburbs reflected the prominence of concern over *how* space is configured rather than where in space the new urban bourgeoisie vision should be represented materially.

Complimenting these new urbanist developments was also the attention paid towards revitalizing the town centers that dot metropolitan Atlanta's sprawling landscape, such as Marietta, Canton, Duluth, Norcross, and McDonough – again, instances of reconfiguring space taking precedence over where that place was located in the metropolitan area.

5.5.1 Who Articulated the New Urban Bourgeoisie Mobility Vision?

The key articulators of the new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision were mostly white professionals. Many of them lived in conventional automobile-centered developments but sought change. They attended public meetings and forums and underwrote the grassroots funding for advocacy organizations such as PEDS and ABC. However, they were not the same as the leadership of these organizations, which I have categorized elsewhere as articulators of an ethical mobility vision. This does not imply that the articulators of the new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision (or any other vision) do not share in an ethical viewpoint, but it simply reflects what was most often emphasized in interviews, meetings, and publications espousing the shared views. Sharing the new urban bourgeoisie vision were a handful of prominent developers such as Post Properties, the Winter Group, and developers of Atlantic Station in Midtown. The editorial board of the liberal *Atlanta Constitution* and liberal political commentators also influenced local public opinion. Also included in this vision were many of the planners and professional staffs in public planning and consultants. Two important environmental organizations, the Southface Energy Institute and the Georgia Conservancy, were key articulators of the new urban bourgeoisie vision.

One of the most prominent institutions to embrace the basic tenets of the CNU, and whose board reflected the new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision, was the Atlanta chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI). The ULI described itself as a nonprofit educational and research institute for the national development industry. ULI had 15,000 professional members in 50 states and 52 countries, and 36 district offices across the US. ULI was a significant player in the sprawl debate because it had influence on the development industry and weighed in on the side of anti-sprawl efforts (ULI, 2002). The members of ULI's Atlanta's district were actively engaged in Atlanta's sprawl debate. They included developers who stressed the principles of the CNU, the staff of the Georgia Conservancy (a prominent environmental group with strong business ties), and planners, consultants, and academics. Most of the major REITs and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce also had ties to the ULI. ULI (2001) outlines that the key features of future growth should be "access to public transportation, use of existing infrastructure, conservation of resources, infill and brownfield development, pedestrian-friendly developments, and mixed, compact, and adaptive uses." Clearly, in Atlanta, ULI has aligned itself with the tenets of the CNU.

ULI sponsored many conferences and workshops, such as those for developers on transit-oriented development (TOD), affordable infill housing, and the importance of regional cooperation. The Institute also released a report on revitalizing suburban edge cities in conjunction with the Bank of America in 2001 (ULI, 2001). This report argued that existing edge cities, such as Atlanta's Perimeter Center or Cumberland area, had enormous potential for reconfiguration into 24-hour, pedestrian-oriented, higher density, mixed use, and transit-oriented urban centers (ULI, 2002). The report outlined the steps

that should be taken to retrofit suburban space, and called retrofitting the “next new thing” in urban revitalization. Another report by the ULI (Dunphy, 1997) suggested that Atlanta decision-makers should discontinue building more roads further out, especially the proposed Outer Perimeter. The report had assistance from key local Atlantans who articulated the new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision.

One member of the ULI Atlanta district was the CEO of the Winter Group, a major intown developer. The Winter Group converts old buildings into lofts or offices, and the company CEO boasts that the firm financed its first loft conversion after being turned down by 32 banks. Reflecting the ethos that good quality of life is urban, the CEO of Winter anticipated that "Atlanta will be a city someday" (Wilbert, 1999). The CEO's vision was to produce a new Midtown, a "stunning urban space" with cafes, residential development, and a connection to the future Atlantic Station. Defining an urbane lifestyle, the executive said he wanted to create a community in Midtown that was "diverse, black and white, straight and gay" (Silverman, 2001). Also envisioned was a "European Village" with a live-work-walk community of hi-tech loft offices and condos on the west side of Georgia Tech, near downtown Atlanta.

A major booster of the new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision was the liberal daily newspaper, the *Atlanta Constitution*. The *Constitution* has worked continually in the last decade to keep the subject of sprawl in the public discourse of Atlanta. The Editorial Page Editor, Cynthia Tucker (1998 and 1999), has written columns praising the idea of being able to walk to get a cup of coffee or go shopping, and has pointed to New York and San Francisco as real cities Atlanta should aspire to emulate. Invoking a neo-liberal stance on the benefits of good urbanism, she has consistently pointed out that good

urban development increases property values (Tucker, 1999). Tucker is also a supporter of commuter rail, and has argued that money targeted for the Northern Arc should instead be spent on rail (Tucker, 1998). Indeed, the *Constitution* had become one of the staunchest critics of sprawl by 1996, on the eve of the Summer Olympics. In May 1996, reporter David Goldberg ran a story titled "Gridshock" that startled Atlanta's business interests. The story warned that the transportation problem would be big after the Olympic euphoria passed. It revealed to the public that the ARC staff was warning that the metropolitan area was going to have a serious air quality crisis and that highway money could be suspended. Goldberg noted that the story got a large response from the public, including lots of letters to the editor in the month before the Summer Olympics (Goldberg, 2001).

Before the Olympics started, Goldberg ran another story outlining how the region had officially failed to meet EPA air quality standards. Coverage on the sprawl issue increased in the paper, and the editorial board frequently wrote editorials critical of the lack of political will to seriously confront problems. The reporting in the *Constitution* pushed the limit on designating blame for sprawl. While it generally exercised a tone that put more blame on the overarching structure of zoning codes and state policy, it continually exposed the agency of prominent figures in the GDOT and ARC board as individuals who had disproportionate power to make sprawl and automobile dependency happen. In June of 1997, at the height of the transportation crisis, the editors of the *Constitution* ran a 6-part series called "Growing a New Atlanta," mainly written by Jay Bookman, a liberal columnist for the paper (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1997a). The series blasted the political leadership of metro Atlanta, saying that Atlanta was unfairly

compared to Los Angeles because Los Angeles "grew in the dark" (Atlanta Constitution, 6-9-97, p. A12). Atlanta, the *Constitution* editorial staff said, did not have the excuse Los Angeles had, of being young and charting new territory. Instead, leaders in Atlanta were making the same mistakes already made in Los Angeles, reflecting unsophisticated ignorance among Atlanta leaders. The series echoed some of the main themes of Duany, that sprawl was unfairly subsidized and that archaic, government-mandated zoning laws caused automobile dependency. It blasted the GDOT and its leader, Wayne Shackelford, and called for changing the state constitution, since while Atlanta could not build roads because of air quality, it also could not build other forms of transportation infrastructure because the state constitution does not allow the gas tax to be used to build rail systems, etc. The conclusion of the series was a brief summary of the CNU charter (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1997a).

The frequency of reporting by the daily paper led to the formation of a weekly special section covering growth issues in 1997. This section was called the Horizon section, and the lead writer was David Goldberg, who by this time was emerging as a nationally known critic of sprawl. Around the nation, anti-sprawl activists praised the work of the *Constitution* and urged their local papers to implement a similar series critiquing sprawl (Interview # 15). Among anti-sprawl activists interviewed for this research, David Goldberg and the *Constitution* were praised for their contributions to the debate. The Turner Foundation, which emerged in the second half of the 1990's as the chief sponsor of anti-sprawl advocacy organizations, subsequently published a collection of reprints of *Constitution* articles and editorials critical of sprawl (see Turner Foundation, 1997).

5.5.2 Challenging Automobile Hegemony, but not the Automobile

In Atlanta, a growing segment of the new bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie appear to have rejected an entire spatial organization centered on automobility. However, the consumer preference for a new urbanist built environment does not necessarily exclude automobility. In Chapter 2, for example, I remarked on "parking-in-the-back-New Urbanism" which resulted when actual New Urbanist developments cleverly hid the automobile but did not significantly alter its primacy in everyday life. When asked, for example, how Interviews got to work, or what their general feelings were about the automobile, most Interviews who articulated the new urban bourgeoisie vision admitted that despite their rhetoric, they drove to work, and despite their desire for a walkable, urban space with good transit, they would likely continue to own and use an automobile. Also, while many holders of this vision extolled the merits of urban living, they tended also to have enough disposable income for a weekend home in the mountain/ lake region north of Atlanta, or a vacation home further away, or they took frequent vacations. They could therefore "get away" from the city more often than most working families in both city and suburbs.

Many articulators of the new urban bourgeoisie vision of mobility were sure to point out that while they admonished a lifestyle and spatial configuration centered only on automobility, they did not seek to end the relative dominance of automobility. For example, many expressed sentiments that cars should not be used for every daily trip in the city, but that trips to grocery stores still required an automobile. This bordered on negotiation rather than challenging automobile hegemony. Many articulators of this vision stressed that they were being practical, given the way Atlanta's built environment

and political environment were structured, and that change was probably going to be slow. However, I consider the new urban bourgeoisie to present a challenge to the hegemony of automobility because in their discourse they express a spatial vision that ultimately makes the use of an automobile less convenient, more costly, and less logical in many circumstances. Hence, the new urban bourgeoisie shared many of the goals of the accessible and ethical mobility visions, and I will describe this as a shared vision that explicitly challenges automobile hegemony in Atlanta.

5.6 A Shared Vision

Not surprisingly, the shared vision of the accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie is similar to the package of policies contained in Vision 2020. Overall, articulators of all three visions oppose all new large roads in the Atlanta metropolitan area, regardless of where they would be located. Many are vehemently opposed to upgrading suburban roads to expressways, building brand new roads such as the Northern Arc, and widening peripheral roads. These policies are cast as inequitable, racist, ecologically unsound, and undermining the vitality of the city.²⁹ The shared vision includes strong support for federal policies that allow the "flexing" of road money to transit instead of building new roads. Many argue that the funds for the proposed \$2.4

²⁹ However, the shared vision does not exclude efforts to improve existing roads. For example, the condition of inner-city roads is considered deplorable because of potholes and unsafe configurations. Also, many intersections were said to be in need of improvement. Issues of connectivity and grid networks were stressed. Cul-de-sacs were frowned on and isolated subdivisions needed to be connected. However, many advocates did not want roads to "break" cul-de-sacs. Instead, connectivity between isolated subdivisions should be just trails for walkers and bikers. Some said that dangerous two-lane roads should be widened, but strict land-use controls should be implemented to keep them from being overwhelmed by traffic. It was preferred to widen two-lane roads to three with bike lanes, instead of four thru-lanes.

billion Northern Arc should be spent in the urban core instead of on the periphery.

Proponents of the shared vision argue for "front-loading" so as to drastically cut back on new road building and expansion, and instead use the funds to build bike, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure throughout much of the region, such that over time the road-building program will not be needed because new forms of mobility have been constructed and made practical. For example, the Atlanta Bicycle Campaign (ABC) has pointed out that under the current funding scenarios proposed, it would take 133 years for Atlanta to become "bike-friendly." ABC advocates that this be sped up to 25 years by a policy of front-loading. In short, articulators of all three visions explicitly challenged the hegemony of automobility and envisioned a future where its accommodation through further road building would be minimized or discontinued.

Another important common theme of the three visions outlined in this chapter is that the problems associated with sprawl can not be mitigated by technological fixes such as cleaner cars or pervious pavements. For example, cleaner cars would improve air quality, a key objective of many anti-sprawl activists, but cleaner cars would not resolve the habitat destruction from fragmented landscapes crisscrossed with roads. They would not address mobility equity issues like safer conditions for walkers and cyclists, nor address the public health relationship between sprawl and obesity. Social equity would not be met by clean cars because non-drivers, such as the elderly, children, the disabled, and those who cannot afford to drive would remain excluded or marginalized in an auto-centric society. Technological fixes like cleaner cars were cast as a partial curative and not prevention. In fact, some interviewees chided people who drive cars and say that they are waiting for a cleaner car so that their driving could be "guilt free." They

compared this to false advertisement for diet pills that required no exercise or no change in diet. In the words of one activist:

Not addressing the design aspects of the automobile-dominated landscape is like saying we have an air quality problem so give everyone an air tank, or we have a race problem, so everyone should live separately (Interview # 1).

Another interviewee said that:

Success is not gridlock sitting in a zero emissions vehicle (Interview # 29).

Many were enthusiastic about neighborhood car sharing which would replace individual car ownership with shared cooperatives. The economic argument for such an approach was that when a car sits in a driveway, it was still being paid for, which was an inefficient use of capital resources. Thus, they suggest, psychologically, individual car ownership compels usage because the initial overhead is so high while gas prices are very low. Under car sharing, instead, multiple persons would share costs. The concept would be geared towards higher-density residential areas where a good transit and pedestrian network was in place. People would subscribe to a car sharing service and use the car only when it was really needed. The rationale was that people would not think they had to use a car all the time because the car would not always be in their driveway, and the overhead cost was shared, based on usage.³⁰ The key ingredient for making car sharing work, however, is a neighborhood with good transit service and walkability, a situation

³⁰ Studies in Europe have concluded that car sharing has the potential of replacing between four and eight privately owned cars per cooperative, and that members of car sharing cooperatives reduce car travel by 30% or more. Car sharing is growing in Europe, and has gained a foothold on the US West Coast and in Canada. In Switzerland, Mobility Car Sharing Suisse had 1,100 cars at 700 locations throughout Switzerland for the use of 23,000 members. In the US, William Clay Ford Jr, the chairman of Ford and supposed environmentalist, predicted that in the future Americans would forego car ownership in cities and instead join car clubs. In San Francisco, where parking is a problem in residential areas, car sharing clubs are forming, and members can reserve cars ranging from Volkswagons to pick-up trucks (Car Share Network, 2002).

which seems to preclude car sharing for the immediate near future in Atlanta – Atlanta Bicycle Campaign, for instance, had the only shared car in Atlanta in 2001 (Interview # 18).

Most proponents of a shared accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision ideally wished that more heavy rail could be constructed, but were skeptical of the costs and its implications in areas that are already sprawling. Many stressed that the region should not extend MARTA heavy rail to outer suburbs because it was not equitable at a time when MARTA fares were the most expensive in the nation and service was being cut back. Instead, the existing system should be improved, and fares reduced. For example, there is skepticism about proposed light rail in Cobb County. It is also felt that if people moved to communities beyond rail and bus service, then they should not be rewarded by extensions of transit paid for collectively by all people in the region. Instead, those who "chose" to live beyond the transit-shed should be forced to pay the increasing costs of their own driving, deal with increased congestion, and pay a stiff entry fee into a regional transit system. Many privately are opposed to the tactic GRTA was taking, which was subsidizing the extension of express bus service to suburban counties while not providing needed funding to MARTA (which was raising fares and cutting services). This was seen as rewarding racism, among other things.

Intensification of bus service inside I-285 was often preferred over expanding bus service to peripheral counties. Also, it was repeatedly noted that suburban extensions of rail would not really improve air quality, and would make it easier for people to move further out, if certain land-use changes did not accompany the extension of transit. Many believe that walking or biking should substitute for car trips at the neighborhood-level,

while transit should connect neighborhoods to each other. If a county was not considering this form of mobility around its transit station but, instead, was considering massive parking lots, then it did not deserve transit. Further, almost all Interviews expressing all three visions were very enthusiastic about a proposed intown loop light rail system that would act as a spine for increased revitalization and densification of intown areas, and intensification of development around existing MARTA rail stations. Light rail was envisioned for Peachtree Street from Buckhead to Downtown, to the west side of the city where there was poor rail transit service, in the Ponce de Leon corridor towards the east side, and into South DeKalb County. In all cases, proponents had no problem with taking away car-travel lanes to implement light rail. This was perhaps one of the more explicit spatial challenges to automobile hegemony. All three visions included significant appropriation of space from the automobile to make bicycling and walking safer and transit more efficient, while making driving less convenient, more costly, and more frustrating (in Chapter 8 I will elaborate on congestion as a tool for producing certain spatial outcomes).

It should be emphasized that the arguments made by the articulators of all three visions tended to favor investment inside of I-285, rather than outside of I-285, which appears on the surface to be consistent with the local dependency thesis of defending place in a coalition with landed interests in the core. Yet in my analysis of interviews, I observed that this was not necessarily geographical chauvinism against areas beyond I-285. Rather, it was favoritism towards areas with the existing spatial configuration that was more suitable for their mobility visions, or at least with the potential for being retrofitted. Many advocates of all three visions noted that Atlanta was surrounded by

small towns in a sea of sprawl, such as Marietta, Norcross, McDonough, Jonesboro, or Canton, that had potential for being retrofitted into less automobile-dependent built forms, and that these places should be served by transit. Commuter rail, for example, could serve these towns, and the older downtowns could be revitalized. Indeed, some of the articulators of all three visions I have presented above lived beyond I-285. Hence, the emphasis on the core should not be construed as a city-v.-suburb conflict, and most of the interviewees were adamant that they were not "anti-suburb" but, rather, anti-sprawl. New automobile-centric developments, which was their definition of sprawl, were seen as places that should not receive further investment in the form of both roads or transit. Suburbs such as smaller towns or suburbs that expressed an interest in new urbanism and smart growth were cast as politically, ideologically, and spatially different from sprawl.

Affordable housing was the key problematic in developing and sustaining the shared vision into a political coalition capable of influencing Atlanta's growth. As pressure for high-end, new urban bourgeoisie housing in the inner core expanded, this became a contentious issue. The general sentiment expressed by holders of the new urban bourgeoisie vision was that affordable housing was desperately needed in Atlanta, but that the city needed to accommodate higher-end housing first. This was considered politically and economically practical because it was considered a way to achieve more neighborhood stability while also attracting developers. The new urban bourgeoisie therefore supported public subsidy for luxury condominiums in downtown Atlanta, supported the removal of older public housing from the core, and supported proposals to eradicate the homeless from downtown Atlanta. These were seen as necessary strategies for making the core of Atlanta into a 24-hour new urbanist model in the Southeast.

Yet this was not a strategy shared by the accessible and ethical mobility visions, who instead expressed concern that the poor would be pushed out of the city for the benefit of the wealthy. This issue, more than any other, must be resolved if a political coalition between the accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie is going to be possible. Yet, as discussed above, a major part of resolving affordable housing questions relates to the structure of American capitalism. Indeed, both mobility and housing are inextricably bound with both automobile hegemony and capitalism. The accessible and ethical mobility visions have underlying values that draw into question the nature of the capitalist structure. Hence, a probable negotiation of the affordable housing question, like mobility, will involve circumventing direct challenges to the capitalist urbanization process and accommodation of the new urban bourgeoisie political tactics (I will discuss this further in Chapter 8). This tactic is especially likely given that the defenders of automobile hegemony, as I show in the next chapter, remain a formidable political force in Atlanta.

CHAPTER 6

DEFENDING AUTOMOBILITY

6.1 Essentializing Sprawl

In this chapter I will elaborate on the factions in Atlanta's sprawl debate that are diametrically opposed to the three visions just presented. These are the defenders of automobility, stakeholders that articulate from two distinctive ideological positions, one of which has a vested interest in profits from automobility, the other of which equates automobility with a libertarian ethos. What they have in common is that they conceptualize automobility as the inevitable result of growth and economic development. Broadly speaking, they share a vision of full automobility across all space. Indeed, full automobility, sprawl, and economic and population growth are the same thing in these two conceptualizations of mobility. Hence, one interviewee, a member of the GRTA board, has suggested that sprawl was:

Widespread growth.... A lot of growth, which is widespread, is sprawl. A little bit of growth is not sprawl (Interview # 10).

Likewise, another key player in regional politics, a county commissioner, has said of sprawl:

Growth was inevitable. I don't think there is anything that anyone could have done any differently that would have not caused out here. Things were in place, and you can call it sprawl or growth. All successful places have the same problems as this county. It will continue to happen until the birth rate stops (Interview # 17).

Still another stakeholder, a transportation lobbyist, called sprawl "urban evolution," saying it was a natural evolution of the urban environment.

Cities do not pile up on top of themselves, but they spread. Maybe it is different in Bombay or London, but in the US it is outward. Today's sprawl will be tomorrow's intown (Interview #26).

All of these comments were followed by stakeholder perceptions of the automobile as essential for prosperity.

In essence sprawl and automobility are being essentialized and a certain politics of possibilities about urban space is being positioned. There is an image that the highway system and the dispersed low-density development pattern are inevitable, part of an organic process of urban growth. Such an approach argues that people desire driving and the low-density configuration it enables, and there is no political resolution that can thwart this. Articulators of this conceptualization extend that image with visions of a future Atlanta with at least the Northern Arc, but many are steadfast that some day the entire Outer Perimeter should be built. It is inevitable, they say. People want full automobility, and public servants should provide for that demand. Yet beneath the veneer of universalized automobility there are some stark differences among the strongest advocates for full automobility. A close analysis of the underlying rationale and methods for achieving the vision of full automobility reveals substantial philosophical differences within the broader political coalition that promotes full automobility. Two factions in Atlanta's sprawl debate promote a vision of full automobility, but their differences expose inconsistencies in how the automobile has been essentialized and how it continues to remain an intractable, but not inevitable, spatial problematic.

6.2 Who Advocates Full Automobility?

The "auto-industrial complex" is a group of developers, politicians, and road construction interests that have considerable control over the shape of transportation policy in metropolitan Atlanta. [I discussed some of their tactics and politics in Chapter 3.] They have direct influence over the shaping of public policy and assert their vision of full automobility through a disproportionate influence over the political process. While they engage in a public neoliberal rhetoric about the need for privatization and free markets, they simultaneously leverage considerable public funds to produce landscapes they then proclaim to be the result of the invisible hand of capitalism. This is the point of departure from the rhetoric of the second vision of full automobility, what I call the "cornucopian vision."

The cornucopian vision of automobility takes literally the neoliberal ideology that unfettered free markets will "sort out" the problems of sprawl, which are first and foremost congestion. The normative vision is of a future of decentralized, dispersed spatial organization with no real need for cities except for places of cultural consumption or limited production and exchange. Atlanta, in this vision, is prophetic, and congestion is hampering the market process of further dispersal. In the cornucopia vision, government should retreat from deciding where transportation investment goes and what type of investment is made. Instead, the market should be left to decide, and government should then respond. This is a fundamental contradiction with the operating methods of the auto-industrial complex, which views big government as necessary for building the

mega roads that increase localized land values. The champions of the cornucopian vision refute the methods of cabals that affect where government invests. Yet, in Atlanta, there is a dubious silence among articulators of the cornucopian vision regarding the practices of many developers and road builders, who explicitly steer public funds towards projects that may not have happened under ideal free market conditions.

The thread that connects the defenders of automobility is the concern over congestion. What Atlanta has done wrong, according to both of these visions, is to not build enough roads. In the full automobility vision of mobility, congestion is the single greatest impediment to mobility. The concern for congestion and the vision of roads has induced the articulators of the cornucopian vision to overlook the "how" of using political influence to build roads. How roads are funded, and how much influence geographically based special interests have over building roads, is a major ideological difference that has too often been glossed over as inconsequential. It is therefore necessary to look in detail at who promotes the vision of full automobility and how the promoters have differences that expose weaknesses in the full automobility coalition.

6.2.1 The Gwinnett Mafia

One of the sets of questions I asked in the interviews was about how the stakeholders in the debate perceived each other. I asked each interviewee to briefly mention what or who they saw as the key barriers to implementing their vision. The most referred to barrier for social change was a small but powerful group of men, called the "Gwinnett Mafia," who allegedly controlled transportation policy in Georgia (McCosh and Shelton, 1999). They were landed interests centered in suburban Gwinnett County

who planted key allies in all levels of transportation decision-making in Georgia, including the powerful Georgia DOT.

The allegations of there being a "Gwinnett Mafia" came from many of the interviewees, but were not simply the biased opinion of angry environmentalists or inner-city neighborhood activists. They were also shared by some of the corporate business elite and suburban subdivision activists. They also frequently emerged in the *Atlanta Constitution*, which berated the GDOT and its leader Wayne Shackelford and charged him with deceitful ties to Gwinnett County developers. Also, while supportive of road building and its results in Gwinnett County, conservative commentator Bill Shipp provided narratives of the Gwinnett Mafia as a Southern "good ole boy" network operating against other "good ole boy" networks (Shipp, 1999a and b).

I am comfortable with using the phrase "Gwinnett Mafia" because it provides a useful recognition that a specific, geographically based group of individuals projected their power to produce a landscape that fit with their vision. That they were geographically based is key, because in producing the spaces of automobility the Gwinnett Mafia also actively promoted a vision of Gwinnett as a future city center that competed with Atlanta. In this way they were similar to the geographically based corporate boosters of downtown Atlanta, because they too were seeking to maximize exchange values on specific parcels of land and seeking to achieve that through control of transportation policy and the broader discourse on mobility. However, that they were geographically based distinguished them from their opponents in the accessible, ethical, and new urban mobility visions, opponents who are more concerned with how space is configured rather than where it is produced. Moreover, the cornucopian vision of

mobility is also less geographically rooted and more concerned with producing spaces for automobility everywhere.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the Gwinnett Mafia had a Gwinnett-based core, but their politics were regional on two issues –land-use and transportation. The land-use that they made happen was low-density sprawl, and the transportation policy they made happen was road building. They benefited from the political coverage strategy of promoting roadbuilding and local control of land-use zoning. This forged an alliance with landed interests in other peripheral counties, thus creating a voting block on the ARC board. On issues of a mobility vision, they were allied with key ARC board members, including representatives from Cobb, Douglas, and Clayton counties (*Atlanta Constitution*, 2001).

For the Gwinnett Mafia, the automobile has a key role in the capitalist accumulation process: it opens more land up to speculation in real estate. The land on urban peripheries is cheaper and, once opened up, increases in value, but roads are needed first. Real estate interests in these peripheral areas benefit the most. The local interests and rural land-owners preferred automobility instead of rail-transit mobility because along roads all land potentially increases in value. All land-owners have an opportunity to have a road cut and thus achieve access to the automobility network. This contrasts transit-oriented development, where only the land nearest to transit stations is valued. Therefore, at the county-unit level, the land-owners and farmers preferred roads. This was a democratization of development profit among landowners in suburban counties (Dunn, 1998). I focus on the Gwinnett Mafia because they provide a very good

example of how real estate, highway, and local political interests combined to promote full automobility, and also how they contradict the vision of cornucopian automobility.

Throughout the 1990's, the Gwinnett Mafia controlled the ARC board. The central controller was Wayne Hill, the chairman of Gwinnett County since 1992 and the chairman of the ARC board from 1998 to 2002. In the 2000 election for Gwinnett County commission chair, Hill collected \$420,000 in contributions from all over Atlanta, contributions dominated by developers and road contractors (Stanford, 2000). The Builders Political Action Committee was among his major donors (Stanford, 2000). Hill openly acknowledged friendship with the head of GDOT, Wayne Shackelford, and Shackelford leveraged large amounts of road money for Gwinnett County during his tenure as GDOT Commissioner (Goldberg and Soto, 1998).

The roots of the Gwinnett Mafia extend back to the 1960's when white flight turned Gwinnett County into a booming growth area. The Mason family, large landowners in Gwinnett, started building the first subdivisions and shopping centers in the Snellville area (Roughton, 1998). They later formed a bank in Snellville and entered local politics, with the elder member eventually elected to the Georgia House during the first boom in Gwinnett in the late 1960's to 1975. Jimmy Mason later held positions on the state property commission, and was chairman of the Georgia Ports Authority, and had very strong ties to statewide elected officials (Roughton, 1998; McCosh and Shelton, 1999).

Meanwhile, a group of developers and county commissioners, led by Wayne Mason, speculated in large tracts of real estate while also using public funds to lay down infrastructure to increase land values (McCosh and Shelton, 1999). As chair of Gwinnett

County in the late 1970's, Mason hired Wayne Shackelford to be the county's chief administrator. By the late 1970's Shackelford was directing the placement of roads and sewers throughout Gwinnett County. In 1980 Mason ended his re-election bid for commission chair early in the Democratic primary because he was under federal investigation for various accusations of corruption, accused of overcharging the county in land deals with the water and sewer board and school board of Gwinnett (Roughton, 1998). He denied all charges and in 1982 the federal investigation was ended, but the reputation for corruption remained and an image of shadowy figures based in Gwinnett pulling the strings of local and statewide politicians emerged (Roughton, 1998; McCosh and Shelton, 1999).

During the 1980's, despite the federal investigation and reputation of corruption, Mason remained closely involved in Gwinnett County politics and development. His ally, Shackelford, resigned from the county to work for Cadillac-Fairview, which developed Gwinnett Place Mall and other malls on Atlanta's north side. In 1989 Mason speculated on real estate for mall development in the Snellville area of Gwinnett County and once again became the subject of allegations of corruption. The land speculation included the path of a future freeway, which was later downsized to what is today Ronald Reagan Parkway. However, that did not stop Mason from profiting from speculation. Mason modified his original plans for a regional mall into a large big-box shopping center. He subdivided the holdings and even sold some to Gwinnett County for future county-funded roads (Roughton, 1998). These activities were legal but raised questions about how the transportation decision-making process could become mired in the creation of wealth for selected individuals with privileged access to decision-makers.

During the 1970's, one of Georgia's future governors, Zell Miller, established a strong connection with the Gwinnett Mafia, a connection that would have a profound influence in Atlanta's sprawl debate years later (Saporta, 1998a). Miller, originally from Young Harris in the North Georgia Mountains, made two attempts at running for US Congress in a district based in Gwinnett County. When he ran for Congress he developed ties to Virgil Williams, a prominent real estate developer, and the Mason family. Although his bid for Congress failed, Miller did become a key player in Georgia politics, rising from President of the State Senate to Lieutenant Governor and then Governor by 1992. When he was elected Governor, he appointed Gwinnett County developers to state boards, with his most controversial act being to get Wayne Shackelford installed to head the GDOT.

The appointment of Shackelford was a significant departure from past GDOT heads. Shackelford had never worked within the GDOT and was not an engineer or transportation professional but was a developer (Bean, 1992). All of the previous GDOT heads, since GDOT was reformed in the 1960's, came from within the professional ranks of GDOT. It was during the 1990's, as Atlanta's transportation crisis unfolded, that the Gwinnett Mafia was at the apex of political power in Georgia. That apex was the power of Zell Miller, Wayne Shackelford, development cronies such as Wayne Mason and Virgil Williams, and a firebrand Gwinnett County Commissioner named Wayne Hill (several interviewees referred to the gentleman with the name "Wayne" as the "three Waynes"). Preceding Hill as ARC board chairman was a close ally, Randy Poynter from Rockdale County.

These leaders were the champions of the Outer Perimeter and ensured that it remained in the ARC transportation plans in one form or another. When Hill stepped down as chairman of the ARC, he was replaced by an ally in Clayton County who was also a past contributor to Hill's political campaigns. The new chairman was also instrumental in getting a group of 9 Southside ARC board members to vote to keep the Northern Arc in the RTP in 1999, a vote that clearly benefited the Gwinnett Mafia (McCosh, 1999). Though it remains to be seen whether the coalition centered on automobility that exists in the peripheral counties will hold, it is clear that the continued push for the Northern Arc reflects the power of the Gwinnett Mafia and its allies. [I will discuss this further in Chapter 8.] What this summary of activity among key decision-makers reveals is that key, well-connected individuals matter greatly in struggles over space in Atlanta, and thus individual personalities must be considered when thinking about how urban space is produced.

6.2.2 The Highway Lobby

To be sure, the Gwinnett Mafia was part of the wider automobility growth machine. The auto-industrial complex includes those who are directly engaged in the manufacture, sale, or logistical support of automobility –the highway lobby. Georgians for Better Transportation (GBT), for example, is an advocacy organization established in 1988 for the purpose of lobbying for more highways throughout Georgia.³¹ The Georgia Highway Contractors Association (GHCA), which represents firms that build roads and

³¹ Although GBT promotes itself as a multi-modal advocacy organization, it does not actively lobby for bike, pedestrian, or transit, and even though MARTA was a dues-paying member, the GBT agenda actually conflicted with MARTA on issues such as opening the gas tax to funding for transit, among other things (Interviews # 22 and 26).

airports in Georgia, has strong ties to statewide politicians and has engaged in the sprawl debate by labeling opponents to more roads and sprawl as unpatriotic tyrants (Shipp, 1999e; Simmons, 2001g). National industry trade organizations, such as the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), and the American Highway Users Alliance (AHUA) have also actively engaged in Atlanta's sprawl debate, identifying Atlanta as a key site of the national sprawl debate. Even the American Automobile Association (AAA), which most people associate with roadside emergency service and travel maps, has an extensive political lobbying arm that weighed in on Atlanta's sprawl debate.

The GDOT policy-making board is also part of the highway lobby. Indeed, conservative political commentator Bill Shipp (2000, p. 11A) has said:

To be a member of the GDOT board was to have more power over the economic destiny of the state than any 10 legislators.

All 11 members of the GDOT Board are men, and were either former legislators or businessmen. The current board members have linkages to McDonald's fast food restaurants, automobile dealerships, real estate firms, and gas station franchises. Most of them have served as an elected member of the Georgia General Assembly or as a government official. The transportation committee of the Georgia Legislature, when asked about reforming the structure of the GDOT board, responded that if people with highway real estate interests were excluded from serving on the GDOT board, the pool of candidates would be too small (McCosh, 2000). With that attitude, and in an unusual display of unity, the liberal *Atlanta Constitution* editorial board joined with the conservative *Atlanta Journal* editorial Board in condemning the GDOT Board as a corrupt, well-connected fraternity (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 2000).

With critical media and public attention questioning the integrity of the GDOT board and ARC, and opponents of sprawl pursuing litigation as a strategy to stop road building in metro Atlanta, organizations like the Georgia Highway Contractors Association engaged more openly in the sprawl debate to defend full automobility. This was largely in public relations campaigns that included guest editorials in the major newspapers and television commercials, and vocalization in public forums. Representing the companies that pave roads and airport runways, the GHCA presented itself to Atlanta television audiences in 2001 with a series of thirty-second advertisements that attacked what it called "environmental extremists hijacking Atlanta's road money." They promoted the vision of the automobile as "freedom" and the "American way of life," and accused opponents of social engineering and "elitism." They were joined by a collection of national trade organizations that recognized Atlanta as a beachhead for a potential sea-change in US urban transportation policy. The American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) was instrumental in this regard.

Couched within the ARBTA is an organization called Advocates for Safe and Efficient Transportation (ASET), formed and organized by ARBTA to fight environmental groups in litigation over clean air and conformity. ASET formed after ARTBA asked to be at the table as a defendant in the 1999 Atlanta grandfathering lawsuit. ARTBA was concerned that road money would be switched to rail and transit, and that this case would be a national precedent (McCosh and Soto, 1999). On numerous occasions ASET has asked to intervene in the various lawsuits in Atlanta. In February, 2001 ASET lobbied the ARC to ignore the SELC's lawsuit and push forward with the RTP and TIP. ASET says "national professional environmentalist" organizations

threaten transportation planning in Atlanta (ARBTA, 2001a). In 2001 ASET was granted intervenor status in the Atlanta EJ coalition lawsuit against ARC, GDOT, and USDOT. ASET represented the Georgia Highway Contractors Association and the Georgia Crushed Stone Association. The "litigation alliance" included eight other organizations, among them national concrete, pavement, and building supply companies, and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). The ASET litigation alliance claims to represent labor groups broadly, however in reality it only represents one organization that focuses on road crew labor. ASET describes its mission as defending economic growth and jobs from ideologically driven "no-growth" advocates and "environmental extremists" who are holding road building hostage through "frivolous litigation" and "monkeywrenching" (ARTB, 2001b). ASET claims that local, state, and federal officials engage in "secret backroom deals" with radical environmentalists who bring legal challenges on conformity. It says that the government is too soft on these environmentalists and government settles too often, capitulating to unsound science and political pandering.

The ARTBA is a national umbrella trade group that has actively engaged in Atlanta's sprawl debate. Both the national and local highway lobby claim to be defending the government. That is because, according to ARTBA (ASET), government regulators are an ally to industry and government regulators made sound air quality decisions in the past, only to have them challenged by "anti-growth groups." The highway lobby also often claims it is defending labor and often champions populist rhetoric about construction workers losing jobs because of environmental extremists. The highway lobby argues that environmentalists are waging an ideological war on the American

public's freedom to choose and that these groups hold an elitist view that they know what is best for America. Many of the main organizations in the highway lobby frequently engage in rhetoric calling for "sound science and rational arguments" (Interview #26). Much of that rhetoric echoes the articulators of the cornucopian vision.

6.2.3 The Cornucopians

The term "cornucopian" is borrowed from the literature on sustainability and development, where there has been an ongoing debate over what the role of technology and government should be in addressing environmental and social justice concerns. Pearce and Turner (1990) and Ayres (1993) provide good discussions of the spectrum of competing paradigms of this debate. Many economists believe that government should intervene, by varying degrees, to regulate the economy in recognition of ecological limits and social injustices, and that measures such as population control and decreased consumption should be mandated by the state. Cornucopians, in contrast, argue that there should be unfettered free markets and that technological innovation will allow ecological problems to be resolved. Technological innovation, meanwhile, stems from the unchaining of individualism from regulation and control by government.

The work of Peter Gordon and Harry Richardson, based at the University of Southern California, informs the mobility component of the cornucopia worldview (Gordon and Richardson, 1997a and 1997b). Gordon and Richardson have published in academic journals such as the *Journal of the American Planning Association* and *Transportation Quarterly*. They have also been involved in federal research on congestion, sprawl, and public policy (TRB, 1994). Peter Gordon is on the academic advisory board for the Reason Foundation. Harry Richardson is involved with the World

Bank and is a very strong proponent of global automobilization, stating that the World Bank should help developing countries accommodate the increases in mobility provided by automobiles (Richardson, 1999). Both have linkages to right-leaning, libertarian think-tanks such as the Cascade Policy Institute and the Reason Foundation, among others. This is important because many of the stakeholders who were interviewed for this research, and who shared the views of automobility outlined above, acknowledged that they were informed, at least in part, by these think-tanks. Many professed to frequent their websites and key representatives from these organizations have spoken to leaders in Atlanta in special forums. Additionally, the *Atlanta Journal* editorial board, which contrasted the *Atlanta Constitution* editorial board, frequently quoted from or published portions of these think-tanks' literature.

The cornucopia mobility vision equates economic growth with increasing mobility. Zahavi and Ryan (1980) have described the relationship between the automobile and wealth as a trend of human nature to continually trade-off increased wealth by paying more for faster travel times that allowed increased distances between home and work. The vision suggests that there is no carrying capacity of automobility that can not be overcome by technological change. Gordon and Richardson argue that government should promote policies that get people where they want to go faster, cheaper, and more conveniently. Government, especially in terms of mobility, should stand aside for "spontaneous order," a concept promoted by the Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek (1972). This is the spontaneous and uncontrolled effort of individuals that enables the production of a complex order of economic activities. It is made possible only through the freedom of commerce and a minimally controlled, decentralized, and

regulated economy. Individual freedom is impossible without economic freedom. Government should enable spontaneous order and should supply the infrastructure that people demand (and privatize this infrastructure where possible).

The cornucopian automobility vision posits that the automobile offers better transport services than does any other mode (Webber, 1991). It is in one sense the epitome of spontaneous order. People choose to own and drive automobiles because they are superior to mass transit, walking, and biking. The main benefit of automobility, proponents say, is time savings. Greater distances can be accessed in less time than by other modes in an urban configuration accommodating automobility. As technology has improved, the effective radius has expanded for daily routine travel, from 2 miles in a walking city, 8 miles in a streetcar city, to 20-24 miles in the 1970's in a freeway-based city, but travel times remain relatively constant. "The car empowers people to make the choices they want, to be with who they want, to carry luggage, to stop or go when they want, and to be safe from crime while waiting for a bus at a bus stop" (Dunn, 1998, p. 2).

In Atlanta, the major mouthpiece for this vision was a think-tank called Georgia Public Policy Foundation (GPPF). GPPF basically reworks research by national consultants and fits it to the context of Atlanta (GPPF, 2000a). GPPF has ties to the Reason Foundation and the Heritage Foundation, and several key free market-oriented lecturers on urban and transportation policy. For example, Wendell Cox, a nationally recognized transportation consultant and senior fellow of GPPF, drafted a report critical of Atlanta's long-range transportation plan because it funded rail and not enough roads. His fundamental rationale was that people will not get out of their cars no matter what planners and politicians did. For that reason, Atlanta's transportation policy should be to

build more roads. In 1999 Sam Staley of the Reason Foundation urged Atlanta to embrace toll roads and build more roads using the revenue from the tolls.

Like its national brethren, the GPPF called itself a free-market think-tank. Established in 1991, it claimed to be the only nonpartisan research and educational organization in Georgia that focused on state policy issues, and claimed to have 4,200 members (GPPF, 2000b). The think-tank was vocal in debates about privatization of government services, public school reform and the merits of vouchers, and what it saw as excessive federal intrusion in local environmental matters. It espoused a belief in private sector solutions to transportation problems instead of "big government" solutions (this, of course, contrasts with the approach of the Gwinnett Mafia and highway lobby). All of this is significant if, as the GPPF website boasts, Georgia Governor Roy Barnes believes that "The Foundation always tells the truth." Georgia's previous governor, Senator Zell Miller, was honored by GPPF as the recipient of the annual "freedom award" (GPPF, 2002a).

A closer look at who was involved in GPPF reveals the reach of its influence. The staff at GPPF had ties to the late Senator Paul Coverdell and former speaker of the US House and neoliberal economic champion Newt Gingrich (GPPF, 2002b). The president and CEO of the think-tank was a former vice president of a major trucking company based in Atlanta that also had investments in strip shopping centers and apartment complexes. Also serving on the GPPF board was Jim Stephenson, a board member of GRTA and president of Yancy Bros., a major supplier of road construction and real estate development equipment. The chairman of the board was an executive of Gold Kist, a major poultry processing firm. The poultry industry is widely acknowledged to be a

proponent of the Northern Arc because it is an industry with heavy reliance on interstate trucking (Interviewees #26 and 45).

6.3 A Shared Vision of Full Automobility

The auto-industrial complex and cornucopian mobility visions differ on tactics, but do share a final vision of full automobility. It is worth focusing first on how the vision is articulated by its more vocal proponents in academia and to then discuss how the vision filters to the local decision-makers and how differences arise over implementation strategies. In "Why Sprawl is Good" Gordon and Richardson (1997b) express dissatisfaction with the use of the term sprawl. They say it is a pejorative that conjures a lazy, ugly, and undisciplined form of body expression. They imply that the term is an insult to the consumer sovereignty and expressed preferences of the majority of Americans. They accuse opponents of sprawl, like New Urbanists and environmentalists, of wanting to insert "social control" over the alleged "moral minimalism" of suburban life in America.

The articulators of a shared vision of full automobility argue that sprawl is an overstated problem in Georgia. They argue that many technological fixes will resolve the air quality problem and that cars will be cleaner in the future. They posit that because of that, Atlanta should abandon many of the transit proposals in the long-range plan and focus on congestion relief. Automobility (when not congested) is held up as the ultimate standard for which all mobility should strive. The level of personal mobility that is achieved in an uncongested automobility is also the standard by which freedom is measured. To have any less mobility is to have less freedom and, following that, a less-free market.

Banerjee (1993) places Gordon and Richardson's ideological assertions into the wider context of the dismantling of the welfare state begun by Reagan and Thatcher, and on the debates between the role of the state and free markets. Gordon and Richardson support three categories of market solutions – deregulation, privatization, and the creation of new markets from public goods (such as air in the atmosphere and water in streams) (Banarjee, 1993). They support gated subdivisions and private community associations replacing traditional political representation, and praise shopping malls as the privatized main streets of America, saying that they function better than the old town squares (Gordon and Richardson, 1999). They argue that approaching the problems of automobility from this angle is superior to land-use changes and investment in mass transit. The role of government is to provide a legal framework to put market prices on such things as roads, parking, and pollution, instead of regulating it. Government is also necessary to provide a legal framework for property rights, which includes the traditional property rights of land, but also conceptualizations of mobility as a property right. Thus consumers purchase their mobility from a private mobility market that has minimal government interference.

In terms of coordinating a decentralized competitive system of automobility, pricing is key. Mobility becomes commodified and priced. Gordon and Richardson theorize that because there is currently an inadequate pricing system of automobility, congestion is the default mechanism for regulating how automobility is distributed and is an example of spontaneous order shaping urban form. They suggest that sprawl is a congestion relief-valve and a benign market process. They use terms like "disequilibria" and "adjustment" to describe how further spreading is a natural process in a market where

roads (and mobility) are not priced accurately in an otherwise free market. The vision is to impose pricing on highways to regulate congestion while also raising funds for more roads.

Gordon and Richardson's affiliate think-tank, the Reason Foundation, also strongly advocates for High Occupant Toll (HOT) lanes and incremental privatization of some roads and all public transit. Reason also advocates that the federal government decentralize highway funding, giving more control to the states and local government. This devolution of transport funding and policy echoes the broader issues of states' rights and federal devolution in the Republican Party. Locally, the GPPF takes the position that the automobile is under priced. To reduce congestion, GPPF calls for HOT lanes, a system of private shuttle vans, and cash-out parking strategies. To address technical fixes to the air pollution problem, GPPF advocates abandoning annual emissions testing implementing instead remote sensing devices placed on highways to detect the most polluting cars and have them removed or fixed. It also advocates an emissions pricing system, in which motorists are charged emissions fees based on the annual miles driven and the type of vehicle driven.

While advocating HOT lanes, the vision is staunchly opposed to using the toll revenue for anything but more roads. More roads are seen as the way to relieve congestion in Atlanta. There is a pervasive belief that we can "build our way out of congestion" (Samuel, 1999, p. 1). The centerpiece of the vision is a grid system of wide, 4-to-8 lane arterial roads to supplement the freeways, coupled with expansion of the existing freeway network. This grid would overlay the entire metropolitan area. The vision includes separating cars and trucks on freeways with special car-only lanes that are

built within the freeway right-of-way but above the existing freeway, or in tunnels. The double decks would have tolls and peak-period pricing.

The only real problem of the automobile, according to this cornucopian vision, is that everyone does not benefit from the "joys of automobility" (Webber, 1991). Children, the poor, the elderly, and the disabled are physically barred from fully experiencing automobility unless someone drives them. Society should therefore find ways to provide as close as possible the benefits of automobility to everyone. Says Melvin Webber (1991):

Our central challenge is to invent ways of extending the equivalent of automobility to everyone.

The vision of transit is very limited. Cornucopians are proponents of vans such as airport shuttle vans but they also say that low-income people will choose used cars over transit when they can. The GPPF echoes Cox in the mantra that instead of investing in transit every predicted future rail passenger should be given a car at public expense, since this would be cheaper. Proposals for light rail, commuter rail, and intercity passenger rail are routinely attacked as government waste. That brings us to the role that the articulators of a full automobility vision have in deciding how transportation funds are spent in Georgia and how that relates to the state gas tax.

6.3.1 The Gas Tax Debate

The connections GPPF had to companies with vested interests in continued road building reveals the common vision, centered on automobility, shared by the cornucopian and automobility growth machine visions. One of the primary examples of shared policy visions of both the auto-industrial complex and the cornucopian vision has been to

simultaneously lobby to raise Georgia's gas tax in order to finance more roads, while also defending the gas tax from being appropriated for transit. Georgia's state motor fuel tax, which is 7.5 cents per gallon of gasoline, is one of the lowest in the nation (Alaska and Wyoming have lower gas taxes). Comparatively, North Carolina, another fast-growing sunbelt state, has a 22.5 cent gas tax, plus a 3% tax on new cars. The US average state gas tax is 19 cents per gallon (Simmons, 2001f).

The 7.5 cent level was established in 1971 and although attempts have been made to raise it on numerous occasions, by the 1990's Governor Zell Miller declared he would raise no new taxes, and so it was politically difficult. The revenue raised from the tax is restricted to roads by the Georgia Constitution and cannot be used for transit. The revenues go towards administrative costs at the GDOT, road construction, and maintenance. The funds can be used for bike lanes, but it depends on how roads are defined, and generally the GDOT board, which decides how the money is spent, is hostile to anything but automobility. The revenues cannot be used for purchasing transit equipment and cannot be used for operations of transit. In addition to the 7.5 cents gas tax, there is a 3% state sales tax on gas. The revenue raised from this sales tax does not require a state constitutional amendment to divert to transit, merely a vote in the Georgia General Assembly. Yet the assembly has continued to ensure that the revenues from the sales tax are earmarked for roads only. Theoretically, all of this revenue could go to transit or other forms of mobility.

The most vocal proponents for raising the gas tax are members of the automobility growth machine because they perceive raising the tax as a way to accelerate highway building. Among the most vocal were Georgians for Better Transportation

(GBT), but also Wayne Shackelford and Wayne Hill of the Gwinnett Mafia. GBT said that each 1-cent increase in the gas tax equaled \$50 million in additional road money (1998 figures) (Simmons, 2001f; Interviewee # 26). A prominent conservative economist added to the debate that either the gas tax be raised or Georgia cut back on highway funding because, he said, Georgia roads should be funded by user fees in the form of gas taxes, and not from the general fund (Floyd, 1996a & b). This argument was promoted by the GPPF as well.

In reality, the fiscal constraints have been circumvented. The GBT, made up of developers, highway contractors, the Georgia Ports Authority, and corporations like Georgia Power and Bell South, and formed in 1988 to lobby for the Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP), has been instrumental in promoting the methods for circumventing fiscal constraints on road building. It represents a hybrid of the automobility industrial complex and cornucopian visions, balancing the libertarian rhetoric of automobility and freedom with the tendency to seek large public subsidy for questionable roads. GBT was instrumental in convincing the Georgia General Assembly to adopt the GRIP, a system of four-lane roads linking rural areas bypassed by the Federal Interstate Highway System. Made up of 16 routes of approximately 2,500 miles, GRIP had originally included the Outer Perimeter. In 2001, however, the Georgia General Assembly deleted the Outer Perimeter and replaced it with the Northern Arc. The federal government did not formally approve many of the roads in the GRIP, and thus they were not eligible for federal matching funds for their construction (Goldberg, 1996d). The federal government was skeptical about many of the roads because they would handle

relatively small amounts of traffic compared to places where they believed more attention was needed, like in Atlanta.

Because the federal government was dubious about many of these roads, GBT subsequently spent much of the 1990's lobbying for an increasing of Georgia's motor fuel tax. Since the GRIP was not eligible for 80% federal matches, the state had to pay 100% of the cost to build GRIP roads (Floyd, 1996; Goldberg, 1996d). Choosing to go into debt instead of questioning the merits of many of the four-lane projects, each year the state borrowed up to \$135 million to fund GRIP. The GDOT also steadily drew revenue from the state general fund. For example, in 1998-1999 the total GDOT budget was \$1.35 billion (Simmons, 2001f). Of that, \$383 million, or 28%, was raised from the gas tax. Another 12% of that total came from the sales tax on gas, which was earmarked for roads only (Simmons, 2001f). Roughly \$152 million (11% of the total) in general state revenue also went to the GDOT for roads. This money could have been used for transit, had the Georgia Assembly so wanted. It also could otherwise have gone towards schools, health care, or any other state program. The balance of the GDOT budget came from federal block grants and bonding. The GRIP had a debt of \$1 billion accumulated between 1989 and 1996 (Floyd, 1996b). The interest on that debt in 1996 dollars was approximated at \$700 million. With that in mind, highway lobbies sought gas tax increases (Quinn, 2001; Interview # 26).

Ironically, as long as the gas tax was restricted to roads and remained relatively low, many anti-sprawl advocates actually found solace that the already large amount of road building could have been greater but was not. The *Constitution* argued that as long as the momentum for raising the gas tax was only for speculative highway building in

mostly rural areas, then it should not be touched (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1999c). However, if the raising of the gas tax included opening it to transit and passenger rail funding, then the *Constitution* would encourage raising it.

Opening the gas tax to transit was staunchly opposed by the auto-industrial complex (Goldberg, 1998f). It would take a two-thirds majority in both the Georgia Senate and the House to open the gas tax for transit funding. In 1997, a bill did pass in the Georgia Senate to open the gas tax to bike, pedestrian, and commuter rail projects, though it was defeated in the Georgia House after Wayne Shackelford lobbied vehemently against it (Goldberg, 1998h). Shackelford objected to the inclusion of rail funding, which he saw as a potential drain on road money. Rural legislators did not support opening the gas tax because they viewed it as sacrosanct for building rural highways (Goldberg, 1998h). In unison, both the GDOT leadership and rural legislators joined with the wider automobility growth machine and cornucopians in deploying a rhetoric that invoked "Southern" values and the essentialization of roads-only policies as necessary for economic growth. The strategy of using rhetoric is worth exploring because it seems to resonate well in Georgia politics.

6.4 The Rhetoric of Defending Automobile Hegemony and Sprawl

One of the most pronounced strategies that defenders of full automobility shared was rhetorical. The public rhetoric that was deployed by cornucopians was often identical to the rhetoric of the auto-industrial complex, largely because the two factions shared the same immediate opponents – the ethical, accessible, and new urban bourgeoisie mobility visions.

At the national level, the rhetoric of accusing the critics of sprawl of an "anti-suburban" agenda is deployed regularly by national conservative organizations like the Cato Institute. For example, Cato cast the Clinton-Gore administration's proposed anti-sprawl program, the "livability agenda," as "anti-automobile and anti-suburb" and accused the EPA of waging a war on suburbs and American lifestyles (Samuel and O'Toole, 1999, p. 10). Chiming in on the attack, the executive director of the American Highway Users Alliance (AHUA) refers to environmentalists as "extremist" and explicitly targets the Atlanta Sierra Club leadership, blaming them for causing more air pollution and automobile accidents because of stopping road building (Fay, 2001, p.A19). Another component of the national highway lobby, the ARBTA, charges that environmental extremists are harming the public's health and endangering safety. They argued, for example, that road widenings, upgrades, and new roads improve safety, reducing accidents on roads such as Georgia 316 – a road with a tragic history of high-speed accidents blamed not on motorist behavior or speeding but on too many at-grade intersections. They also argue that more roads make it quicker for ambulance, fire, and police response. ARBT's other mouthpiece, the ASET, says environmentalists are waging an ideological war on the American public's freedom to choose, and that these groups hold an elitist view that they "know what is best" for America. ASET refers to the Heritage Foundation and Steven Hayward in its reports (ARBTA, 2001b, p. 2).

The Heritage Foundation, meanwhile, says sprawl has become the "all-purpose scapegoat for urban discontents" (Shaw and Utt, 2000, p. 1). This rhetoric has been adopted in the frequent columns of the conservative editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, Jim Wooten. Wooten constantly lambasts anti-sprawl movements in Atlanta as coming from

an "urban intelligentsia" (Wooten, 1999a, p. G1). Wooten equates single-detached suburbs centered on automobiles as "a setting where families could raise children to become responsible adults" while high density urban environments permit homosexuality and other "alternative lifestyles." He conceptually divides Atlanta's anti-sprawl and pro-sprawl debate as between inside and outside of the I-285 Perimeter, stating that "People inside the Perimeter spend a disproportionate amount of their waking hours talking about gay marriage" (Wooten, 2001, p. A12). This blatant attachment of conservative political ideology to a defense of sprawl filters to Atlanta's suburban politicians such as state representative Bob Irvin, who called both environmentalists and supporters of GRTA an "anti-suburb, anti-automobile extremist group" (quoted in Wooten, 1999b, p. A11). Irvin, considered a moderate among Georgia Republicans, has become the champion in state politics of an agenda that seeks to delegitimize anti-sprawl messages in electoral politics.

The perception that anti-sprawl advocates are inherently anti-suburban was echoed by interviewees in my research. Defenders of sprawl insisted that any kind of new development is "sprawl," and that anti-sprawl opponents are fundamentally anti-suburb and anti-growth. Invoking the literature of the Heritage Foundation, several interviewees claimed that America had been "sprawling" since the first pilgrim landed at Plymouth Rock 400 years ago. Others believe that the expansion of roads will clean the air and that environmentalists cause pollution by stopping roads. Said an industry lobbyist:

If everybody left and all cars were off the road you would still have ozone days in Atlanta. There are Smokey Mountains because trees contribute to haze too (Interview # 26).

One powerful county commissioner emphasized that he represented "thinking people" and that his opponents in the anti-sprawl movement were not thinking people. This echoed the rhetoric of Wayne Shackelford, who in his last days as GDOT Commissioner said that Gwinnett County was "out where people get up in the morning," implying that Atlanta's urban core inside the I-285 Perimeter lacked a work ethic (quoted in Shelton, 1998a, p. A1). [His comments were in reference to expanding MARTA into Gwinnett County, which he claimed would drain money from Gwinnettians (Shelton, 1998a).]

GPPF, in an ironic affront to the Vision 2020 Process that outlined a new vision for Atlanta, demands a "new vision" even as its proposals more accurately reflect the last 50 years of urban transportation policy (GPPF, 2000a, p. v). They argue that increases in personal vehicle use will be inevitable in metro Atlanta, and that policies should simply accommodate that. They do not offer a rationale for this assumption of inevitability except to extrapolate from past trends and invoke ambiguous consumer preference arguments. The GPPF claims to be "realistic" and engaging in "new" thinking, implying that arguments for transit and recentralization of the metro area with infill are old and impossible ideas (GPPF, 2000a, p.v). GPPF also claims to be concerned about social justice and low income access to jobs, claims made by several interviewees who were associated with the full automobility vision. Indeed, a rhetoric of populism and class struggle was utilized to defend sprawl. Interviewees who defended sprawl argued that it was the only way to provide affordable housing. Rhetorically, a concerted effort was made to create a public perception that sprawl equaled affordable housing. One key stakeholder interviewed said he supplied affordable housing (which he said was \$120,000

in 2001) between Atlanta and Alabama. His position was that affordable housing required abundant cheap land on the urban periphery. Further invoking a populist façade, defenders of sprawl said that smart growth or new urbanism was for the rich.

The irony in the populist castigation of new urbanism as elitist is that the critique of New Urbanism is shared with some in the academic left of geography (McCann, 1995; Till, 2001). Gordon and Richardson (1998a) cast New Urbanism as an ideological and religious movement that is extreme and elitist. They dismiss New Urbanism as "Boutique appeal" and go as far as invoking David Harvey's (1997) critique of New Urbanism as spatial determinism. Social problems cannot be solved by urban design, say the leftist Harvey and the staunch conservatives Gordon and Richardson. Like the leftist critiques, they point to Kentlands and Seaside as affluent, elitist enclaves that are too expensive for most American households. While they do not object to it on consumer choice grounds, they claim that the vast majority of Americans prefer low-density sprawl. They critique the CNU's broad agenda as "pie-in-the-sky social engineering" and a "false diagnosis of social problems" (Gordon and Richardson, 1998a). This populist rhetoric is often fused with a McCarthyite anti-environmentalist rhetoric. Thus one prominent developer chastised Atlanta environmental activists while on an organized field trip to observe how other large metropolitan areas cope with growth. Remarking on the generous road building in Texas, he said:

Dallas has the right attitude, ...they ran the environmental people out of here a long time ago. You've got no trees. You've got no streams. You've got no mountains. It's a developer's paradise (Shelton, 1999a).

This prominent member of the Gwinnett mafia, Wayne Mason, called the planning encouraged by alternative mobility visions "socialist." The GPPF, referring to

the environmental litigants during Atlanta's transportation crisis, cast environmentalists as anti-human and said that environmentalists viewed everything in the world as a problem instead of seeing opportunity in the world (GPPF, 2000b). They also cast environmentalists as centralized command-and-control zealots with a philosophy of collectivism and a belief that all behavior should be regulated. GPPF dismissed environmentalists as emotional but extremely dangerous, because, according to GPPF, environmentalists hijacked education through the manipulation of science textbooks. Joining in a national campaign against the "liberal media," the GPPF also claimed that Atlanta media embraced many environmentalist claims. They blame public education and the media for exaggerating environmentalists' claims and spreading negative feelings to the public. This rhetoric was echoed by Atlanta highway interests who called opponents of unfettered automobility "environmentalist extremists" holding the automobile hostage.

This rhetoric aimed at opponents of sprawl contradicted the message I garnered from interviewing those opponents. In the interviews and archival research conducted, there were few explicitly anti-growth positions articulated, contrary to the rhetoric described above. Many interviewees expressed concern about a future carrying capacity for the region, but tended to believe that more people could be accommodated with a different pattern of growth and consumption of natural resources such as water. Few explicitly articulated the position that metro Atlanta had already passed its carrying capacity or that urbanization in general was the core problem. On the defensive, many critics of sprawl were emphatic that "urban" and "suburban" should not be conflated with "sprawl." For many of the more enlightened anti-sprawl advocates, sprawl was not a

debate between suburb and city. The central city of Atlanta made up only 10% of the metro area's population, and thus the political mileage of casting sprawl as a debate between suburb and city was negligible. In fact, almost all interviewees who were critical of sprawl resided outside of the city of Atlanta.

Lastly, it must be stressed that although the ethical, new urban bourgeoisie, and accessible mobility visions all called for urban recentralization and transit, so too did Atlanta's corporate-dominated growth machine, which was a major sponsor and contributor to the Vision 2020 process and which helped create GRTA. This reality reveals that the rhetorical strategy to label the anti-sprawl movement anti-suburban, anti-automobile, or urban bohemian was misleading. For example, the rhetoric of Gordon and Richardson reveals how the cornucopian mobility vision differs from that of the growth machine mobility vision. Gordon and Richardson (2000) argue that central cities are market failures and that government intervention is all that is keeping them going. In the context of Atlanta, this contrasts with the vision of the dominant growth machine, represented by the MACOC, which sought to preserve downtown as the region's vital center and which views mobility as the capacity to access land. Gordon and Richardson have a vision that cities will be increasingly unnecessary in the future and that society is moving to the point where "geography is irrelevant" and information technology will make agglomeration unnecessary. They question the need for day-to-day personal contact and say that "proximity is becoming redundant." Although they do not explicitly point to corporate capital interests such as Atlanta's MACOC, they speak of "urban special interest groups" as the core reason why traditional downtowns are artificially subsidized when they should be "fading fast." They extend this perspective on cities to

urban transportation and are particularly critical of public transit systems, again a form of mobility with the backing of Atlanta's corporate growth machine.

While explicitly exposing a fundamental philosophical contradiction between corporate capitalist visions of mobility and libertarian capitalist mobility, the articulators of the cornucopian mobility vision in Atlanta remained silent about a Gwinnett County-based growth machine, or on other local variations on anti-market processes of shaping space.

6.4.1 Some Emerging Contradictions of Automobile Hegemony

The rhetorical strategy attempting to delegitimize other visions of mobility had a greater meaning when considering the implications for shaping public opinion on civic life and democracy. There were some emergent contradictions in how freedom of choice and democracy were cast. Gordon and Richardson were quite cynical about the democratic side to the planning process, such as visioning exercises and public hearings like Vision 2020. Allowing members of the general public to participate in shaping how their locality grew is not considered a democratic imperative. They claim that fewer and fewer Americans are participating in things like voting, and that small but vocal minorities are usurping public hearings to implement anti-free market policies such as New Urbanism and transit. People are disenchanted with government and that the best arena for democracy is in the market. People "vote with their feet" and exhibit consumer sovereignty over participating in elections. This rhetoric is clearly targeted towards people with an ethos of secession. As I show in the next chapter on "secessionist"

automobility, the rhetoric of defenders of automobility often targets whites in suburbs and includes perceived racial and class prejudices.

Another emerging contradiction is that the cornucopian mobility vision is not always shared by political conservatives, many of whom exhibit the secessionist automobility vision to be discussed in the next chapter. It is worth elaborating on this. Peter Gordon (1999) is explicit in distancing his political philosophy from conservatives. The term "neoliberal" or libertarian may be more accurate in his self-description of unfettered automobility vision. The vision advocates that government minimize its economic and social intervention. Invoking Hayek (Gordon and Richardson, 1999), conservatism is cast as anti-intellectual, traditionalist, mystical, and bound to defend established privilege. A further difference between this libertarianism and traditional American conservatism is that conservatism claims universal values. The cornucopian vision, for example, does not incorporate the anti-urban ethos that equates cities with sin and deviance, as many conservatives in Atlanta do (instead, the city is simply a market failure because it cannot accommodate the automobile and low density sprawl). To the cornucopian, there is no single, all-inclusive set of values, and this is a fundamental fact upon which the whole philosophy of individualism rests. However, there is a glaring inconsistency in the rhetoric on values when the cornucopian vision rationalizes the automobile. For example, Gordon and Richardson refer to Dunn (1998) who said that "the automobile provides a sort of individualist equality that is particularly well-suited to American values" (Dunn, 1998, p. 2). They claim that there are "universally preferred lifestyle choices" that favor, for example, sprawl and automobility, revealing contradictions in their rhetoric that are worth exploiting when considering the politics of

possibilities of urban futures and mobility. That is to say, when arguing against New Urbanism and increased funding, the cornucopian argument points to a universal car culture in America, but then disputes collective universalization when considering markets for New Urbanism or transit under rather different spatial configurations than is the present norm.

In sum, the most interesting dimension of the defenders of automobility in Atlanta is that they are not a single, homogenous group but, rather, a sometimes contradictory and philosophically divergent set of interest groups. While they do share a vision of full, unfettered automobility across all space, components of the auto-industrial complex, exemplified by the Gwinnett Mafia, are rigidly place-based as well. Most significant, however, is the divergence between the auto-industrial complex and cornucopians about the role of government in producing automobility. This exposes an underlying weakness in the idea of a universal car culture dominating Georgia politics. In the next chapter, I present the last mobility vision and stress that this secessionist vision further exposes the contradictions and weaknesses in accepting a universal car culture thesis, or inevitability hypothesis about the future state of Atlanta's growth and quality of life.

CHAPTER 7

SECESSIONIST AUTOMOBILITY VISIONS

7.1 Purpose of Chapter

In the previous chapter I outlined how two factions in the sprawl debate – the auto-industrial complex and the cornucopians – defend automobile hegemony yet have distinctive, even contradictory, underlying philosophies. I want now to discuss a third mobility vision that further exposes the fissures in the defense of full automobile hegemony. This "secessionist automobile vision," which is arguably held by many people in Atlanta, reflects contradictions in automobility, as well as capitalism, that further inform a politics of possibilities for ending automobile hegemony. I will first discuss the factors that have enabled secessionist automobility and then provide an example of how this vision influences the built environment. Broadly speaking, while the secessionist automobility vision includes defense of place it is also (and perhaps more pronounced) includes a defense of certain ideals about how place should be configured, regardless of where in space.

7.2 Automobility and Secession

Vuchic (1999) discusses how the relatively low out-of-pocket expense of automobility for the US middle and upper classes has resulted in a trade-off of distance for other costs. Individuals respond to the problems of poor schools, urban crime, different racial groups, or any other perceived or real urban problem by escaping, or

seceding, from the places where these problems exist. For many individuals and households, secession is an easier option than confronting problems in cities. The low cost of automobility frees people to move away from urban problems, and it frees people from taking more proactive measures in dealing with urban problems. Significantly, secessionist automobility represents an ideal form of space that evades places. Furthermore, automobility allows movement through urban space while sheltering the middle- and upper-class motorist from environmental and social problems. "Secessionist automobility," using automobility as a means of secession, is what French social critic Andre Gorz (1973, p.1) has called the "absolute triumph of bourgeois ideology" over the masses and their daily lives. Those who drive have an illusion that they can seek their own benefit at the expense of everyone else.

Secessionist automobility was a profound ethos deployed in Atlanta's sprawl debate, but it was one which was implied rather than made explicit. In my interviews, I asked each interviewee what he or she believed were the major impediments or barriers for implementing the visions they advocated. While some interviewees blamed "environmental extremists" and others pointed at a cabal of greedy developers, the highway lobby, or a downtown elite, almost all interviewees converged in their pessimism regarding a large segment of Atlanta's middle- and upper-class suburbanites. One prominent suburban politician said:

Prosperity is part of it. Off Sugarloaf (Parkway) there are a ton of rich kids. People will move closer to work but still drive. We are an elite society out here. The society is not sacrifice oriented. We haven't seen any big wars that caused rationing, for example (Interview # 17).

The irony of this view was that it was shared by almost all persons interviewed, regardless of their actual position on mobility, even though the person who made this

particular comment was conservative, generally pro-sprawl, and defended automobility.

This observation about the middle and upper classes was held by articulators of an ethical mobility vision, metro growth machine vision, and by defenders of automobility and sprawl.

Another interviewee echoed a sentiment that there was something particularly "Southern" about the general public's attitude towards automobility.

The South is friendly, small town, but race has perpetuated sprawl. People don't have a problem riding the train in Connecticut, but they do here because they see it as poor and minority...people are trying to escape what they see as urban ills. Southerners don't know much about city life, and fear it. They never had real cities. The 2nd and 3rd generation of Atlanta was raised in suburbia and don't know any other way... but more and more are disillusioned by sprawl. The thing is, culturally, they love their cars, and won't give them up, because of the above reasons (Interview # 21).

The person making this statement was a native-born Southerner and environmental activist.

To anyone familiar with the history of Atlanta, and of American cities, racism has been a major factor in shaping urban form and understanding metropolitan political economy (Stone, 1989; Orfield and Ashkinaze, 1991; Bayor, 1996; Bullard et al., 2000). Racism has had, and continues to have, a major impact on how Atlanta grows, and automobility has been inextricably bound with that (Bayor, 1996; Bullard et al., 2000). In the interviews I conducted for this research, no one openly acknowledged that they were racist. However, a number of interviewees expressed skepticism about restricting automobility because other social forces compelled them to accommodate automobility. For example, several elected officials conceded that race and class factors dominated the residential and mobility choices of their constituents, and that it was political suicide for

them to support expanding public transit or higher-density apartments because of these widely held prejudices. In essence, these decision-makers claimed they were captive to their electorate's racist attitudes.

As I show in the following section, archival research of local zoning debates and debates over expanding transit revealed embedded racial and class politics that impelled a low-density, segregated, and automobile-centric urban form. This archival research was reinforced by the opinion of many interviewees that race and class mattered greatly in Atlanta's sprawl debate. Real or perceived, the notion of race and class politics was likely influencing how and why decision makers choose their positions and policy agendas. I must emphasize that from this research I gathered that race was often conflated with, or mistaken for, other expressed values and ideologies about the nature of cities and humanity. To untangle race from other factors it is appropriate to discuss two strands of secessionist automobility that I identified from observing participants in Atlanta's sprawl debate. The first was a "racialized automobility" that explicitly sought separation by race. The second form of secessionist automobility was what I call "Malthusian mobility," because the fundamental problem was that (borrowing from the sustainability literature, see Pearce and Turner, 1990 and Ayres, 1993) there were too many people trying to do the same thing. There needed to be fewer people – in this case fewer people driving. I will begin with the more widely understood issue of racism and discuss how it results in a racialized automobility vision.

7.3 Racialized Automobility

Racialized automobility, as expressed in Atlanta, has two parts. First, there has been the physical act of secession of whites from blacks, or "white flight," that has affected how Atlanta grew – using space to achieve racial separation, and abandoning place for a higher perceived ideal such as racial separation. Automobility is inextricably bound with that process. Second, racialized automobility has resulted because the prevailing political ethos in many of the white "receiving" areas of white flight has been to reject any gestures towards extending Atlanta's public transit system. Opportunities for configuring space around transit are therefore absent. The mobility of transit, for many white, suburban, automobilists, was defined as a black mode of mobility, and higher-density apartment developments were seen as warrens for crime, broadly associated with blacks. Together, the process of white flight and the rejection of transit and higher-density development resulted in spatial separation that amplified automobility. The motorist who held racist ideas could successfully live in separation and travel through the city in separate, private cocoons, never having to interact with other races. Without a transit system or higher-density development that enables other forms of mobility to be practical, automobility was the default mobility. To understand the pervasiveness of this process in Atlanta, it is worth briefly reviewing Atlanta's tumultuous racialized history and to relate it to the spaces of automobility.

In this regard, Dana White (1982) has outlined the distinction between "racial distance" and "social distance." During the Jim Crow era of segregation, black people in Atlanta and across the South "knew their place," as the saying went. There was a rigid social order imposed on blacks and this rigid social order made whites comfortable in

spatial proximity to blacks. There was a social distance but not a spatially manifested racial distance. This included spatial proximity in residential patterns. Blacks did not necessarily live next to whites, but they lived in proximity relative to the walking and transit-oriented spatial structure of these mobilities. Most importantly, blacks and whites lived in the same political jurisdiction.

As Atlanta grew, and blacks made incremental gains in political empowerment, racial distance set in as a substitute for social distance. Even as early as the 1940's, some whites seceded by suburbanizing from Atlanta as blacks began to influence local elections (Stone, 1989; Pomerantz, 1996; Bayor, 1996). During the 1950's, black political organizers negotiated with the white ruling elite for police reform and a voice on the school board. By the 1960's a black was elected to the city council, and by 1973 to mayor. As the social distance preferred by many whites eroded, automobility became a key component of the spatial strategy of racial separation. The key goal was to move to a separate political jurisdiction for living, but to be able to move around the city without having to share space with blacks.

Ronald Bayor (1996) outlines in detail the transformation of Atlanta from majority white in 1960 to majority black by 1970. Suburbs in DeKalb County along Memorial Drive, Buford Highway, and in eastern Cobb grew during this period into all-white middle-class bedroom suburbs. There was a strong rhetoric of secession and refusal to have regional transit or cooperation on any regional issues (Torpy, 1999a; Wood, 2000). White flight set the trajectory of Atlanta's growth (Orfeild and Ashkinaze, 1991; Keating, 2001). White people and jobs tended to move to the northern suburbs, or to the far southside counties. Within the entire metropolitan area there was a "cascade

effect" of new sprawl into a belt of counties outside of I-285.³² Following this trajectory were retail and service jobs, including trucking and distribution jobs, the remaining bulwark of blue collar employment in Atlanta. What did not follow were public transit and land uses that could efficiently support transit in the future.

With publication of the 2000 Census, there has been evidence that the cascading effect has continued outwards in all directions. In addition to black suburbanization, more Latinos and Southeast Asian immigrants came to the Atlanta area. There was also white flight from the neighborhoods where they concentrated. To the southside, Henry County boomed as Clayton County became majority-minority. Paulding and Cherokee Counties grew as parts of Cobb became majority-minority, particularly in the Smyrna-Marietta vicinity. Gwinnett County is 1/3 minority, and white middle-class families have been moving either to the eastern portions of the county or to counties like Forsyth, Barrow, or Hall (Interviews # 12, 21, 22, 27). A newspaper story on the demographic transformation in western Gwinnett County hinted at what is going on (Puckett, 1999). A public high school called Meadow Creek got the nickname "ghettocreek" in the local vernacular. The school had a large Asian, Latino, and black minority but was still mostly white. Yet many white residents around the school planned to leave the area as soon as their children were of high school age.

The process of spatial separation through white flight was accompanied by debates about expanding public transit and building apartments in white suburban areas. Several elected officials interviewed in this research acknowledged that racism was

³² These counties were Cherokee, Forsyth, Hall, Barrow, Walton, Rockdale, Newton, Henry, Fayette, Coweta, Douglas, Paulding, and Bartow, which became part of the Atlanta MSA between 1970 and 2000.

central to the MARTA expansion debate. One commissioner related a story of the day a temporary park-and-ride lot opened in a suburban area to facilitate bus travel during the 1996 Summer Olympics. The day the sign went up announcing the park-and-ride bus service, the county offices had to reroute phone lines because people were calling in anger, alarmed that MARTA was stealthily expanding into their county.

Gwinnett County was often cited as the prime example of how white racist attitudes towards MARTA have affected suburban growth. For 30 years Gwinnett County could have had MARTA, but its citizens rejected referendums to join MARTA, and racial rhetoric clouded any discussions of rail or bus transit (Torpy, 1999a). Gwinnett had its first vote on joining MARTA in 1971. In the 1980's Gwinnett voters rejected MARTA again in a non-binding straw poll conducted to gauge public support for commuter rail and joining MARTA (Cordell, 1987; Dickerson, 1987; *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* 1988; Tucker, 1988). The last major debate about transit in Gwinnett was in 1990, when Gwinnett voters rejected a plan for joining MARTA. Express buses were debated in Gwinnett in 1989, the year that Cobb County started its own bus system. Buses were rejected that year as well (Quinn, 2001b). In the meantime, as outlined in Chapter 6, the infamous Gwinnett Mafia steered road money towards the county and produced a massive sprawling complex of automobility.

In 1990 Gwinnett was the epitome of white, middle-class suburbia. Since then it has remained majority white, but two things have changed. First, many white newcomers to the county are from northern metropolitan areas where commuter rail and region-wide bus transit are the norm (Interviews #17, #21). Second, the white majority has shrunk, and the county was almost 1/3 non-white in 2000 (Kicklighter, 2001; US Census, 2000).

African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians have concentrated in the county's first ring of suburbs on the border with DeKalb County. With that demographic change, the resistance to public transit is still evident, but it is less than what it had been previously.

In the end, the new Gwinnett County bus system was not initiated by public demand or referendum (Shelton, 1998a). Instead, it was created by the Gwinnett County Commission with very little public debate in 1998. At the formal commission meeting to adopt the bus plan, there was no public speech opposing the bus. It was a done deal made behind closed doors. Specifically, the Commission was able to circumvent a referendum because they tapped funds that did not come with raising taxes (Shelton, 1998b). The local funds for the buses, which would match federal transit grants, came from business license fees and the whole deal was brokered by the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce. The commissioners expressed sentiment with the Gwinnettians opposed to transit, but started the system anyway for two reasons. First, the Commission's commitment to the bus system became leverage in the debate about resolving Atlanta's air quality and congestion problems. The commissioners used the federal conformity lapse as political cover and could easily claim that they were starting the bus system to appease EPA in order to free road money coveted by the county.

Second, the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce supported transit because of its utility as a transporter of low-wage workers to low-wage jobs at malls (Shelton, 1998b). The president of the Gwinnett Chamber was a booster of the bus system because he envisioned it linking inner-city Atlanta's poor to fast food jobs and mall retail jobs that had recently been paying higher wages in order to attract workers. So the introduction of buses was hoped to expand the labor pool and thus decrease the prevailing wage.

Consequently, the Gwinnett Express Bus system started operating in November 2001, ending Gwinnett County's distinction of being the largest county in the nation without transit.

Gwinnett should not be singled out, however, because every county in metropolitan Atlanta, with the exception of Fulton and DeKalb, has at some point rejected attempts to initiate transit since MARTA was originally established in the 1960s. In Cherokee County, resistance to MARTA in the mid-1990s evolved into a resistance to development of a regional express bus system managed and operated by GRTA, and racial undertones were part of the objection (see the section on Cherokee County below). Cobb County eventually embraced very limited transit service only in the late 1980's (Secrest, 1986). This provision of basic mobility to the poor allowed inner-city Atlanta workers access to jobs in Cobb County and provided mobility for an emerging low-wage, minority concentration in a limited area in the vicinity of Smyrna and Marietta. Yet, surrounding the debate about initiating the Cobb County transit system was explicit, racially charged references to MARTA, the City of Atlanta, and its black majority population (Secrest, 1986; Cordell, 1987; Dickerson, 1987). Out of these protests a consensus was brokered that allowed limited bus transit in the county but no financial connection to MARTA. Part of the protest against joining MARTA, to be sure, was probably not racially motivated but, rather, motivated by a neoliberal anti-urban ethos that equated MARTA and its big city problems to graft and organized labor (Corvette, 1986). A source of contention for a vocal group of Cobb citizens was that the MARTA bus drivers were paid too much and that Cobb should initiate a system that was more "modern" in terms of labor-capital relations—that is fewer benefits, no union, lower

overtime, etc. To alleviate the combined racialized and neoliberal resistance to joining with MARTA in a coordinated regional system, the Cobb County commissioners voted for a very limited, separate system.

A decade later, in debates about light rail for Cobb County, a very similar racialized and neoliberal rhetoric surrounded the proposal. The Chairman of a local anti-tax organization declared that "MARTA-style mass transit would lead to an increase in crime and the construction of low-income housing in Cobb County" (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1998c. p. A12). Although Cobb County's chamber of commerce was behind the proposal for light rail, it was rejected, even after the conservative commission chair pleaded to the public that "this isn't MARTA!" Circumventing the voters, the business groups centered on the Cumberland edge city complex funded the engineering study that was rejected by Cobb voters. Likewise, in Clayton County, a start-up bus system, which would eventually incorporate with GRTA, was also funded by business interests to avoid a possible voter rejection. To be sure, by the time Clayton County opened to transit, the 2000 Census revealed that it had transformed into a majority minority county. As late as 2002, counties like Cherokee and Fayette refused to accept GRTA's mandate that they had to accept limited bus transit in order to get highway money. These counties preferred to forego road money rather than accept transit.

In addition to persistently opposing public transit, the racialization of mobility was strongly linked to exclusionary zoning. Exclusionary zoning was the practice of local suburban governments requiring minimum floor areas for homes, minimum house lot sizes, and large areas zoned for single-family detached homes only, practices which effectively barred apartments. Nelson (2000) and Keating (2001) have both blamed

exclusionary zoning for contributing to the continued racial and income segregation in metro Atlanta. The City of Atlanta was the only jurisdiction with no minimum floor area requirements. Places like Northern Gwinnett County and Henry County lacked affordable housing despite the growth in jobs. For example, in Conyers, on Atlanta's eastern suburban fringe, city council members said that apartments would "threaten the quality of life," and that apartments would attract a "certain type of person," "undesirables," and lower property values and crime (Stanford, 1998, p. c4). The result of this exclusionary zoning was that many low-wage, minority workers (in the case of Conyers, an influx of Latinos) had to travel further to reach the blue collar manufacturing and construction jobs in Rockdale County. They had to purchase an automobile, expending limited income, or rely on others because Rockdale County resisted transit.

In rapidly growing Henry County, 80% of the workers at a new mega-warehouse distribution center could not afford to live in the county (Harte, 2000; *Atlanta Constitution*, 2000). The *Constitution*, citing research by Chris Nelson of Georgia Tech, argued that this discriminated against most blacks, in addition to service workers, teachers, single-parent households, and even county employees (*Atlanta Constitution*, 2000). The result was that the low-wage workers had to drive or be driven by a co-worker, friend, or relative, to access jobs that were located beyond the reach of transit and affordable housing. At the time Henry County was one of the fastest growing counties in the US and was undergoing a rapid transformation from a rural to suburban character. The county leaders have championed the idea that over half of the relatively large (for metropolitan Atlanta counties) land area of the county would be developed in a traditional sprawl pattern by 2020. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the county leadership has

strong ties to the Gwinnett Mafia, and former GDOT commissioner Tom Moreland's consulting firm oversaw its massive road-building program (Roughton, 1997). In what might be seen as indicative of racial attitudes, the Henry County commission also flirted with the idea of refusing to fly the new Georgia state flag, which minimized the Confederate Battle Flag, when the state flag was changed in 2001 in a racially polarized debate (*Atlanta Constitution*, 2001c).

Perhaps the most egregious example of racializing mobility was a pair of television advertisements produced by the Georgia Highway Contractors Association (GHCA) in 2001. The rhetoric of the ads was similar to that discussed in the previous chapter, identifying opponents of unfettered automobility as extremists and tyrants. The images in one commercial began in full color with an elderly Korean War veteran seated in front of a large fluttering American flag. He reminisces about fighting communism in the 1950's and warned that environmental extremists were a new tyranny. The picture switched to a white soccer mom corralling her white children into a white mini-van in a pastoral, verdant (obviously white) suburban area. The narrator stated that "environmentalists were preventing us from driving cars and forcing us to live downtown." As the narrator warned of extremists trying to take away suburban freedoms, the imagery switched to a gritty black and white background (instead of sharp colors) with a large, gray, Soviet-style high-rise building, and a black man exiting a bus. "Tyranny didn't win in South Korea, don't let it happen here" the narrator concludes. After a few weeks, the ads were pulled, but not before a wave of criticism and defense in the letters section of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (See Simmons, 2001g; *Atlanta*

Journal, 2001; *Atlanta Constitution*, 2001d; *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 2001; Brown, 2001).

The subtle racism in the television ads deployed by the Georgia Association of Highway Contractors does not tell us that highway contractors were racist, but it does tell us that the highway contractors believed there was a residual strand of racism in the Atlanta metropolitan area, particularly in suburban areas. The commercials reveal that, whether real or not, there remained a strong perception that many whites held racialized views about transit, higher density development, and urbanism. Thus, it was considered a politically astute tactic to appeal to those racialized sentiments and to attach them to the contestation of mobility.

Of course, sprawl by itself does not cause, nor is caused, by racism and segregation. Minneapolis, MN and Portland, OR, cities with very small minority populations, still experienced sprawl. Equally, middle-class blacks in Atlanta moved into sprawl beginning in the 1970's. Indeed, it is a form of environmental determinism to assume that a more compact urban form would compel racial and class integration. New Urbanist developments, for example, are widely criticized for exhibiting the very same race and class segregation that can be found in exclusive low-density gated communities, and for being white, upper-class developments that are very exclusive (Kreiger, 1998). The famous New Urbanist development of Seaside in Florida admittedly has no housing for the workers who keep the resort village operating (Duany, 2001). Significantly, the New Urbanist nostalgia for the 1900-1920's neotraditional urban form omits the racism and class segregation of that era (Lehrer and Milgrom, 1996). The ideal neighborhood type was built for the middle class and rich, not the poor and not blacks. Similarly, that

gentrification occurs only in certain areas of intown Atlanta, and not other parts of the historic core, is undoubtedly related to class and race.

Sprawl is, however, racially segregated. For instance, South DeKalb County underwent suburban white flight beginning in the 1970's. The DeKalb public school system was forced to integrate by court order in 1969 (Stafford, 1999). Whites withdrew their children from DeKalb public schools, and many moved to Gwinnett and Rockdale Counties. Subdivisions in South DeKalb County, along Wesley Chapel Road, for example, went from 100% white to 95% black between 1970 and 2000 (Chapman, 2001). The racialization of mobility in Atlanta's sprawl debate reveals only one part of why automobility was embraced for reasons other than a direct "love affair" with automobiles or an embedded natural desire for driving. Yet rejections of transit and higher-density are not necessarily always motivated by race. It is important to discern between a racially motivated position of secessionist automobility, and secessionism based on other prejudices or ideologies.

7.4 Malthusian Automobility

Sheller and Urry (2000) note that middle-class activists have an ambivalence towards cars. They own them and they use them, but they fight road projects and sprawl. Part of this ambivalence is driven more by what Downs (2001) characterized as Americans' opposition to both sprawl and high density development meant to counter sprawl. In Atlanta, several development-oriented interviewees, expressing frustration with subdivision activists who fought off higher-density, new retail, or new roads, concluded that, for many Atlantans, sprawl was defined as too many people sharing the

same lifestyle. In other words, as one interviewee put it, "Wal-mart was not sprawl." Instead, "too many people trying to drive to the same Wal-Mart, and a Wal-Mart too close to one's house, was sprawl." This was a Malthusian worldview of sprawl, an analogy I make in reference to the rise of a Malthusian worldview in the global population debate in the early 1970's. In the simplest of terms, the Malthusian worldview is one that considers population growth to be a problem instead of how individuals consume natural resources.

Harvey (1974), responding to the rise of a Malthusian worldview, argued that the reason the discourse on population and resources focused on decreasing population rather than decreasing resource use was because all other alternatives were perceived as politically impossible. The alternatives to rigid population growth controls were a significant reduction in the per capita consumption of wealthier people around the world, (mainly in the US and Europe), and replacing the growth-for-growth's sake structure of capitalism with a steady-state, probably socialist, system. Because of the hegemony of the capitalist ideology, decision-makers and world leaders were focused on overpopulation as the cause of ecological and social problems, instead of the economic and social order. For Harvey, the population problem was not about too many people, but about the way people were organized. In thinking about a Malthusian automobility in Atlanta's sprawl debate, the issue is defending ideals of how space is organized more than defending specific places for their innate value.

At its core, Malthusian automobility is about the relationship between density and traffic. The analogy to the population debate is that higher-density and traffic are overpopulation. In the Malthusian automobility vision, individual automobility is not

questioned, just as an individual observing that there are too many people might not question their personal role in resource consumption. Rather, too many other individuals in other automobiles is the problem. Thus, in terms of automobility, too many people are trying to do the same thing, which is to move into a low-density subdivision but have a 20-minute commute to work by car, and shopping relatively close by – but not too close. As more and more households pursue this low-density vision, roads became overwhelmed and pressure to widen them arises. Also, land values increase and so developers seek to increase densities to maximize profits. Developers seek higher densities, whether for apartments, single-detached tract housing, or commercial real estate, because they are interested in the exchange value of land and higher profits.

Many of the residents who were in the first wave of development oppose new, wider roads and new developments because they undermine the original low-density vision they sought. Not for a moment is there an explicit self-critique of automobility itself. Thus, they advocate zoning laws that keep densities lower than what would otherwise be attractive for developers, and they do so because the use-value of land, to them, is the pastoral, exurban or rural character – their vision is the use value. They have a conceptualization of *how* space should be configured in their ideal world. It is necessary, then, to explore the components of the vision to understand how this leads to a Malthusian automobility position in the sprawl debate. To do so requires a cultural contextualization of Atlanta as a Southern city.

In *Region, Race and Cities: Interpreting the Urban South*, David Goldfield (1997) quotes Henri Lefebvre, stating that:

"the urbanization of the countryside involves a subsidiary ruralization of the city."

As cities like Atlanta experienced rapid population growth in the 20th century, a large portion of their new urbanizing populations carried with them a set of rural values, unique in their emphasis to the Southern US. Automobility upholds what Goldfield (1982) called "rural values" in the city. These rural values are worth examining closely in terms of their relationship to automobility, and particularly the Malthusian vision of automobility in metropolitan Atlanta.

According to Goldfield (1982, p. 4), rural values included being "close to nature," or what other scholars have noted as a quest for agrarian, pre-industrial ideals that romanticize independent yeoman farmers. Beauregard (1993) adds that this vision stems from a "Jeffersonian" mythology that greater democracy comes from yeomen farmers. This romanticization of proximity to outdoors was realized by low-density, single-detached houses on large plots. Certainly, this desire for proximity to nature is not distinctly "Southern," but when overlaid with other values, a certain Southern cultural accentuation is apparent.

Another rural value Goldfield discussed was a narrow concept of social responsibility stemming from strong family ties. Goldfield has argued that this lies at the core of Southern values and has had a profound impact on Southern cities and urban form. In the South, he said, family ties focus people inward instead of outward. The concept of personal responsibility is defined as personal responsibility to one's family, and to individual morals and ambiguous notions of "family values," but not a recognition of how an individual's behavior fits into wider social processes or problems. Therefore, there is a lot of rhetoric in Southern politics about "personal responsibility" but no real intention towards collectively solving regional-scale problems such as sprawl,

congestion, air and water pollution, or inequality in education, health care provision, or affordable housing.

The strength of this anti-civic ethos is revealed in the priority of private consumption at the household level over public consumption in public space. Private consumption of the home and by the family takes precedence over public consumption, and what Harvey called "possessive individualism" is entrenched. Private yards are preferred over public parks and civic spaces, for example. This, of course, translates into another underlying logic for low-density sprawl – the automobile is preferred over transit because privatized mobility is preferred.

A third, often-ignored, aspect of the South and rural values is evangelical Protestantism. Scholars of Southern culture, such as John Shelton Reed (2001), elaborate that there is a quasi-ethnic version of the South that is about more than food or music. It includes an ethos of cultural conservatism which is stronger than in the rest of the nation and that stems from higher participation in organized religion. The extreme religious worldview in many Southern households translates into a strong anti-urban rhetoric. The religious ethos holds a pessimistic view of human nature, and therefore people, especially strangers, are not to be trusted. In a dense city, where there are obviously more strangers, the possibility of vice is amplified. Transit, too, allows for too much social interaction that threatens purity and virtue. The tendency towards evangelical Protestantism also leads to suspicion and intolerance of new ideas.

With this outlook, the low-density suburbs surround a corrupt city of ghettos and mob rule. Beauregard (1993) interprets the theorized mob rule to be inflated by media coverage of "gang warfare" coupled with a real underground drug economy that is

associated with the central city, even as mountains of evidence show suburbanites are inextricably bound in the consumption of illegal drugs. The repetitive media coverage of corrupt big city mayors like Bill Campbell's airport corruption scandal (Salzer, 2001; Wooten, 2001) reinforces notions that central cities are naturally corrupt, while small town, rural government is not structured around cronyism and patronage.

The "community" where these values are synthesized moves inside, to the private spaces of home, churches, and clubs (which can exclude those that are undesired), but also draws resources away from civic space. The everyday interaction with other people is characterized as homogenous, with church and family summing the extent of ideas about community, instead of a broader, diverse, multicultural, ethnic, or even religiously diverse concept of community. Hence the reluctance to support investment in public space or civic buildings, and in many cases even antagonism towards public education.

The culmination of these rural values and ideals of spatial configuration in Atlanta's sprawl debate is Malthusian/ secessionist automobility. Without the automobile, it is unlikely that these rural values could be realized physically. Yet, as more and more people seek out this vision, the sprawl spreads further. The result is what Goldfield called "countrified cities," spread out, low-density sprawl that is no doubt found in every part of the US, but is most pronounced in the South. For example, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) identifies 6 major urban regions in the US. One of these is the "Southeast Interior" that runs from Birmingham and Nashville on the west, to Atlanta on the south, to Charlotte and Raleigh-Durham in the northeast. Compared to other urban regions, the Southeast Interior has the lowest percentage (29%) of its population living in central cities and has the lowest density of any major urban region of the US, at 200

persons per square mile. Compared to other sunbelt cities and cities across the US, Atlanta has larger average lot sizes, fewer multiple family units, fewer cluster homes, and the largest commuter shed of any city (Nelson, 2001). The Southern urban belt has what ULI called "extreme automobile dependency." Both Nashville and Atlanta had per capita automobile travel approaching 35 miles per day. In exurban Dawson County, 67% of residents commute southbound on Georgia 400 to jobs in north Atlanta suburbs such as Alpharetta and Perimeter Center (Anderson, 1997). The irony is that many of those residents of Dawson County used to reside in those same north Atlanta suburbs.

The epitome of Malthusian secession in urban design is the cul-de-sac. The cul-de-sac is less a place and more an ideal of how space should be organized. In Gwinnett County, in 1997, half of the 9,000 roads in the county had a cul-de-sac at one end (Becker, 1997). Cul-de-sacs contribute considerably to automobile dependency, yet there is a paradox. The consumer of a home on a cul-de-sac is said to desire this arrangement because their children can play in the street free of the threat of automobiles. The consumer desires the cul-de-sac because it is quiet, out of the way, or a form of defensible space where possible burglars have fewer escape options. Atlanta homebuilders stress that houses on cul-de-sacs sell at prices at least 10% higher than nearby lots not on a cul-de-sac. Entire subdivisions with thousands of cars are essentially a large cul-de-sac, with only one entrance. This means that the more cul-de-sacs there are built, the more there is automobile dependency because they eventually feed into larger roads, which then feed into even larger roads. The more automobile dependency there is, the more people want to escape from roads, with traffic, speeding, and pollution,

and so they retreat to another cul-de-sac further outward. In one sense, then, secession begets further secession.

Following from this, in the next section, I will provide a case study of how secessionist automobility visions interact with other mobility visions, particularly the automobility growth machine, and produce certain spaces reflecting tension between the visions.

7.5 Secessionist Automobility Visions: Cherokee County

Cherokee County is a rapidly growing auto-centric suburb on the north side of Atlanta. In the 2000 Census Cherokee County had a population of 140,000 people and was 94% white. Unlike other northside counties, it did not have a regional mall or any class-A office space. Rather, more than 70% of workers commuted to jobs outside of the county, almost all by single-occupant vehicle (Interview # 27). The majority of county residents, according to its political leadership, were vehemently opposed to any form of public transit except for business-organized vanpools for corporate commuters (Interview # 27; Bennet, 1998a; Long, 2001). In fact, many in Cherokee quite literally wanted to secede from the Atlanta Regional Commission because they felt that by being part of the ARC they would one day be forced to accept transit, among other things (McCosh and Quinn, 2001). Many Cherokee County homeowners groups were also part of the core opposition to the proposed Northern Arc, which would traverse the northern section of the county, if built (Interview # 27; NATF, 2002). The county thus provides a good example of how racialized automobility and Malthusian automobility fused into a complete package of secessionist automobility visions. This secessionist vision, in turn,

engaged in a protracted political struggle with the auto-industrial complex and cornucopian automobility visions, thus exposing fissures in automobile hegemony.

Cherokee County is staunchly conservative. For example, during the visioning process for a proposed county land-use plan, many residents were opposed to the concept of "villages," which were clusters of higher-density development at key roadway intersections and in the traditional small towns of the county (Sanderlin, 1998). The opposition was to the term "village." The reason for this, according to the county's planner, was that the term "village" was associated with Hillary Clinton, the wife of President Clinton, who once used the sound bite "It takes a village" in discussing her proposals for improving the learning environment for children. Instead of using the term "village" the town planners used "township" to describe the vision of small town clusters (Patton, 1998).

Concern over labels aside, in the late 1990's Cherokee County became politically polarized over the proposed land-use plan. The older residents of the county, many of whom dominated the local political scene, supported more sprawl-type growth (Interview # 27; Bookman, 1998). They stood to benefit from sprawl because it increased land values and provided development opportunities. Allied with them were the homebuilding and development interests, who sought to continue the sprawl model of development throughout the county. Many of the development interests in Cherokee were regional in scope and part of the wider automobility growth machine. Along with development interests across the northern suburbs, Cherokee's pro-sprawl commission supported the proposed Northern Arc.

On the south side of Cherokee County new suburban residents moved from all around the country and made the county into a classic bedroom suburb. As massive developments like Towne Lake grew and congestion overwhelmed the county's two-lane road network, the new suburbanites began to oppose some aspects of sprawl (Bookman, 1998). The ideal spatial configuration people sought in Cherokee was disappearing with more growth. The main concern was a Malthusian stance on traffic, but there was also a strong concern for school over-crowding and the gradual elimination of scenic vistas and the rural environment that attracted some to the county in the first place. Dismayed at what to them was a blatant lack of concern by their commissioners, the new suburban, mostly Republican, homeowners banded together into subdivision groups and began attending public meetings, voicing opposition to the county commission's generous dealings with developers.

This new suburban activist movement, which was politically conservative, was cast as anti-growth by developers and their allies on the commission. Sensitive to being cast as anti-growth, the conservative subdivision activists participated in a visioning process to draft a comprehensive land-use plan that would channel and manage growth. This process was controlled by the pro-sprawl county commission, however (Interview # 27; Bennett, 1998b; Bennett, 1998c; Bennett, 1998d). The final draft of the land-use plan included township clusters that would be modeled on new urbanist design principles, a "Technology Ridge" corridor along I-575 to attract high-tech jobs like those in the Georgia 400 corridor, and zoning ordinances that would encourage conservation subdivisions and transferable development rights (TDR's). In the rural areas, land owners could transfer their development rights to the townships. A potential developer who eyed

land in a designated township would buy the right to development from a rural land owner, who would then be legally bound never to develop the rural land. The county would not build infrastructure in the rural zones, while focusing county funds on the townships and the I-575 corridor.

The idea was to create a rural utopia surrounded by small towns with rural values. The county would encourage low-density "horse farm estate communities" and mountain/lake developments in the rural zones. The plan would regulate visual pollution along main roads. All new retail developments would be focused in the townships instead of sprawling along the county highways. This would make the driving experience more aesthetically pleasing along the main highways.

As envisioned, the townships would be the focus for development, and twelve were identified. Each township would have a commercial district centered on an intersection, with apartments adjacent or nearby, and then gradually declining housing density as one moved further from the commercial node. The townships would encourage new urbanist design elements and were of the "parking in the back" variety of New Urbanism (that is, automobility's visual blight was hidden, but the usage of the car still dominated). The pro-sprawl commission chair called it a "quality growth" plan.

While the development interests in the county supported the idea of intensive development in the townships, the actual geographical definition of a township was much greater than what subdivision activists had in mind. The commission and development interests set the population goal of the county at over 300,000 by 2020, and cited this as the reason the townships were geographically large (Bennett, 1998b). Many of the slow-growth minded subdivision activists were outraged at the population projections and

argued that the townships should be much smaller, less dense, and the county should cap future population at 215,000 by 2020 (Interview # 27; Bennett, 1999a). The debate over how many people the county should allow by 2020 was quintessentially Malthusian versus Cornucopian, with the automobility growth machine championing the concept of no limits.

Needless to say, the Cherokee Commission eventually drafted a significantly watered-down version of the rural/ small town utopia outlined above. Land-owners along GA 140, for example, expressed "violent" opposition to having their development potential devalued by townships and a rural-feel. The lure of strip-style automobile access in terms of land values was too great. Land along one major road was listed at \$100,000 an acre in 1999 (Bennett, 1999b). In the designated townships, many residents opposed the increases of density and mixed-land uses, preferring that densities be left low. The idea of apartments above stores was balked at as inviting "crime" to the rural utopia (Patton, 1998), and in 1999 the amount of acreage in the township designation was reduced significantly, while the number of apartments and houses was also cut dramatically. Much of the rural area of the county was zoned for 1 house per 2 acres.

Bitter from defeat, in 1998 the subdivision activists mounted a political campaign to defeat those commissioners up for re-election (Interview # 27; Ezzard, 1998). Because it was an all-Republican county, and because the incumbent commissioners had generous campaign funding from developers, the Republican subdivision movement took on a grassroots aura. The "morally conservative" Emily Lemcke, who became the champion for subdivision activists, raised \$23,000 in small donations from activists, and pledged not to take developers' money (Ezzard, 1998). Her opponent, the chair of Cherokee

County, had \$100,000 mostly raised from developers (Ezzard, 1998). In August 1998 Lemcke won the Republican primary, and effectively won the seat as county commission chair because there was no Democratic candidate to challenge her in the November election. Her victory was seen as a key moment in Atlanta's sprawl debate. Lemcke became the regional symbol of slow growth and NIMBY movements, and she was routinely asked to speak to fledgling neighborhood groups across north Georgia, including two visits to Athens. Lemcke was the epitome of Malthusian automobility in Atlanta. She was a non-native who moved to metropolitan Atlanta because of a job and sought an exurban lifestyle in Cherokee but with close automobile access to jobs and urban amenities in North Fulton and the rest of Atlanta.

Two other slow growth commissioners were elected that year in Cherokee County. After the election, the defeated lame-duck commissioners approved dozens of rushed rezoning requests in favor of homebuilders and developers. The move solidified the cause of subdivision activists, and some tried unsuccessfully to sue the commission for rezoning in the midst of a political signal that Cherokee citizens wanted slow growth. As Cherokee Commission chair, Emily Lemcke also became the representative of the county on the ARC board. There she projected herself into the regional sprawl debate and became one of the most vocal opponents of the Northern Arc, of the Gwinnett Mafia, and in favor of the formation of GRTA and its ability to force counties to accept public transit. Instead of allying herself with the traditional block of peripheral counties that were in the grip of the Gwinnett Mafia, she was aligned with the downtown Atlanta growth machine and intown interests (Interviews #27; # 30; #38; #44). In an interview with this author, one person familiar with Cherokee County politics vocalized support for

extending transit into Cherokee county, but said that realistically there was too much racism in Cherokee for transit.

Secessionist automobility permeates Atlanta's sprawl debate throughout the metropolitan region and is not unique to Cherokee County. In west Cobb County, for instance, homeowners signed covenants agreeing not to subdivide their land for at least 20 years. The motivation, according to one homeowner, was that "we are for families – on large plots" (Visser, 1999, p. F2). The land was a 15-minute drive from Marietta in light traffic, and the residents wanted to preserve "country living" and the 15-minute drive, which meant keeping everybody else out. Another group of west Cobb homeowners pooled their life-savings and refinanced their homes in order to buy nearby undeveloped land and preserve the rural character of exurbia while maintaining automobile access to the consumptive spaces of suburbia. In an essay published in the *Atlanta Constitution*, one activist asked, while remarking about traffic in suburbia, "Who stole my mobility?" After running down the list from developers to county commissioners and the metro chamber of commerce, he confessed that part of the problem was, in fact, himself and his excessive driving habits (Paulson, 2000).

One of the key ironies of secessionist automobility, especially its Malthusian strand, was that many suburbanites and exurbanites identified themselves as being "anti-sprawl." They were not entirely false in that representation. They actually shared the same definition of sprawl as the automobility growth machine and the cornucopian visions – that is, sprawl was growth, it was any and all development, no matter what density or pattern. One key decision-maker defined sprawl as simply "civilizing land," and stressed that there needed to be containment of the "civilizing" of land (Interview

#27). Another interviewee pointed out that "suburban people don't want increases in density, and they see this as sprawl" (Interview # 40). That is, for people living in low-density suburbs, it was the influx of apartments and more retail that was cast as "sprawl." Smart growth or new urbanist policies such as those proposed in the township plan in Cherokee County were sprawl, just as the Northern Arc and its highway-oriented development was sprawl.

The secessionist/ Malthusian vision of mobility did, however, have an environmentalist strand to it. Many exurbanites moved to "the country" for environmental instead of social reasons and are, by default, dependent on automobility, yet they oppose any further intrusions of other people's automobility. This was an ideal for many environmentalists who lamented the intrusion of sprawl northward into Cherokee County. For environmentalists with a Malthusian automobility vision, an attractive antidote to their image of sprawl was the concept of a "conservation subdivision." This was a development with houses clustered together in the countryside, surrounded by forests and pastoral landscapes. The clustering of houses enabled more open space to be conserved, and yet overall density on the land was not increased at a neighborhood level. A 50-acre development could have 50 houses on one acres lots, or 50 houses on 1/2 acres lots with 25 acres set aside for conservation. The conserved land would be open to all subdivision residents. Conservation subdivisions could be certified by mainstream national environmental organizations such as Audubon or the National Wildlife Federation because they take into account minimizing habitat destruction in their development. Conservation subdivisions were also promoted by some national environmental organizations to preserve agricultural land around development, enhancing

the agrarian theme of rural values (see, for example, NLT, 1995). Proponents of conservation subdivisions promote themes of rural values and environmental stewardship (Arendt, 1996). The stewardship angle attracted environmentalists but, from a mobility perspective, conservation subdivisions were automobile dependent – they were still residential subdivisions far removed from jobs and urban services.

7.6 Secessionist Automobility as a Barrier to Change

When asking interviewees about who or what they perceived as barriers to change, or obstacles for promoting their agenda, there was widespread cynicism about the level of sophistication of the general public in Atlanta. There was pessimism that the public in Atlanta was capable of understanding its own role in creating the problems people complain about. Instead, the general public was often cast as running away from problems, as being in denial. The most pervasive faction that made this complaint was the pro-sprawl cornucopian and auto-industrial complex. They perceived that they were demonized in the public, yet at the same time they were providing the public with what it wanted. They believed that they were providing a service to the public – more roads, more free parking, more sprawl, because this was consumer demand. Yet often the most privileged classes opposed further efforts to produce more spaces of sprawl. They had achieved their ideal, or optimum spatial configuration, centered on automobility, and sought to keep that optimum. This was most pronounced in places like Cherokee County, where a very strong secessionist automobility vision dominated the political discourse on sprawl and contested the auto-industrial complex's efforts at producing more sprawl.

Adherents to the ethical, accessible, and new urban bourgeoisie mobility visions shared a similar notion that the public was not sophisticated in its confrontation with the

sprawl problem. Like the automobility and cornucopian visions, they too believed that the general public was inconsistent and even hypocritical. The public said it wanted clean air, clean water, and social justice. Yet, when it came time for individuals to act on that, to modify their behavior by choosing to reduce their own automobility, to live closer to work, or even to engage in the public planning process, there was an overwhelming display of complacency and denial. More cynical observers noticed that as environmental and social problems in Atlanta worsened, many people were responding by fleeing further away, if they could afford it. Instead of defending place, they were seeking an ideal spatial configuration elsewhere. Secession was easier than confrontation and engagement.

CHAPTER 8

CONTESTING THE SPACES OF THE AUTOMOBILE IN ATLANTA: A CASE STUDY OF THE NORTHERN ARC DEBATE

8.1 Purpose of Chapter

By now it should be evident that considering how different forms of mobility require different spatial configurations, values, and ideologies adds to and enriches our understanding of struggles over urban space. While most geographers are appreciative that urban spaces are manifestations of struggles between capital and labor, as well as the outcome of conflicts between alliances of capitalists, labor, and community groups located in different geographical spaces, there has been less attention to struggles over *how* space is configured. Part of this lack of attention to spatial configuration, at least in the U.S., I have argued, arises from the essentialization of the automobile in everyday American life. Yet there are competing visions of mobility that have differing organizational structures of space –competing geographies– that are at the nexus of the sprawl debate in Atlanta. These competing geographies of mobility are components of wider normative visions of the urban future that are representations of values and ideologies that span more than just a defense of place. They include conceptualizations of social justice, ecological sustainability, attitudes towards cities or civil society, race, class, and how people should live.

In this chapter I will continue the examination of how the sprawl debate is fundamentally a debate over the spatiality of the automobile versus other mobilities. The

purpose of this chapter is to show how the mobility visions outlined in the previous chapters interact, conflict, and, in some cases, ally to produce urban spaces centered on particular geographies of mobility. I want also to show how the projection of values and ideologies, represented by the material geographies of mobility, interact and conflict. I have chosen to focus on the contentious debate over the Northern Arc as a case study of how competing visions of mobility struggle over the production of space.

8.2 The Northern Arc

Figure 8.1 shows the proposed path of the 59-mile Northern Arc. In 2001 Governor Barnes moved the Northern Arc closer to realization by announcing that he would borrow from future federal highway funds and use bonds to accelerate the road (*Atlanta Constitution*, 2001e).³³ This is part of a wider \$8.3 billion bonding program he proposed in order to speed construction of rural highways, HOV lanes in Atlanta, and to purchase buses for GRTA (Simmons, 2001b). Although on paper it appears that the Northern Arc could some day be built, in reality it is an extremely contentious issue that is far from decided. Barnes's commitment of billions of dollars in bonds intensified the debate over the need for the Arc. The spatiality of the possible urban future of Atlanta

³³ This borrowing against future federal transportation funds was called "GARVEE" (Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles). In Georgia, the GARVEE bonding plan is to accelerate by 10 years the funding of transportation projects in Georgia, and borrow \$8.3 billion from future federal transportation allotments (Simmons, 2001b; Coleman, 2001). Hence whatever gets built now using GARVEE bonds will deplete future federal revenues, meaning any new proposals that are advanced in five or ten years will be theoretically difficult to fund, given that the money was already spent years before.

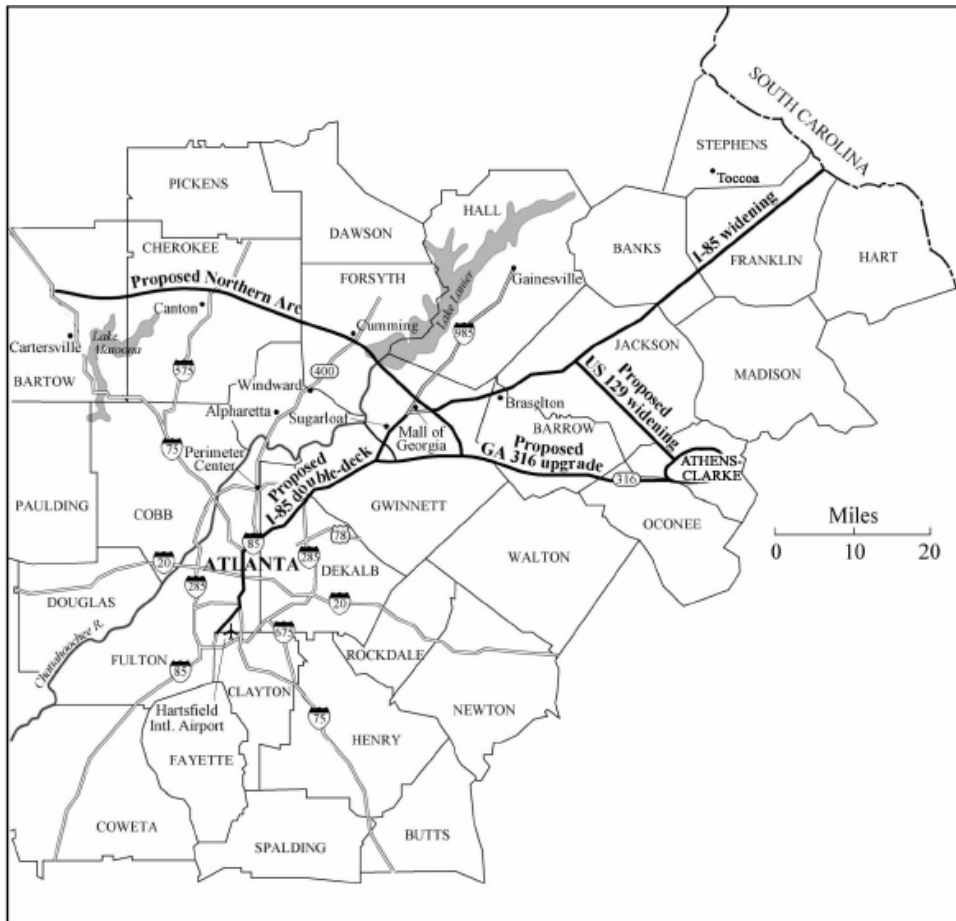


Figure 8.1: The Geography of the Northern Arc

will be significantly affected by the decision to build or not build this road. Everyone I interviewed in this research had something to say about the Northern Arc. Some interviewees lamented that it was once part of the proposed Outer Perimeter and they vowed to one day have the entire loop built, fitting a vision of full, unfettered automobility and sprawl. Others warned that the Northern Arc would do irreparable damage to the natural resources of Georgia, and still others pointed out that spending \$2.4 billion on the Northern Arc was robbing the existing built up area of Atlanta of needed infrastructure.

The competing visions of mobility, and the competing visions over the geography of Atlanta's urban future, are at stake in this proposed road. Regardless of whether this road is built or not, metropolitan Atlanta is expected to grow, adding more than 1 million additional people by 2025 (ARC, 2000b). The Northern Arc would have no bearing on whether or not this growth occurs and, in fact, the primary proponents of the road, the GDOT, admit that growth would occur with or without the Arc (Hairston, 2002). But it will have a profound impact on *where* that new growth occurs and, more importantly, *how* that growth is spatially organized. Politically, then, there are deep divisions over the Northern Arc, such that as late as May 2002 there was speculation that when the ARC next voted on Atlanta's transportation plan in the Fall of 2002, the Northern Arc vote will be very close (Hairston and Frankston, 2002).³⁴

³⁴ In July 2002 all planning and engineering for the Northern Arc was suspended because of emerging ethics scandals involving the governor's connections to developers interested in the Northern Arc, and conflict of interests among members of the GDOT, ARC, and GRTA boards who own land in the Northern Arc corridor (Galloway and Frankston, 2002). The governor ordered that all work on the Northern Arc cease until the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation clarifying ethics rules for individuals serving on state boards such as GDOT. It is worth noting that this was also an election-year in which Barnes' Republican opposition was using the Northern Arc to attack Barnes, and in

The conflicts over the Northern Arc represent three salient issues of how mobility visions embody conflicts over how space should be considered and who is actively seeking to produce Atlanta's urban future:

- The Northern Arc contradicts the vision of the metro growth machine, and suggests that the metro growth machine remains unable to shape the region in its own image. Moreover, the political process that has kept the Northern Arc in Atlanta's transportation plan reflects the metro growth machine's negotiation, rather than outward challenge, of automobile hegemony (unlike the accessible-ethical mobility visions, which explicitly challenge automobile hegemony).
- Second, a prevalent secessionist automobility vision continues to undermine the auto-industrial complex and cornucopian agendas. Secessionists in the path of the Northern Arc have become the most vocal opponents of it because it will intrude on their ideals of how space should be configured and organized.
- Third, the opposition to the Northern Arc by secessionists indirectly aids the accessible-ethical mobility reform coalition. While this coalition had experienced considerable setbacks in the last few years, with the aid of the new urban bourgeoisie it remains steadfast in its determination to end automobile hegemony in Atlanta. If the movement against the Northern Arc is successful, the politics of possibilities for this mobility reform coalition might be promising.

which advocates of the accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie were increasingly critical of Barnes (Hairston, 2002e and 2002f).

The Northern Arc is symbolic of what is transpiring within the sprawl debate. It is a signifier of the direction in which Atlanta's debate over sprawl is proceeding and how the competing visions of mobility interact to produce specific spaces. Although there are obvious place-based motivations for supporting or opposing the Northern Arc, what I want to highlight in this discussion is the dimension that considers *how* space should be configured and organized. How this all hinges on the Northern Arc is outlined here, beginning with a discussion of who wants the Northern Arc and why.

8.3 The Spaces of the Arc: "Atlanta's Baltimore"

The Northern Arc is part of a vision. This vision is informed by values and ideologies I have previously identified as the auto-industrial complex and the cornucopian mobility vision. In a very concerted and planned way, in what some might call "social engineering," the auto-industrial complex centered in Gwinnett County is producing a new urban space that is more than a traditional sprawling suburbia. The vision is to produce a new auto-centric city that is to Atlanta what "Baltimore is to Washington," as Gwinnett County Commission Chairman Wayne Hill has put it (Nurse, 2001). To a degree this is a place-based effort to bolster land values in areas within and adjacent to Gwinnett County. There is no doubt that raw capitalist mobility favoring automobility is at work. However, the vision is also about an ideal spatial configuration, one which is promoted across all space, and not simply in a distinct place like Gwinnett County.

Figure 8.1 shows ground zero for this new city in the vicinity of the Sugarloaf Parkway interchange with I-85, between the Gwinnett Place Mall and the Mall of

Georgia. The Northern Arc will feed traffic right into this new city. Hill believes that within 50 years Gwinnett will be a destination, and not just a suburb of Atlanta (*Atlanta Constitution*, 2001b; Nurse, 2001; Interview # 17). He envisions a day when millions of people come to Gwinnett instead of Atlanta (Interview # 17). While this space is already being produced, its possibility for success as a major city is dependent on significant investment in new roads (Mcosh and Shelton, 1999b; 1999c).

The single-most important component to the vision of a super sprawl city in northern Gwinnett County is the Northern Arc. The highway would link the new city to rapidly growing, and affluent, Forsyth and Cherokee Counties, as well as to I-75 and thus to the interior of the Eastern United States. Just as Atlanta is the lower "pass" through the Appalachian Mountains between the interior and the Eastern Seaboard, so would Gwinnett be if this mega-road were built, enabling both trucks and automobiles to bypass Atlanta and, particularly, the congested I-285. However, the Northern Arc is not simply a by-pass in the Gwinnett vision. Rather, it would link to bedroom communities in the rapidly growing, affluent northern exurbs of Atlanta in Forsyth, Cherokee, and Bartow Counties. To the east, the Northern Arc would link to another vital component of the Gwinnett vision, an upgrade of Georgia 316 to freeway grade, thus pulling Athens (home of the University of Georgia) into the orbit of the new city. Athens would really become a suburb of Gwinnett. Everything between Athens and Gwinnett would be configured as sprawl in the vision. To the north, the vision includes widening I-85 to six-lanes all the way to the South Carolina border. During an interview with one stakeholder, a 1960-planning map of Gwinnett was unfolded and presented to this author, showing a more proposed large road projects, including two more north-south freeways in Gwinnett

County (Interview # 17). Lastly, a proposal to double-deck I-85 between the Mall of Georgia and Atlanta's Airport has been discussed. This would be a special toll road with limited exits that would primarily link Gwinnett to the airport (in other words, the "HOT" lanes discussed elsewhere). From this we see that the Northern Arc is but one part, but a very important part, of the creation of a Gwinnett City. The Northern Arc can be viewed as the thread that will tie the rest of it together. Without the Northern Arc, and if the rest of this vision is implemented, the Gwinnett City will only have a north-south connection to the region, and not a good east-west connection. It will not be at the "crossroads" that other cities started from, and will likely become even more congested than it is today. Hence, the loudest supporters of the Northern Arc are the power elite in Gwinnett County, part of the automobility growth machine outlined in Chapter 6. Recall also from Chapter 3 the efforts of the GDOT during the 1990's to promote the idea of the Outer Perimeter, and the activity undertaken to at least expedite the Northern Arc. Many of the supporters of the Northern Arc continue to assert that the entire Outer Perimeter should be built (Interview # 17; # 24; #26; # 40).

Parts of the vision are already falling into place. The vision extends Atlanta's favored quarter north along the Chattahoochee River towards Lake Lanier. Large subdivisions of executive housing with \$1 million homes and country clubs are already under development. Along the Chattahoochee River, state funds, part of the greenspace program established by Governor Barnes, are being used to purchase and protect some of the most expensive land in the South (Shelton, 1999b). This, of course, will make the real estate adjacent to the river corridor even more valuable, as exhibited in areas closer

to Atlanta along the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area.³⁵ Civic space is being created at Sugarloaf Parkway near the I-85 interchange. The new Gwinnett Civic and Cultural Center will be expanded to provide more ballroom space and 3,500 new parking spaces (Nurse, 2001; Interview # 42). Additionally, Gwinnett boosters lobbied for a 13,000-seat arena for minor league hockey and concerts. Promoters eventually envision an arts center, hockey team, symphony, and a natural history museum (Interview # 17). Surrounding this auto-centric civic center would be dispersed class A office space, the most desirable and most expensive, which would be attracted by the proximity to executive class housing along the Chattahoochee corridor and the future Northern Arc. That it is estimated that tolls on the Northern Arc will approach \$7.50 to travel its entire length simply assures that it would be used by the affluent commuting from the west into Gwinnett (Hairston, 2001). In terms of retail, the crowning glory of the vision, the Mall of Georgia, has already been built, and was conveniently located adjacent to the future path of the Northern Arc near a proposed interchange.

One of the key advantages of building in Gwinnett County is that it is on the edge of Atlanta's non-attainment area. Therefore, speculators are simply crossing county lines to seek new spaces for industrial development. 50 miles north of downtown Atlanta on I-85, but only 15 miles north of the Mall of Georgia and the future Northern Arc, Braselton is the first exit on I-85 outside of the non-attainment area. The long-term vision is to

³⁵ The money needed to buy the developable land in the corridor soaks up funds from other uses. For example, the Robert Woodruff Foundation gave large private donations to the Trust for Public Lands which then purchased real estate at market value in the affluent northern suburbs along the Chattahoochee. The land trust was awarded \$25 million from Woodruff to buy a parcel of land in Gwinnett that a developer wanted to convert into half-million homes. Meanwhile MARTA was in a \$25 million annual deficit (Shelton, 1999b).

create a massive complex for trucking-oriented distribution in a narrow corridor (Frankston and Wilbert, 2001). In addition, massive new housing and commercial development is being proposed for this area. Affluent developments extending the "favored quarter" further north into Jackson, Hall, and Banks County are centering around the Chateau Elan development. Moreover, the Gwinnett City vision includes a new working class. The new city would be proximate to immigrant workers who are concentrating in the southwestern end of the Gwinnett County and to the north in Gainesville. These new immigrant concentrations are targeted as the labor force that will build, clean, and maintain the new city, according to one interviewee.

To begin building this city, Wayne Hill championed the construction of \$1 billion worth of water and sewer infrastructure, including one of the nation's premier waste water recycling plants that cost \$700 million and is, coincidentally, named after Hill (Nurse, 2001). When Hill was seeking the site for this plant, he was aware that Gwinnett had roughly 10 years left in sewer capacity at the rate of growth it was experiencing (McCosh and Shelton, 1999b; 1999c). Moreover, there is increasing awareness in metropolitan Atlanta that water scarcity is looming in the future, and Gwinnett has locked in on a substantial future allotment (Seabrook, 2001). The sewer plant became a key goal to sustain growth in the I-85 corridor and for enabling the newly emerging space for automobility. Ironically, in keeping with the Gwinnett-as-the-next-Baltimore vision, Hill advocated light rail or a monorail between Gwinnett Place Mall and the Mall of Georgia, but not further south to link with MARTA. The vision of commuter rail was similar. Commuter rail from Athens and Gainesville were supported rhetorically, but it was also noted that it should be centered on Gwinnett County (Interview # 17). People would

commute by rail from Atlanta, from Gainesville, and from Athens to the new city and not the other way around. Moreover, the vision included a rail line paralleling the proposed Northern Arc: connecting the county seat of Gwinnett – Lawrenceville – on the east to the County seat of Cobb – Marietta – on the west, and passing through Alpharetta (North Fulton) along the way.³⁶

The producers of Gwinnett City know that they cannot get the Northern Arc built without first creating the demand for it. Hence, the vigorous boosterism of Gwinnett County is accompanied by rapid development and the building of plentiful infrastructure to accommodate further auto-centric growth, but is also accompanied by a rhetorical campaign to convince the wider general public that the growth in the path of the Northern Arc is inevitable and that future traffic projections justify building the road now. Thus they have projected a fatalistic, inevitability hypothesis into the discourse that is difficult for many Atlantans who are stuck in traffic to reject, unless they examine the discourse more closely. For example, both the GDOT and Gwinnett boosters use an alarmist tone that "explosive growth makes the Northern Arc necessary," and that a drive between Bartow and Forsyth County that takes 24 minutes now will take 58 minutes in 2025 if the Arc is not built because of congestion of local roads (Hairston, 2002b). What the GDOT conveniently fails to mention is that with the Northern Arc the same trip would take 56 minutes because much of the trip would still be on the same congested local roads, even if a portion of that trip would be on the Northern Arc (Bookman, 2002).

Indeed, much of the rhetoric of inevitable growth is self-fulfilling when examining what speculative development activity is underway in the path of the Northern

³⁶ Proponents of this plan are also some of the same people who have consistently opposed MARTA in any form.

Arc. Not surprisingly, the political power behind the Northern Arc is the auto-industrial complex, whose members are sinking capital into real estate throughout the corridor, adding to the "inevitability" of the road. Speculators have assembled large land parcels in the vicinity of where I-575 in Cherokee County would possibly intersect the Arc (Bennett, 1999c).³⁷ A developer in Canton has announced plans for Cherokee's first mega-development with housing, commercial, and office development that would be built-out over ten years (as the Northern Arc would be presumably constructed). The developer has said that if the Northern Arc is built, they would also build a regional mall (Bennett, 1999c). Technology Park Atlanta, directed by Gwinnett developer Charlie Brown, has invested in land for a low-rise hi-tech office development near the future I-575/ Northern Arc interchange as well (Wilbert, 1999d). This development, called Technology Bluffs, would set hi-tech offices in the foothills of the Appalachians, modeled on the massive Technology Park development built in Gwinnett in 1971.

In Forsyth County (see figure 8.1), several mega-developments were proposed in the Northern Arc Corridor. Upscale subdivisions were proposed by the Eagle Land Group and Beazer Homes (Saunders, 2002). The Forsyth County Commission has lobbied GDOT to add 3 interchanges to the proposed route, and has passed resolutions to show Forsyth's support for the road (McCosh, 2001a). The posh Polo Club developed by Chatham Propserities is just off GA 371, which is the key interchange the Forsyth

³⁷ Coincidentally, Cherokee County was the location of the fictional Croker Concourse, a speculative office building gone bust, in Tom Wolfe's (1998) novel *A Man in Full*. In this story, an arrogant good ole' boy developer built a large office building beyond existing development in anticipation of the Outer Perimeter. He faced bankruptcy because the Outer Perimeter was not built, and thus his real estate investment was devaluing. The entire novel unfolds from the inability of the developer to pay off speculative debts because the proposed loop was not built. Wolfe does not elaborate in his story about the forces that either delayed or stopped the road.

Commission wants, while a mega-development called Windermere has been constructed, such that it anticipates exits and coordinated its layout with the road in mind.

Meanwhile, one of the key members of the Gwinnett Mafia has speculated in property in Forsyth County and in the Braselton area in anticipation of future "inevitable" growth (Wilbert, 1999). Much of this speculative development hinges on construction of the Northern Arc. If these developments are constructed without the Arc, massive gridlock on local roads will make the values of these developments low relative to more accessible locations. At the same time, if these developments are built, there will be even more calls for the Arc, reflecting the inevitability rhetoric currently being deployed.

As I have outlined in previous chapters, the main focus of a localized growth machine is in bolstering the value of real estate by controlling public policy on roads and other infrastructure. I have discussed how the metro growth machine, reconstituted around the transportation crisis, has focused on enhancing access to the entire region as a node in the global capitalist space economy, but also actively seeks to re-make the core of Atlanta, extending from Downtown to Perimeter Center, into a new vital center of the Southeast. I posit that the efforts of a Gwinnett-centered growth machine, which is the leading front of the auto-industrial complex, are actively seeking to do the same thing, but their vital center would be in Gwinnett, and not Atlanta. Obviously this represents competition between factions of capital located in different places, hence place-based struggle. Yet I maintain that this struggle is also competition between mobility visions – visions of *how* space should be configured. Considering the logic of automobility outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, the most obvious place for automobility to expand is on the periphery, and not the center. By default of the logic of automobility, the auto-industrial

complex is vested in the urban periphery for expansion. Moreover, their power derives from strong ties to the GDOT power structure, to powerful statewide elected officials such as US Senator Zell Miller (an historic ally), and from the ability to align ARC board votes in a block to support peripheral roadways such as this. Their mobility vision is one of continued unfettered automobility, with discussion of rail almost an afterthought and bus transit cast in terms of a basic mobility for an underclass.

Philosophically, the vision of the auto-industrial complex is complimented by the cornucopian vision of automobility. That is, sprawl and automobility should be allowed to spread across the Piedmont and Appalachian foothills into a mega-low density countrified city from Chattanooga on the north, Macon to the south, and towards Greenville and Charlotte in the east, and perhaps even connecting to the megalopolis in the Northeast Corridor. To the cornucopians, this is progress, this is economic growth, and this is inevitable. Significantly, this is a vision for all space and not just specific places. For this vision, the Northern Arc is vital.

8.4 Negotiating the Spaces of the Arc

The auto-industrial complex and cornucopian automobility visions share resounding support of the Northern Arc. They envision the Arc as a standard beltway with multiple interchanges and opportunities for automobile-oriented development. Yet Governor Barnes has presented a different vision of the Arc. His vision is of a very limited set of interchanges, perhaps only where the Arc crosses existing interstates (Coleman, 2002; Hairston, 2001d; 2002c). While the GDOT has pushed for at least 13, if not more, interchanges, reflecting their anticipation for the Northern Arc to be a

developmental highway, the vision of the Governor involves about six interchanges (Hairston, 2001d). This would mean that any access to the Northern Arc would have to be from one of the other six limited-access highways it would intersect. Between these interchanges there would be no way on or off of the freeway, and thus no opportunity for road-based development such as that springing up around a standard interstate in Georgia. Barnes has also advocated that the Northern Arc should be constructed within a 1,000-foot green corridor along its entire route (Hairston, 2001d). This 1,000-foot wide buffer with "greenspace" for bikes and pedestrians would possibly also enable a future railway. Sprawl-related development, if it did occur, would theoretically not be visible from the road, a disadvantage to roadside peddlers such as McDonald's or Exxon. Moreover, the vision of Barnes, now accepted by many who support the Arc, is that the road will be a rather expensive toll road, with an estimated charge of \$7.50 to travel the entire 59 miles (Hairston, 2002a; Coleman, 2002). This vision of the road limits the possibility of localized automobile travel. For example, the road would not likely be used as a way to access shopping by local residents in the corridor due to both limited access points coupled with high tolls.

In this vision, then, the Northern Arc would act as a true by-pass, except that three of those exits would be in Gwinnett County, where as I have stressed above, an east-west freeway is seen as vital. It is this vision that most likely appeases those members of the metro growth machine. While dubious of pulling sprawl further north and enabling a "vital center" to emerge and compete with the existing core, some in the metro growth machine, especially those with trucking interests, see a need for east-west road capacity (Interview # 44; Lawler, 2001; Barnes, 2002). Moreover, this vision of the Northern Arc,

promoted by the "surrogate mayor of metro Atlanta," as Governor Barnes has been called (see Chapter 4) is also reflective of the metro growth machine "negotiating" politics with the powerful Gwinnett Mafia as a proxy for the wider auto-industrial complex.

It is worth briefly repeating the metro growth machine vision to emphasize that the Northern Arc does not fit in that vision. Firstly, the vision is arguably place-based. Atlanta's metro growth machine has a vision to re-center the accumulation process to what is called a "vital center" of compact, higher-density growth between the existing downtown and Perimeter Center. It seeks to compete nationally and internationally with other metropolitan regions by preserving notions of "quality of life" that are increasingly at odds with the problems of sprawl, congestion, and smog. It seeks to accommodate the demands of its new urban bourgeoisie workforce by providing the levels of urbanity associated with New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, creating a walkable 24-hour city with plenty of cultural amenities and a "café culture." This recentralization would be made possible in part by development of a radial commuter rail network, extensions of the existing MARTA rail system, a regional express bus system, and, eventually, a high-speed rail network. This does not mean that automobility would be excluded, and as I outlined in Chapter 4, the metro growth machine continues to lobby for roads. However, the metro growth machine has expressed discontent with the degree of automobility in Atlanta, even as it has benefited from it in the past.

The Northern Arc, in any form, does not fit this vision of re-centralizing growth, especially if it is also going to cost \$2.4 billion – money that could be spent on such items as commuter rail, fixing existing arterials, and retrofitting the spaces around MARTA stations for pedestrian and bicycle mobility. It is generally understood by many

advocates, planners, and business interests, including vocal supporters of the Northern Arc, that regardless of the promises by Governor Barnes and others that the Northern Arc would be designed in such a way as to limit growth, the road will pull sprawl further north, dispersing growth instead of concentrating it (ARC, 1994; Hairston, 2002d). For example the prominent economist Jeffrey Humphries, based at the University of Georgia and strong supporter of the Northern Arc, openly acknowledges that the road is a developmental highway meant to attract new automobile-oriented growth (Hairston, 2002d). It would especially pull sprawl north of Gwinnett County along I-85, where considerable auto-oriented speculation and investment is already underway. Moreover, where the proposed Northern Arc intersects with I-85 in Gwinnett County is adjacent to an area envisioned by Gwinnett County boosters as a future mega-city that effectively competes with Atlanta for primacy in the region. Again, this does not fit with the metro growth machine vision.

What, then, of the metro growth machine vision? There is no doubt that the metro growth machine is divided about the Northern Arc and that it does not unanimously represent spaces created in the image of the metro growth machine (Saporta, 2001d; Saporta, 2001e). This is the first of three salient points about the spatiality of the Northern Arc. It reveals that the metro growth machine negotiates but does not challenge automobile hegemony and cannot, at this moment at least, produce space in its own image because of internal conflicts over the Northern Arc and conflicts with the auto-industrial complex over the destiny of the region. The impotence of GRTA in deliberating on the Northern Arc reflects this. Recall that GRTA, which was largely the institutional brainchild of the metro growth machine, can veto any transportation plan put

forth by the ARC but needs a 2/3 majority. GRTA's board did ask for ARC to delay including the Northern Arc in the 2025 RTP when a formal vote was taken in 2000, and ARC rejected that request (Interviews # 7; #19; #30; # 36). When the final 2025 RTP cleared the ARC board and was passed to the GRTA board for approval, the GRTA board did not veto the RTP, which would have forced ARC to redraw the plan to exclude the Northern Arc. The GRTA board, appointed by Barnes and said by many to be divided on mobility issues, cannot achieve such a vote as it stands (Interview #42). Hence, what was largely enabled by the power and political influence of the metro growth machine has become paralyzed on the Northern Arc. This would not seem as significant if it were not for the fact that in the Fall of 2001 Allen Franklin, CEO of Southern Company, and Dan Dupree, an executive at Cousins Properties (both key players in metro growth machine), formally asked the ARC board that funding for the Northern Arc be removed from Atlanta's transportation plan, at least temporarily (Hairston, 2001a and b). Their request in writing was denied. This rejection was met with public silence by the metro growth machine and as the contestation of the Northern Arc has intensified, with almost daily coverage of it in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the dissent against the Arc among the rank-and-file of the metro growth machine has been deafeningly silent. The only component of the metro growth machine offering consistent opposition is the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and even there the editorial board is divided (since the liberal *Constitution* merged with the conservative *Journal*).

To be sure, interviews with key people in the metro growth machine revealed that there is a large amount of dissent concerning the Northern Arc, but this dissent is not expressed openly. One venue where the metro growth machine does remain vocal,

however, is through the environmental organization the Georgia Conservancy, which, as I have noted elsewhere, is a moderate, business-friendly environmental organization with prominent business leaders on its board. The Georgia Conservancy has maintained an open dissent against the Northern Arc in any form, and its president, who also serves on the GRTA board, remains passionately opposed to the road. However, there were those interviewed, who are also key players in the metro growth machine, who think the Northern Arc is appropriate if built as Governor Barnes envisions, within a 1,000-foot green corridor and limited interchanges. Hence my interviews and the questions about the Northern Arc revealed the internal divisions among capitalist growth interests.

There are several factors that I believe are crucial in understanding how the Northern Arc has moved forward in the contemporary political climate. The political economic context for the timing of Barnes's announcement on the Northern Arc was in the climate of a new Presidential administration openly hostile to the way the previous Clinton Administration had allowed the EPA to enforce clean air laws (see for example, Wall and Edelstein, 2000). There is considerable evidence that the Bush Administration is actively slowing the process of critically examining the relationship between clean air, transportation, and urbanization (Wooten, 2000; *Atlanta Constitution*, 2001f; Seabrook, 2001b). The EPA has already, by this time, been ordered to decouple itself from organizations promoting smart growth and transportation alternatives to the automobile. Under the Clinton Administration, the STPP, one of the primary national organizations that explicitly challenged automobile hegemony, was co-sponsor with EPA of a web-based clearinghouse of information and policy recommendations (O'Toole, 2001; Samuel and O'Toole, 1999; O' Toole, 1995). This shared web-site reflected a general sensibility

within the EPA that truly to address environmental problems of sprawl, and especially air quality, automobile dependency had to be addressed. Obviously, this is not the policy agenda advocated by the Bush Administration, whose Cabinet is stacked with fossil fuel and automotive industry executives who oppose tougher emissions standards on automobility and publicly state that there is "not enough science" to back up pollution claims which were openly acknowledged by the previous administration (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 2002a). The Bush EPA has instead argued that it cannot mandate clean air standards until it better understands the process of "ozone transport," such as air pollution from Alabama contributing to Atlanta's smog. It has therefore extended until 2004 the deadline for Atlanta to achieve the attainment goal that was originally established as 1999. This has provided the proponents of the Northern Arc with a crucial window of opportunity they had not had since before the region's "transportation crisis" began in 1996. Among other things, then, the current administration in Washington has provided a temporary reprieve to localities with strong automobility growth machines like Atlanta.

As Keating (2001) lamented in discussing research on decision-making in Atlanta, it is difficult to know *why* all decisions are made, much less who actually makes decisions behind closed doors. Keating stressed that there has never been an accurate history of why certain decisions about the politics of growth have been made in Atlanta, nor is one likely. However, reading the discourse and analyzing shifts in what people emphasize and how they emphasize issues can reveal something about how they perceive the wider political climate. It is insulting to the intelligence of Governor Barnes not to suspect that he knew that with the Bush Administration, the "heat" on Atlanta with

respect to smog would probably recede. Indeed, it has. [For example, in 1999 Barnes was openly warning that he would have to add many more counties to the 13 counties already in non-attainment, and used this to leverage concessions on the GRTA vote. Since late 2000 there has been no discussion in public by Barnes about expanding the non-attainment area. There are many other examples: Barnes's enthusiasm for rail in his first year, followed by waning support; Barnes's original insistence that GRTA be active, followed by GRTA's sluggish adoption of performance measures. The list could go on, and the most prominent example is the current fast-tracking of the Northern Arc.]

Of course, politics undergirds all discourse on the Northern Arc. In Chapter 4 I noted that Barnes has been called the "surrogate mayor of metro Atlanta." What this implies is that Barnes is the spokesperson and political agent for the agenda of the metro growth machine. However, Barnes, as Governor of Georgia and not simply the agent of a metro growth machine, does not necessarily promote their vision exclusively but, rather, he promotes the results of mediation between the metro growth machine and the assortment of competing visions about how Atlanta should grow. This is logical since he is the most powerful statewide elected official, one who relies on broad electoral support from a geographically diverse constituency that far outnumbers the relatively few, mostly white, middle-aged to elderly male corporate elite that make up the metro growth machine. The Governor's politics, then, reflect the mediation of struggles between disparate factions of capital, interest groups, and public opinion, with the dominant faction ultimately shaping a compromise. That the Northern Arc remains in Atlanta's long-range transportation plan, despite its enormous cost, spatial implications, and obvious conflict with air quality issues, reveals that politics makes transportation policy.

In 2001, when Barnes accelerated the Northern Arc and announced an extensive, multi-billion dollar bonding scheme to fund a package of transportation projects, there was arguably "something for everybody" (Simmons, 2001b). This package included \$2 billion targeted for the GRIP program in rural Georgia, which reflected a political compromise that involved redistricting and reapportionment of the Georgia General Assembly and an expected decline in rural power, and hence a last payback for past political favors. The package included another \$2 billion to widen the remaining sections of Interstates I-75, I-85, and I-20 to 6 lanes, which will undoubtedly benefit trucking interests (Simmons, 2001b). The package included another \$2 billion for a proposed light rail line between central Atlanta and Cobb County, reflecting political ties between Barnes and his home county, as well as integrating other parts of the "favored quarter" into a regional rail network that undoubtedly reflects the metro growth machine agenda (Simmons, 2001b). A multimodal terminal in Downtown Atlanta that would be the eventual center of a commuter rail, regional bus, and intercity high-speed rail network was also listed in the package, although actual funds for commuter rail have been lacking. This multimodal terminal is considered prime real estate and Downtown boosters are interested in developing over the air rights of the station, as well as adjacent tracts of land that are now surface parking (Saporta, 2000; Barry, 2001a). This, too, reflects the spatial imperatives of the metro growth machine. It also included several hundred million dollars for procurement of buses for GRTA's express bus system, and another \$2 billion for metro Atlanta HOV projects.

Barnes, as "surrogate mayor" of Atlanta, presented a negotiated settlement of automobile hegemony that nevertheless undermined some spatial goals of the metro

growth machine while simultaneously providing for wider goals of reduced circulation of capital and incremental transit investments in the direction desired by the metro growth machine. As a statewide elected official, the Governor is, in essence, arbitrator of conflict between different competing visions. (Moreover, the GRTA board, appointed by Barnes, reflects that role). However, once a conflict has either been resolved or circumscribed, he becomes the chief spokesperson for the compromise. This is, in essence, "politics" and it is politics that is moving Atlanta in the direction of building the Northern Arc. Yet it is also politics that may stop it from being built.

8.5 Contesting the Spaces of the Arc

Although a politically powerful auto-industrial complex has assured that the Northern Arc qualifies for billions of dollars in the Barnes transportation vision, and the passivity of the metro growth machine reveals internal conflict within the ranks of Atlanta's corporate elite, there remains a very strong contestation of the Northern Arc. Subdivision activists who reflect what I have identified as a secessionist automobility vision are vehemently opposed to the Northern Arc.³⁸ The coordinated grassroots organization against the proposed freeway did not intensify until Spring of 2001, when it was announced by Governor Barnes that special bonds would be used to accelerate its construction.³⁹ Beforehand, the Arc was a distant worry because its \$2.4 billion cost was

³⁸ To be sure, those who hold the secessionist automobility vision yet do not reside in the path of the Northern Arc may well support the Arc. The point is, if the road were proposed where they lived, they would likely oppose it.

³⁹ The Northern Arc Task Force (NATF), the main organization opposing the Arc in Atlanta's northern suburbs and exurbs, continued to protest the Arc even after Barnes suspended all work on it in July 2002 (Quinn, 2002).

considered prohibitive. By Summer of 2001 subdivision activists, including the slow growth members of the Cherokee County Commission, were organizing grassroots opposition and networking with other subdivision activists in the path of the highway. In places like Cherokee, Forsyth, and Bartow County the rhetoric of defending the "small town quality of life" has been deployed by opponents of the proposed road. The chairwoman of Cherokee County, Emily Lemcke, had already voted against the Northern Arc on the ARC board, keeping her pledge to slow growth in the county (Shelton, 1999c).

The secessionist automobility opposition to the Northern Arc reflected a contradiction in automobile hegemony, a second salient point emerging out of the Northern Arc debate. For secessionists, the main line of criticism against the Northern Arc was not a critique of automobility as an organizational spatial structure. Motivating the opposition to the Northern Arc was a strong NIMBY conceptualization of the sprawl problem (Quinn, 2002). Sprawl meant too many cars that should go somewhere else. One activist in Cherokee County exclaimed that "we thought 230 acres would buffer us from the ghastliness of American automobile culture" (Quinn, 2002, C1). Another wrote that the Northern Arc "would create precisely the kind of chaos that I have just escaped. I moved [to Bartow County, the Western terminus of the proposed Northern Arc] to get away from the city" (Shipp, 2002, A10). The Arc was conceptualized not as a traffic reliever but as a traffic generator, and this would be an unacceptable intrusion of more cars into an area that should remain automobile-centric, though only for those already there. There was no real dispute about automobility as an everyday way of life and there was little explicit opposition to automobility as the dominant organization of space. The

contradiction was that the small-town, exurban lifestyle was possible because of high-speed automobile access to Atlanta's northern edge cities. The Northern Arc would simultaneously make the rural utopia even more accessible by automobile while also erasing that rural utopia in its path. Ultimately, the opponents of the Northern Arc knew the road would carry waves of others seeking the same kind of secession they already experienced (Galloway, 2002; Hairston, 2002d).

Some opponents have even argued for a "Southern Arc," for Atlanta's south side, thus dispersing sprawl in a different direction (Interview # 27). Others have said that they would support building the Arc from GA 316 in Gwinnett County to GA 400 in Forsyth County, but stop it from coming through Cherokee County. This would, of course, appease those secessionists further to the west while also appeasing the Gwinnett-based automobility growth machine. With that, a collective of subdivision activists across Atlanta's north side have formed the "Northern Arc Task Force to fight the road (see NATF, 2002a). Already, they have hired a former Attorney General for the State of Georgia as counsel (Hairston, 2002e). The activists are extremely well connected in the Republican Party and have elicited the rhetorical support of 3 Republican Gubernatorial candidates, thus making the Arc a partisan issue (Governor Barnes is a Democrat) (Galloway, 2002). Meanwhile, they have attempted to make the Arc an issue in all political forums and electoral politics in the northern tier.

The secessionists also began networking with seasoned environmental activists from inside I-285 who came from the ranks of the ethical and new urban bourgeoisie mobility visions (Hairston, 2002; Hairston and Quinn, 2002). Arising from this is the third salient issue regarding how the politics of mobility undergirds Atlanta's sprawl

debate and providing an indication of where the politics of sprawl and mobility are headed in Atlanta. Specifically, this is the possibility of coalition building, organized around a specific common cause, that Henri Lefebvre (1991: 381) discussed as a new reality of spatial struggle where seemingly disparate interests groups actually find common ground. In this case, the reactionists in the secessionist automobility camp have opposed the Northern Arc because it threatens their own privileged space, their gardens and parks, their nature and greenery, and their homes. Lefebvre argued that this type of reactionary social movement would ally with ecologists who also opposed a project (such as the Northern Arc) and that this was a new form of spatial struggle that transcended defense of locality and led towards struggles over *how* space is configured and utilized. While on the surface secessionists seem to be defending physical places, a finer resolution examining motivations reveals the defense is of an ideal of spatial organization and configuration, and rootedness in place is less relevant. Secessionists, it should be reminded, moved to their ideal spatial configuration from a place that they did not defend, a place that succumbed to the sprawl they claim to admonish. While I am not dismissing humanistic attachment to place, I am arguing that the strong current of what undergirds their actions is an ideal of *how* space should be configured. This consideration of how space should ideally be configured is similar to the motivations of the accessible and ethical mobility visions, not in what the ideal is per se, but in how they conceptualize the debate as one concerning *how* space should be configured rather than as one which is simply a defense of place.

An arguably unintentional political coalition is emerging between the decidedly anti-urban, and sometimes racist, articulators of the secessionist automobility vision, and

the three pillars of an organized challenge to the hegemony of automobility – the accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie mobility visions. All of these visions oppose the Northern Arc. Adherents to the accessible mobility and ethical mobility visions have charged that the Northern Arc would be an ecological disaster and inequitable, and would divert limited resources to the urban periphery while contributing to further sprawl. Yet a major thrust of their argument is about *how* all space should be configured. More significant, however, is that if this coalition successfully blocks the construction of the Northern Arc, a task that will likely require litigation, their collective success could very well change the trajectory of Atlanta's growth in a radical way and this trajectory is worth considering in detail. I call this trajectory the "spaces of congestion."

8.6 The Spaces of Congestion: Retrofitting Atlanta

In Chapter 2 I discussed the essentialization of automobility in discourses on urban futures. As an example I quoted Anthony Downs (2001a 2001b) on the grim future of increased time spent in automobiles by all Americans. Downs suggested that people ready themselves for continued automobility and congestion by purchasing amenities for vehicles such as cell phones, air conditioning, and a good stereo. His prediction is that no matter what is done in the next several decades, congestion will worsen because of a combined ambivalence Americans have towards both sprawl and higher density, which means the haphazard pattern of the status quo is likely to continue. Moreover, congestion will also intensify because of opposition to higher taxes for more roads, opposition to transit, coupled with NIMBY battles over their locations. An example of this is, in fact,

the Northern Arc debate. Yet some people do not think impending congestion is necessarily such a bad thing, if certain other things happen at the same time, and if the possible impact congestion will have on space is considered.

In the interview process, a number of interviewees discussed the concept of "congestion as growth management," an idea suggesting that nothing be done either to improve or to build new roads in Atlanta's suburbs and, instead, congestion should simply be allowed to intensify –in other words, the mobility advantages of car usage should be allowed to decline. A fundamental logic of this perspective was that, regardless of how many billions of dollars the region spent on more roads, congestion would never get much better. Indeed, the current long-range transportation plan for Atlanta shows that 45% of all travel in 2025 will be in congested conditions, worse than today (ARC, 2000b). One interpretation of this is that for any given trip a person makes by car almost half of that trip will be in a congested situation. [Congestion here is defined as conditions where the volumes of automobiles on a road are higher than the capacity for a road to accommodate automobiles while enabling the expected high-speed travel that makes automobility advantageous.] For example, the average person will leave their driveway and traverse subdivision streets with few impediments, only to find that the main arterial is constantly jammed, especially near shopping areas and freeway exits.

The Northern Arc, which has been justified as a congestion reliever for I-285 (even though it would be 25-30 miles north of I-285), would likely remove some cars and trucks from I-285. Yet this would not relieve I-285 from congestion, despite what defenders of the Arc deploy in their rhetoric. The GDOT has even admitted that while presently 27% of the vehicles on the northern section of I-285 are trucks, in 2025 26% of

vehicles on I-285, with a net higher volume, will likely be trucks (NATF, 2002b; *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 2002b; JJG, 2002). Hence, there will be no real noticeable difference to the average motorist sitting in congestion on I-285 if the Northern Arc, in whatever form, is built. The Northern Arc would really only minimize, but not avert, the increase in congestion expected under current planning scenarios. Similar conclusions have been acknowledged by the American Highway Users Alliance (2000), which reported that if billions of dollars were invested in the nation's worst freeway bottlenecks, time savings and gas would be saved by individual motorists who use those bottlenecks presently but, overall, congestion will get worse. The final outcome of improving strategic bottlenecks would be a decrease in the growth rate of congestion, but no end to it. Individuals will still waste large sums of personal income on gas and time, but less of a large sum if the bottlenecks are improved than if they are not.

With that, there is a compelling argument to do nothing to widen or improve existing bottlenecks or congested roads. Instead of building new roads and expanding peripheral roads where congestion is increasing, this logic follows, transportation investment should be funneled into mobility choices such as improved transit, New Urbanist land-use, and configurations that reduce automobile dependency. Indeed, it may even be appropriate to take away spaces from automobiles on congested roads in order to privilege buses, bicycles, or other mobilities. This is, in fact, common practice in some European countries, but the important point is that alternatives to driving are provided. In the end, the average motorist will notice no substantial improvement in congestion on I-285 if the Northern Arc is built, or on their local arterial "main street" if its is widened or turn-lanes added, because it will simply fill in with more cars. Therefore, if investments

were made in other mobilities, at least an option would be available to more people in the future. Moreover, the option of cycling, walking, or transit usage would likely allow savings in personal income that outpace the "savings" from improving expensive freeway interchanges or building \$2.4 billion worth of roadways.

In the interviews and archival research I conducted, "congestion as growth management" was theorized as resulting in a massive return to central cities and inner suburbs. Congestion as growth management is supported by articulators of the accessible mobility vision because any and all new roads in suburbs are considered detrimental to social justice. Roads in affluent areas should not be widened but, instead, reinvestment in the central city and other depressed areas should be part of transportation policy. Articulators of the ethical mobility vision also suggested that congestion be allowed to simply happen: people should just have to stew in traffic and reflect on their own personal role in creating congestion. For the metro growth machine and new urban bourgeoisie, congestion was a knife-edge. On the one hand, congestion on the periphery, which clearly was getting worse, enhances the land values in places like Downtown, Midtown, and perhaps Perimeter Center, as long as these places have other forms of mobility that make them accessible, such as rail transit. This would stimulate the creation of more "urbanity" and create critical masses of people in more compact space, providing the 24-hour urban feel many thought Atlanta needed. On the other hand, widespread congestion potentially devalues the metropolitan region as a whole.

Although the "congestion as growth management" strategy has been tried and shows success in Portland, Oregon, it is not popular in Atlanta public rhetoric, where the hegemony of automobility in the political discourse remains committed to expanding

roads. In Atlanta, it is not yet politically popular to openly support consciously creating conditions of congestion. However, I offer an example of how contradictions within automobile hegemony have the unintended consequence of creating situations of extreme congestion that may point to evidence that congestion as growth management might be a viable tool for reducing automobile dependency in Atlanta.

8.6.1 The Example of Perimeter Center Congestion

Political resistance to road widenings by Malthusian/ secessionist automobilists has inadvertently resulted in a limited example of what could happen under an adoption of the congestion as growth management hypothesis. The politically powerful affluent residents in Sandy Springs and Dunwoody, which surround the large Perimeter Center edge city complex (see figure 8.2), have stifled numerous attempts to widen the roads that made the Perimeter Center the major subcenter that it is. The stalemate that emerged over road widenings eventually compelled the metro growth machine to adopt a mobility vision that sought to reduce automobile dependency by retrofitting urban space within the Perimeter Center. The result of this was to unintentionally establish the groundwork for showing how a "congestion as growth management" strategy in Atlanta might work.

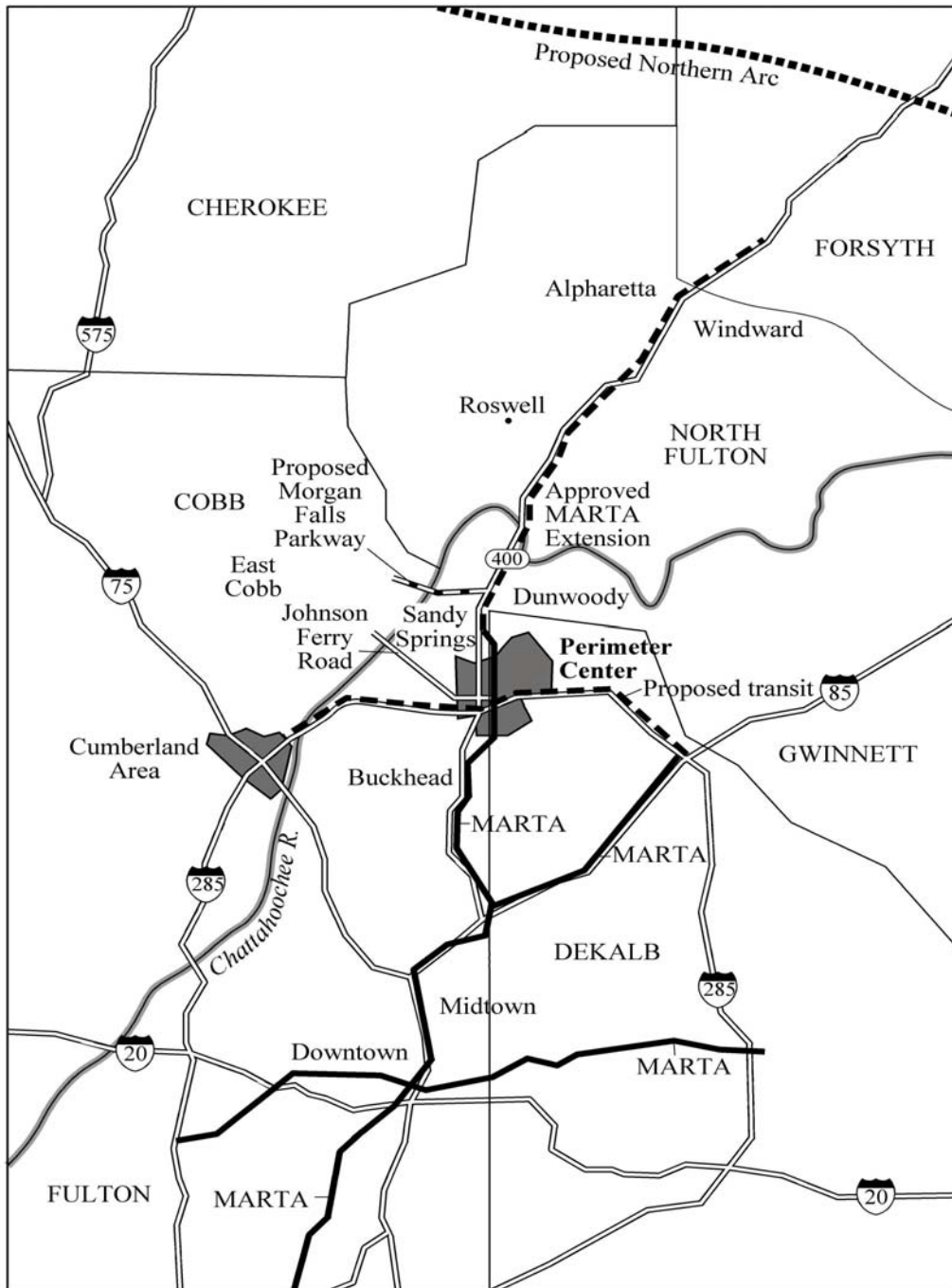


Figure 8.2: Congestion at Perimeter Center (Source: ARC, 2000)

The roots of this de facto congestion as growth management are in the mobility of the rich. Recall that large suburban office centers arose in large part due to the mobility concerns of the affluent executive classes. Places like Sandy Springs north of Atlanta (far from African-Americans) were popular for upscale executive housing beginning in the 1960's. As Downtown, Midtown, and even Buckhead became more congested and commute times increased, executives moved offices closer to their homes, expanding north to the "favored quarter" to places like Perimeter Center or Cumberland. Today, Perimeter Center has well over 100,000 workers, making it as big an employment center as many Downtowns across the US (Leinberger, 1996). In terms of mobility, places like Perimeter Center have 70% of their land area consumed by parking and roads, making them some of the most automobile-intensive places on Earth (Leinberger, 1996). Yet, while there is bountiful space to store automobiles, the highway and arterial road approaches are a different, and contradictory, matter.

To supply adequate amounts of road capacity to places like Perimeter Center, Cornucopian automobility advocates suggest overlaying the entire area with 6-8 lane arterials every mile or so, and double-decking the northern arc of I-285 (GPPF, 2000). This, they say, would enable unfettered automobility without traffic. On the other hand, the metro growth machine, with substantial fixed capital sunk into Perimeter Center, has deployed a vision that is closer to the design principles of New Urbanism, and stresses retrofitting the entire complex (Wilbert, 2002; Saporta, 2002). In terms of roads, this is less extensive than that of the Cornucopian vision, yet still advocates widening the adjacent freeways and selected arterials while also constructing rail transit links that ultimately connected the area to Downtown and the airport (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1997b).

However, the Perimeter Center is surrounded by wealth and there has been a politically powerful opposition to widening roads in the adjacent suburban areas of Dunwoody and Sandy Springs, making the possibilities for massive road expansion doubtful. This anti-roads movement is unlike an ethical or accessible mobility vision which opposes roads on the grounds that automobility is inequitable and damaging to the environment. The Malthusian vision in Sandy Springs and Dunwoody is not anti-roads, nor anti-automobile. It is, instead, a mobility vision centered on enjoying a lifestyle centered on full automobility and seeking to sustain that lifestyle by ensuring that the landscape is not transformed into one that allows full unfettered automobility for thousands of others. These others would use these widened roads everyday, and that would intrude on the lifestyle of excessive, unfettered automobility, and quick access to the amenities and jobs at Perimeter Center that is enjoyed by residents of Sandy Springs, Dunwoody, and other nearby affluent areas.

A good example of this type of conflict is the Johnson Ferry Road controversy, a road that links the Perimeter Center area to East Cobb County and which, more importantly, is one of only a few crossing the Chattahoochee River (see Figure 8.2). The Johnson Ferry Road conflict epitomizes what has become a protracted conflict between supporters of more roads (the metro growth machine and defenders of automobility) and articulators of a Malthusian/ secessionist mobility vision. Every day it is estimated by the Perimeter Center Transportation Coalition that Cobb County sends about 25% of the Perimeter Center's workforce, or 25,000 commuters, to the area (Interviews # 25; #39). Motorists commuting from Cobb can either take the congested I-285 eastbound or take Johnson Ferry Road. In Cobb County, Johnson Ferry Road is 6 lanes, and improvements

in the 1990's made the "thru-put" of automobiles more "efficient." Yet, in Fulton County, as the road crosses the Chattahoochee River, it narrows, and a major bottleneck occurs every morning and afternoon. Congestion builds up on Johnson Ferry Road and then Abernathy Road, which feed into the Perimeter Center. For years, Johnson Ferry and Abernathy Roads have been studied by the ARC and GDOT and widenings have been proposed through the middle of affluent Sandy Springs (Simmons, 1999a). Yet neighborhood groups in the entirely auto-centric Sandy Springs have opposed these widenings (Soto, 1995, 1997). Instead of advocating that local transportation problems be solved by expanding transit or providing pedestrian and bicycle space, the main thrust of the Sandy Springs opposition is that the GDOT instead build a road somewhere else. That meant a new Chattahoochee crossing to the north of Sandy Springs, on an abandoned landfill and one of the last pieces of open space in the area. This alternative is called the Morgan Falls crossing and would link the affluent east Cobb County subdivisions to Perimeter Center via a connection to GA 400, avoiding most of Sandy Springs (see figure 8.2). Meanwhile, east Cobb County representatives and their homeowner constituents, who have similar income demographics to residents in Sandy Springs, oppose the Morgan Falls option because they say it would disrupt subdivisions on their side of the river (Simmons, 1999b). Hence a strong, politically conservative and well-connected NIMBY movement makes the construction of any crossing of the Chattahoochee, and any widening of existing roads, almost impossible, and yet many of the people opposing these projects, on both sides of the river, continue to expect unfettered automobility. This is Malthusian mobility at its best.

By the late 1990's investors grew concerned about accumulation rates because auto access to Perimeter Center was saturated (Goldberg, 1996c; *Atlanta Constitution*, 1997; Saporta, 1998c; Interviews # 15; #25; #30). The roads leading into the Perimeter Center, such as I-285, Johnson Ferry, GA 400, and Ashford-Dunwoody, were completely congested throughout the day. Within the complex itself, poor pedestrian circulation means that trips within these cores are also by car, aggravating congestion at lunch hour. As congestion worsened, more firms and developers looked north along GA 400 for locations with less congestion yet still proximate by car to executive housing in the favored quarter (Wilbert, 1999c; Grantham, 2000). Hence functional decongestion, resulting indirectly from the political opposition of the Malthusian automobility vision, contributed to a northward migration of low-density, automobile-oriented sprawl into North Fulton and Forsyth Counties, which consequently emerged as the fastest growing office market in the entire metro area. This fit with the cornucopian and automobility growth machine vision, which advocated that if roads in existing places could not be widened to accommodate congestion, then more roads should be constructed and widened further out. Now those areas that were once attractive because they were "wide open" are becoming congested, and the Northern Arc is being promoted as necessary to relieve some of that emerging congestion. Hence the Northern Arc would act as an enabler of further functional decongestion towards the north.

Yet functional decongestion, while perhaps acting as a pressure release valve dispersing new auto-centric growth as well as providing a means of continued accumulation for the highway lobby and speculators, did not address the very real conundrum of the fixed capital investments made by corporations and developers already

committed to the Perimeter Center. Facing mounting congestion and possible future devaluation, the business elite, couched in the metro growth machine, formed the Perimeter Center community improvement district (CID), a shadow private government that focused on sustaining property values by improving mobility as the capacity to access land (Wilbert, 1999c; Interview #25). The objective was to relieve traffic but the approach was no longer simply to advocate major road widenings, since the staunchly conservative and politically connected Republican-dominated, Malthusian subdivision organizations had made it clear they would fight that approach. The agenda of the elite shifted to retrofitting the area for walkability and improving transit access, while developing infill housing on land proximate to newly constructed MARTA rail stations. A new mobility vision took hold. The MARTA stations are key because a significant number of low-wage workers from the inner city of Atlanta can commute northwards everyday, but also the affluent classes have direct rail access to the Atlanta airport, enhancing the mobility advantages of the Perimeter Center from a global capitalist space-economy perspective. The new MARTA stations indeed integrate Perimeter Center into the renewed production of a "vital center" that extends southwards to Downtown and the airport and represented the core investment area for new urbanist developments and transit-oriented development. To further enhance the Perimeter Center's accessibility in the region, there are proposals for an east-west rail transit corridor linking the Cumberland area in Cobb County to Perimeter Center and then, further east, to the Doraville MARTA station (*Atlanta Constitution*, 1997; URS, 2001). Moreover, the proposal to expand MARTA northwards as far north as Alpharetta is part of the long-range plan for the region. Consequently, Perimeter Center has the possibility of

becoming as centrally located, from a mobility perspective, as downtown Atlanta is today.

Perimeter Center, however, is different from downtown Atlanta. It does not have government offices, and specifically it does not act as a central location for social service agencies. This has mobility implications. It is surrounded by white, affluent neighborhoods and, therefore, efforts to pedestrianize the area do not include having to share pedestrian space with large numbers of poor African-Americans, at least in theory. Moreover, the metro growth machine's enthusiasm about infill housing in automobile-oriented places like Perimeter Center remains focused on condominiums and high-end housing. These may be spaces that reduce automobile dependency and enhance other forms of mobility, but for whom? There will be no public housing for the poor, at least in the foreseeable future and, moreover, the accessibility of housing for clerical and retail workers is questionable in the future vision for Perimeter Center. Hence articulators of the accessible and ethical mobility visions have expressed cynicism about places like Perimeter Center. Why, articulators of these visions ask, does the long-range transportation plan privilege the affluent north side with extensions of MARTA, while capital continues to avoid investing in existing MARTA stations in African-American neighborhoods on the south side and while only higher-end housing is constructed on the north side? I want to touch on these issues momentarily, but first I want to review what the implications of congestion are for the production of new retrofitted spaces in Atlanta.

What is transpiring in the Perimeter Center area should provide evidence that congestion as growth management may have a desired effect in reconfiguring space and reducing automobile dependency. Although not an explicit policy objective, the political

opposition to road building by a Malthusian/ secessionist mobility faction resulted in a de facto policy of congestion as growth management. This has special implications for the present attention in Atlanta's debate over the Northern Arc. In the case of the Perimeter Center the tension between secessionist automobility visions and the agenda of building new roads conflicts greatly – resulting in a spatial outcome favorable to the thesis of congestion as growth management. This creates conditions that may ultimately be favorable to the accessibility, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie visions. The recentralization, of course, is desired by the coalition challenging automobility, but also the metro growth machine, even though it also desires to minimize congestion. Secessionists, I would argue, unwittingly create the conditions that can result in recentralization, albeit on varying geographical scales. The problem, for proponents of the accessible and ethical visions, is that the solution being promoted to address congestion in Atlanta's northern suburbs is the Northern Arc, which is simply a form of functional decongestion outlined by Gordon and Richardson (1997a). The key, then, is to defeat the Northern Arc, which, as I have suggested, is a formidable but not impossible task. However, as I discuss below, congestion as growth management is only the first step towards realizing the visions of the accessible and ethical mobility advocates. While the articulators of these two visions have largely been excluded from the massive multi-billion dollar package of transportation projects proposed by Governor Barnes, they have been actively working towards producing spaces in Atlanta that are, in their perception, more socially just and ecologically sound (Interviews # 3; # 5; # 16; # 18). As pressure builds to recentralize growth even further, the agenda of the accessible and ethical mobility visions will likely receive more attention.

8.7 Contesting the Spaces of Recentralization

I want now to place the Northern Arc into the context of wider urban processes of uneven development to provide an idea of what may happen if it is not constructed but Atlanta continues to grow (as is expected). Smith (1990) proposes that a see-saw process of capital flows operates at the metropolitan and regional scale as capital is attracted back towards spaces it had previously abandoned. Hence, inner cities were devalued after World War Two, concomitant with the valuation of automobile-oriented sprawl. By the late 1960's, though, some of these devalued spaces, like Lower Manhattan, became revalued for a variety of reasons broadly called "gentrification."⁴⁰ Meanwhile, many inner-ring suburbs in cities were devalued because of congestion and other urban problems that followed sprawl, and therefore the periphery of cities expanded and increased in exchange value as beltways and new roads were built to provide for automobility and further expansion (see Myron Orfield, 1997). In Atlanta today, the Northern Arc represents a key juncture for the trajectory of this process of uneven development, as one place is devalued while another is valued.

The fundamental issue of the Northern Arc is one of the exchange value of Atlanta's northern periphery. Put simply, if the Northern Arc is not built, the spatiality of unfettered automobility on the periphery of the region will likely be devalued, while

⁴⁰ There are a number of explanations offered for the market forces that shape the pattern of gentrification, including a preference for older buildings and homes, or a desire for multiculturalism and diversity. Some argue that gays and lesbians are often the pioneers of gentrification because urban cores tend to have relatively more tolerance for them than the suburbs (Kicklighter, 2001b; Chapman, 2001). Low interest rates in the later 1990's and new federal policies allowing remodeling and encouraging urban revitalization were influential. Another explanation is that gentrification is a market response to increased congestion of suburbs (Cauley, 1999). Realtors in Atlanta say that congestion is a major catalyst for gentrification in Eastern Atlanta in neighborhoods like Kirkwood, Grant Park, and Decatur (Harte, 1999).

spatiality of other mobilities such as transit, walking, and bicycling may increase the value of land in the urban core. Spaces such as the mega-city proposed in Gwinnett, for example, may be devalued over time as the costs of congestion and automobility exceed the value of this low-density sprawl. This does not imply that land would not have any value, but it does suggest that it would be considerably less valuable than if the Arc were built. A concerted effort to stop the Arc can be seen as resulting in devaluing the exurban periphery while re-valuing the core. To be sure, the value of the periphery in non-economic terms to secessionists would likely be higher because seclusion and defense of place are what they seek, and not necessarily exchange values in land. The creation of congestion resulting from Malthusians/ secessionists blocking roads, and especially the Northern Arc, may bode well in the long run for those who seek an accessible, ethical, or new urban bourgeoisie vision, as well as for the metro growth machine. Yet this does not come without tension among these visions and it is in this last section that I want to touch on some of the tensions that are arising and that may intensify if the Arc is not built and substantial recentralization of growth occurs.

The nexus of the tension is in the process of gentrification already underway in parts of Atlanta, and in the process of physically taking away the spaces of automobiles in certain parts of the city and replacing them with space for other mobilities. With the possibility that massive increases in congestion will come to characterize the periphery, these two processes may accelerate and expand in geographical scope. This raises the question: can recentralization occur in a way that is agreeable to articulators of the accessible and ethical mobility visions and their pursuit of a more socially just and ecologically sound city while simultaneously satisfying the production and consumption

spaces of the metro growth machine and new urban bourgeoisie mobility visions? While no full answer to such an inquiry can be provided here, I offer some insights into what issues are emerging from the process of recentralization already underway.

8.7.1 Gentrification and Mobility

In Atlanta, gentrification and mobility are linked. Congestion is considered to have a significant influence on households choosing to locate in intown neighborhoods of Atlanta (Torpy, 1999; Hill, 1999; Hairston, 2001c). Part of the attraction for older intown neighborhoods and MARTA rail stations is that, in general, there is the possibility, or choice, to spend far less time in an automobile while continuing to have proximity to urban services and amenities. Congestion on area freeways stimulated demand for upscale condominiums in Buckhead, Midtown, and Downtown (Hill, 1999; Cauley, 1999). This spurred a boom in high-rise condominium development in a north-south axis from Downtown to Buckhead along Peachtree Road, Piedmont Avenue, and the North-South MARTA line (Cauley, 1999). Further, and as reflected in the process of gentrification, middle-class whites who could not afford to live north of the East-West MARTA line began moving south into black working-class neighborhoods (Torpy, 1999). These neighborhoods, such as Grant Park, Kirkwood, and East Atlanta, were streetcar suburbs developed in the 1920's (Torpy, 1999). The layout of these streetcar suburbs is an urban configuration that is generally walkable and human-scaled, inviting neighborhood-scale restaurants, coffee shops, and small grocers. The MARTA East-West Line is nearby and provides an easy commute to downtown, and, with a change of trains, to Midtown, Buckhead, Perimeter Center to the north, and the airport to the South.

The area also had relatively decent bus service. It was therefore extremely accessible by many forms of mobility. Yet with the rise in gentrification, affordable housing in these areas is now an emerging issue that links to the possibility of further large-scale recentralization of growth.

The issue of affordable housing and its relationship to mobility are only recently coming to light in Atlanta, and there remains contention that undoubtedly returns to a deep-rooted contradiction between the shared vision of the accessible-ethical coalition and the metro growth machine-new urban bourgeoisie visions. The current representation of this contradictory vision is in the spaces being retrofitted from large public housing projects into New Urbanist, mixed-income neighborhoods that are located on very accessible pieces of real estate proximate to Downtown Atlanta. The shared consensus among all visions is that the previous concentration of poverty into densely packed, substandard housing was not effective in alleviating poverty. However, disagreement emerges when low-income residents are displaced by improving the former public housing facilities, yet affordable units are not available in the same neighborhood, and so the residents must seek out new housing further away. The metro growth machine position is that before attention can be focused on affordability, there must be a certain (unspecified) critical mass of luxury and affluent housing in the core. Hence, there is reluctance to provide affordable housing in new condominium developments downtown, even as the land was provided through public subsidy (Turner, 2001a). There is also concern about what happens to many of the households that are displaced.

To get a sense of what may be in store for the entire inner core of Atlanta if the Northern Arc is not built and if massive peripheral congestion stimulates recentralization,

consider that public housing throughout Atlanta is targeted for conversion to mixed income development. Since 1995, seven public housing complexes have been demolished in Atlanta and replaced by new mixed-income developments. The final plan is to demolish 4,500 public housing units and replace them with 3,982 units, of which 1,732 (43%) will be retained as low-income housing (Shalhoup, 2001a and 2001b). The rest of the new units will be offered at market rate. Displaced public housing tenants will sign on to a waiting list to stay in public housing, or get vouchers to move. There is no tracking of what happens to those who move to determine their housing status. Yet there is evidence that as public housing is retrofitted, substantial neighborhood improvements occur and this is followed by gentrification (Torpy, 1999; Reid, 2001). At the moment some of the conversion projects are in limbo due to a slow-down in investment region wide and an apparent glut of apartments, especially high-end apartments and condominiums. The head of the Atlanta Housing Authority, however, envisions Perry Homes, west of downtown, as "Ansely Park West," in reference to an affluent intown neighborhood east of Midtown (Saporta, 2000b). She has called Capitol Homes, another retrofitting project east of downtown, "Georgetown of the South," in reference to the shopping, entertainment, and residential neighborhood in Washington, DC (Reid, 2001). The development would also include apartments and condominiums atop "Buckhead-style restaurants." All of these developments have been promoted with the concept of New Urbanism. All of them are prime real estate for a recentralization boom on the horizon. All of them are envisioned with a spatial configuration around mobilities of walking, bicycling, and transit. However, tensions will undoubtedly arise over who will get to enjoy these new spatial configurations and their concomitant mobilities.

To be sure, articulators of the accessible and ethical mobility visions offer solutions that could mediate the tensions. For example, the concept of a location efficient mortgage (LEM) is being promoted. Location efficiency is the ability to live in a neighborhood with easy access to transit or in a walkable neighborhood where services are nearby. A participating lending agent will calculate the financial savings from not owning or not using a car as often as do people who live in traditionally auto-centric neighborhoods. The savings are considered additional disposable income, and can be used to increase the ability to finance an intown home. The concept is targeted at first-time homebuyers and people who seek to live in an urban area with minimal car use, and low-income working households qualify. The program has been put in place in Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and has been proposed for Atlanta (STPP, 2000).

Another proposal to minimize the impact of recentralization on the supply of affordable housing is to allow for substantial urban infill to increase the overall supply of housing units, hence deflating the cost per unit. In conjunction with that, organizations such as the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Project have argued that zoning laws should be changed to require any new infill developments to have 20% "affordable" units (Turner, 2001b). These modest proposals have not yet been embraced in Atlanta and it remains to be seen if they will, in fact, become policy but they do suggest possibilities in a future city with increased recentralization of growth.

8.7.2 Recentralization and the Right to Urban Space

An essential component of the congestion as growth management strategy is to provide practical alternatives to driving. To provide these practical alternatives in Atlanta will eventually require reconfiguring space in such a way as to physically appropriate the spaces of automobility. As I noted in Chapters 1 and 2, the spaces of automobility are often incongruent with the spaces of walking and bicycling. This does not imply the modes cannot mix safely, but it does imply that a traditional auto-centric development pattern, which may have an operational logic for automobility, cannot co-exist with a practical, safe, and convenient pedestrian and bicycle network. The fundamental conflict between these mobilities is that for automobility to function practically with minimum inconvenience, it must appropriate the spaces of pedestrians and cyclists. For example, for automobility to be useful it requires high speeds through the urban area, which means pedestrian crossings and cyclists in roads are considered impediments. In Atlanta the entire metropolitan region, including downtown and places like intown mentioned above, have been designed to accommodate unfettered automobility and, in the process, pedestrian and bicycling mobilities have been systematically marginalized to the point where they are largely considered non-legitimate modes of transportation.

Spatial legitimacy, therefore, is one of the key goals of advocates in the accessible and ethical mobility visions. Bicycle and pedestrian advocates have as part of their mission to instill a sense of legitimacy towards biking and walking as modes of transportation in the metropolitan region. For example, articulators of an accessible and ethical mobility vision have allied with intown neighborhood organizations to lobby for

public officials in the city of Atlanta and DeKalb County to undertake several "road diets" (Interview # 18). These "road diets" would take away car-travel lanes and replace them with bike lanes, a center turn lane (sometimes called a suicide lane when motorists travel at high speeds), and improved pedestrian crossings (Burden and Lagerway, 1999). Such arterials as Cheshire Bridge Road, which is a vital corridor between East Atlanta neighborhoods and Buckhead, and North Decatur Road, which links Emory University to Decatur, have been targeted by advocates (Interviews # 8, #13, # 18) . Another major lobby effort was to conduct a road diet on the infamous Buford Highway, where a spate of pedestrian fatalities involving Latino immigrants have occurred (*Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 1997; *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 1998; Interviews # 13, # 20) . These proposals bring the spatial requirements of different forms of mobility into direct confrontation. To legitimize bicycling and walking means to take space away from automobility.

Meanwhile, capitalists in the metro growth machine have contributed to the spatial legitimization of pedestrian and bicycling mobility. Key landed interests have sought to contain the automobile once it enters the spaces of major subcenters such as Downtown, Midtown, Perimeter Center, and Buckhead. This, in effect, reverses the 50-year trend of making these subcenters as convenient as possible to automobility. Most of Atlanta's major subcenters have drafted "blueprints" that outline ambitious New Urbanist visions wherein the spaces of automobility are limited, appropriated, or hidden. Hence, there was a "Blueprint Midtown" that envisioned Peachtree Road becoming a street lined with outdoor cafes and pedestrian street life, and calls to "road diet" the signature street are emerging (Midtown Alliance, 2001). There was a "Blueprint Cumberland" that

sought to emulate "Buckhead" nightlife and create self-enclosed live-work-shop-play environments and a new light rail link to Atlanta, with walkability as a key component (Cumberland Community Improvement District, 2001). In Perimeter Center, where I have outlined the impact of congestion on capitalist landowners, bicycling as a mode of transportation is starting to be taken seriously and promoted (Saporta, 2002; Perimeter Transportation Coalition, 2001). In downtown Atlanta, Central Atlanta Progress (an arm of the Metro Chamber) aggressively sought high-end housing and redevelopment around the former Olympic sites with the intention of creating walkable space (Saporta, 1999c). In Buckhead federal funds were leveraged to introduce bike lanes, to widen sidewalks, and to impose traffic calming measures on high-speed thoroughfares.

All of these major corporate subcenters have what are called "Community Improvement Districts" (CIDs), which I discussed briefly in Chapter 4. These CIDs can self-tax relatively affluent property owners, raise funds, and use them to match federal and state transportation funds. While other sections of the metropolitan area might languish with under-investment in bike lanes and sidewalks, the CIDs are poised to produce even greater competitive advantages by offering mobility choice to investors and the new urban bourgeoisie (which seeks this walking and biking lifestyle). This differs from less affluent sections of Atlanta, such as south side neighborhoods or intown neighborhoods, that do not have corporate sponsors to underwrite the matching funds needed to leverage federal money. In other words, there is an emerging uneven development in producing spaces for accessible and ethical mobility that will need to be addressed as more recentralization occurs.

Outside of the spaces of corporate subcenters, the spatial legitimacy of pedestrian and biking mobilities is contentious. The imperative of the accessible and ethical mobility visions to appropriate urban space from the automobile differs from the approach of the metro growth machine. The new urban bourgeoisie are somewhere in the middle (they want to appropriate the space of the car but they want to drive their car too). The accessible and ethical visions want to appropriate space systematically and region wide, to reduce automobile dependency and to make transit more attractive. The metro growth machine, on the other hand, seeks to achieve these ends within subcenters, but is not so much concerned with the spaces beyond those centers. In fact, there is a tendency to preserve the enormous thru-put of automobility already in place that enables these subcenters to have unfettered automobile access. In essence, the metro growth machine vision is to create large, extended shopping malls with peripheral parking, yet preserve the multi-lane roads into the area.

This divergence on the degree of containing automobility is reflective of the wider differences between explicitly challenging automobile hegemony, which the accessible and ethical visions do, contrasted with the negotiation of automobile hegemony that the metro growth machine has undertaken. Moreover, it gets to the heart of how the mobility visions differ on their wider conceptualization of the capitalist urban process. As I outlined in Chapter 5, speed is the essence of capitalist mobility. To challenge automobile hegemony in the US, and especially in Atlanta, is to challenge mobility inextricably bound with a social structure of capitalism and speed. To appropriate the spaces of automobility would be, in effect, appropriating speed and, hence, increasing the circulation times of capital. While landed capitalists may want speeds slowed within

corporate subcenters to enhance their values in an era of "quality of life" consumptive markets, they remain adherents to enabling high-speed access by car to these spaces. In one sense, the appropriation of the "spaces of speed" is as contentious to the capitalist urban process as the appropriation of land to provide affordable housing units discussed above. Both of these spatial contestations will likely emerge as key political struggles in Atlanta's future as automobile hegemony is truly challenged by such conflicts as the Northern Arc.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Summary of Findings and Contributions

The initial aim of this research was to understand the politics of the sprawl debate using Atlanta as a case study. The broader goal of the research was to contribute to an understanding of how geography and ideology influence transportation policy and shape the politics of possibilities in urban growth conflicts. I asked how discourses about sprawl have been constructed and contested in Atlanta, who engaged in this process, and how such discourses have shaped the city or might shape the future urban landscape. In the previous chapter I used a case study of Atlanta's Northern Arc debate to show how geography and ideology relate to mobility visions and how this affects how the region will grow. As I have shown in the preceding chapters, the debate over sprawl in Atlanta is fundamentally a debate over the automobile and its spaces. Virtually every aspect of Atlanta's sprawl debate returns to the spatiality of the automobile. Every interviewee elucidated a position on automobility and privileged the concern over the spaces of automobility as a major aspect, if not the most important dimension, of the sprawl debate. This means that challenges to sprawl are challenges to automobile hegemony, in one form or another. Moreover, as I showed in Chapter 2, despite notions of a universal "car culture" and inevitability frequently espoused in scholarship, planning, and political rhetoric, automobility is not necessarily monolithic, even in Atlanta. Rather, it is a system defended by vested interests and both challenged and negotiated by a variety of

stakeholders who actively engage in the sprawl debate through politics. The above were some of the important preliminary findings of the research that led me into more detailed examinations of stakeholders' arguments through asking how they were informed, what their motivations for engagement were, and who they saw as their allies and opponents in the sprawl debate.

The sprawl debate is in many ways about the politics of mobility, and the politics of *how* space should be organized and configured around different mobilities. Thinking in terms of competing conceptualizations of mobility and how space should be configured and organized reveals a much more nuanced and complex debate than simply an anti-sprawl v. sprawl or pro-automobile v. anti-automobile discourses. It is also much more than a place-based struggle of suburb v. city or inner suburb v. outer suburbs. This is because competing conceptualizations of mobility are more than simply debates over transportation modes – they are contentions over *how* urban space should be organized and are also representative of values and ideologies that undergird the promotion of specific spatial configurations. These competing conceptualizations of mobility are about *how* place, across all space, should be organized and configured, just as much as it is about a humanistic defense of place or local dependency conflicts. Hence, to understand how the sprawl debate is unfolding in Atlanta, and how the interrelationships and conflicts between and among the competing mobility visions actively produces space, I sought to examine stakeholders' specific positions on mobility.

In conducting archival research, participant observation, and interviews with key stakeholders in Atlanta's sprawl debate, I identified 7 prominent mobility visions in

Atlanta. The first four, which offered varying degrees of criticism towards automobility, are:

1) Metro Growth Machine Mobility: Atlanta's metro growth machine represents the interests of capitalists primarily concerned with accessing land. The vision is of Atlanta's favored quarter as a vital center acting as the economic and cultural capital of the Southeast, with passenger rail, an airport, and highways enabling access. This vision was compromised in the 1990's by smog and congestion, and the negative national press that accompanied it. More fundamentally, the problems arising out of Atlanta's automobile-oriented growth reflected contradictions in the capitalist urbanization process, with the imperative for speed and unfettered access to land compromising the value of the region in terms of "quality of life" and carrying capacity to grow. As a result, the metro growth machine acted to avert a looming diseconomy and led the movement to create GRTA, while also promoting New Urbanist strategies to reduce automobile dependency.

Yet instead of challenging automobile hegemony and the factions of capital in Atlanta that defended it, the metro growth machine is in a position of negotiating automobile hegemony. This is reflected in the way the metro growth machine has approached the Northern Arc debate. While the Northern Arc undermines the metro growth machine vision, instead of bluntly opposing it the metro growth machine has negotiated a limit on exits, buffers, and for the road to have high tolls in order to "theoretically" avert sprawling growth in its corridor. Moreover, out of the package of transportation projects promoted by Governor Barnes, the metro growth machine has bargained in favor of the Arc in return for promises of passenger rail investment, a new downtown multimodal station adjacent to valuable real estate, and a regional express bus

system operated by GRTA. Hence politics undergirds the negotiation of automobility by the metro growth machine and this politics reveals that no single faction of capital in Atlanta controls the region's destiny. Capitalists are contesting place and locality but also actively contesting how those places and spaces are organized and configured.

Interacting with capitalist production of space out of conflict are visions of mobility that question the underlying imperatives of capitalist urbanization – the accessible and ethical mobility visions.

2) *Accessible Mobility*: The accessible mobility vision is held mainly by environmental justice and civil rights activists who are disproportionately located in Atlanta's urban core, due to a legacy of white flight and exclusionary zoning practices. Although place-based, articulators of this vision are primarily concerned with *how* all urban space affects access to jobs, urban services, and amenities. Hence, regardless of where they are located in the metropolitan region, the vision holds that spaces need to be reconfigured to accommodate mass transit and a safe pedestrian environment. The vision is therefore opposed to further road building, especially on the periphery, and supportive of increased funding for transit, especially in the core. Sprawl and forced automobile dependency are conceptualized as the result of wider racist public policies that inhibited minority access to jobs and urban services. The vision is also inclusive of the concerns for the elderly, children, and the disabled who face severe access problems in urban spaces configured solely for the automobile. The articulators of the accessible mobility vision share their vision with the ethical mobility vision, but there are nuances in what motivates the articulators of the two visions, making it worthwhile to differentiate.

3) *Ethical Mobility*: The ethical mobility vision posits that there is too much mobility, especially too much automobile use. This vision equates excessive mobility as indicative of wider social and environmental problems related to a wider consumer-oriented society. In terms of mobility, the ethical vision centers on speed and how speed is energy intensive, environmentally destructive, and leads to wider social inequity. Speed is for the rich. Speed is also the imperative of capitalists, who seek to decrease the circulation times of capital. With that, the ethical mobility vision has a very pronounced concern for *how* space is configured and is less place-based, even though many of the interviewees and other articulators of the ethical mobility vision resided in intown areas that enabled decreased automobile use.

Because the ethical mobility vision has inherent objections to the structure of capitalism in the US it is the most delegitimized of the visions. Yet both the accessible and ethical mobility visions indirectly challenge the mobility imperatives of capitalism. The accessible mobility vision seeks to minimize the cost on workers of accessing urban space, which capital inherently seeks to impose on workers. For example, in the journey-to-work, automobility and its spaces impose more costs on workers than do other modes and spatial configurations. The ethical mobility vision, as mentioned above, is primarily concerned with the ecological footprint of increased speeds and contests the capitalist imperative for decreased circulation times.

Both the articulators of accessible and ethical mobility visions avoid direct criticisms of capitalism. This is a tactical political approach that reflects the wider hegemonic power of capitalism in all public discourse in America, and especially in an era where neoliberal market solutions are even supported by liberal Democrats. The

political future of an accessible-ethical mobility reform coalition, under these circumstances, relies on their ability to compromise with the metro growth machine vision and the new urban bourgeoisie visions on the issues in which they share concern – how space is configured and reducing automobile dependency. No issue is more shared than that of fundamentally challenging automobile hegemony and its role in continuing to undermine all four factions in the sprawl debate. One path that the accessible-ethical mobility vision may consider is to continue its close political association with the new urban bourgeoisie. This new urban bourgeoisie acts as a mediation between goals of ecological sustainability and social justice on the one hand, and enhancing the metro growth machine's wider goal of enhancing the exchange value of the vital center on the other. Hence the fourth mobility vision:

4) New Urban Bourgeoisie Mobility: The new urban bourgeoisie share a critical view of sprawl and automobile dependency because these things undermine an urban, or at least a more compact and urbane, quality of life. Excessive space dedicated to automobiles is considered aesthetically distasteful, as well as the antithesis of a more sustainable version of capitalism. The new urban bourgeoisie image of sustainable capitalism is reflected in the promotion of New Urbanism and this spatial configuration draws the possibility of a political coalition with accessible and ethical mobility visions. However, certain underlying tensions between the values and ideologies of these visions are problematic, for example the issue of affordable housing. Nevertheless, the accessible, new urban bourgeoisie, and ethical mobility visions joined in a fragile effort with the metro growth machine to challenge and negotiate automobile hegemony, beginning in the early 1990's. The manifestation of this was the Vision 2020 process.

As I outlined in Chapter 3, this process was undermined by the political power of the defenders of automobile hegemony, primarily the auto-industrial complex.

5) *Auto-Industrial Complex*: The "auto-industrial complex" is probably the most powerful faction in Atlanta's sprawl debate from a political standpoint. This cabal of business interests differs from the metro growth machine because it engages in the debate specifically to promote and defend automobility and a spatiality of automobility, but is similar to the metro growth machine in that it is concerned with access to land for exchange value. The landed interests differ in their geographical location in the region, but significantly, the vision of *how* land should be organized and configured for exchange differs between these two factions. The auto-industrial complex has very deep ties to Georgia politics and has considerable influence on how local, state, and federal transportation funds are spent. The epitome of the power of the auto-industrial complex is represented by the Gwinnett Mafia, which is pushing for the Northern Arc in order to create an autocentric city out of what is presently an auto-centric suburb. Rhetorically, the auto-industrial complex invokes the cornucopian vision.

6) *Cornucopian Automobility*: the cornucopian automobility vision does not have direct vested interests in automobility for wealth generation. Nor does the cornucopian vision have explicit place-based motivations. Instead, the vision holds that consumer preference for low-density sprawl propels urban form when left to the free-market and this would occur across all space. This makes the cornucopian vision similar to the ethical-accessible vision in terms of the degree of explicit articulation and emphasis on *how* all space should be configured, even though their visions are diametrically opposed. Moreover, the cornucopian vision fundamentally contrasts with the practices of the auto-

industrial complex, which actively seeks government intervention in the market to create its wealth. While the auto-industrial complex and cornucopian mobility visions share a desire to see sprawl, and automobility, expanded, they do so from very different perspectives. What unites them politically is the defense of automobile hegemony. This means that there are cracks in the rhetorical defense of automobility and this exposes weaknesses that can possibly be targeted by the four factions (metro growth machine, accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie visions) in the sprawl debate that oppose further automobile hegemony. Moreover, these cracks in the underlying unity of the cornucopians and auto-industrial complex are exposed when considering the political activity of articulators of a secessionist automobility vision.

7) *Secessionist Automobility*: Secessionist automobility is not a vision that is explicitly embraced by most stakeholders in the sprawl debate but, rather, it is a vision that many stakeholders claim is held by a significant portion of the general public. Race is a theme of secessionist automobility, but not the only theme. The racially charged rejection of mass transit in the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's led to a default spatial configuration that has made full automobility the default space of everyday life in 17 metro counties without bus or rail service. Thus mobility politics influenced a spatial solution for racists seeking separation, and while this was a racialized defense of place it was also a default defense of *how* place and space were to be organized and configured.

In the secessionist automobility vision there is also a strong "Malthusian" tendency to oppose the expansion of roads and growth while failing to critically consider one's own lifestyle choices. This is particularly acute in Atlanta's northern exurbs, where rapid growth and the proposed Northern Arc have resulted in protests by subdivision

activists who seek a continuation of unfettered automobility and relatively easy access to urban amenities, while enjoying a small town or rural utopian lifestyle. There is an emphasis on *how* space should be configured coupled with defense of place. Yet the fact that many secessionists are willing to move away from a place when it deviates from their ideal reveals that the concern is less about a specific place and more about ideals of spatial configuration. Secessionists are dependent on automobility but they oppose any further intrusion on their living spaces by other people's automobility, which they define as "sprawl." What the secessionist vision reveals is that there are deep contradictions in the system of automobility and the rhetoric of its defenders. That much of the secessionist behavior is designed to escape traffic, pollution, and "density" reflects problems in the system of automobility, and yet secessionists generally do not offer a criticism of their own behavior. Hence a Malthusian ideology, which is pervasive in other social and environmental debates, serves actually to undermine the developmental agenda of the auto-industrial complex and contradict the unfettered market sprawl of the cornucopians. This is what has unfolded in the contentious Northern Arc debate outlined in Chapter 8.

A contribution to both scholarly research on urbanization and urban public policy is that thinking in terms of the geography of mobility contests the ideological essentialization of automobility. No longer should the spaces of automobility be glossed over by geographers and other scholars seeking to understand urbanization and debates about growth. How the competing visions of mobility are manifested in the landscape, and the degree to which each particular vision is actually expressed spatially, can tell us a lot about the political economy of places like Atlanta. Unpacking these mobility visions

reveals their relation to wider political, social, and economic struggles over the landscape, and reveals that these struggles are set against enduring values and ideologies that include different conceptions of social justice, environmental ethics, or anti-urban v. pro urban ideologies.

Two other important themes arise from approaching the sprawl debate in Atlanta from a perspective of thinking about mobility. First, while the debate over sprawl and automobility does have place-based, locality dimensions, it is also a debate about *how* space should be configured. This adds to our theoretical understanding of urban growth debates and local dependency conflicts. For example, in both growth machine theory and theories of the logic of capital and the production of space, place-based capitalists, labor, and community groups actively produce urban space through conflicts both over use and exchange values and where in space production and consumption will occur and who will benefit. However, thinking in terms of mobility also reveals that how space is configured and how space is organized around particular forms of mobility that can be incongruent matters greatly.

Second, the underlying forces that lead to contestations of mobility and spatial configuration are framed by the imperatives and contradictions of capitalism mainly by access and speed, but also by other, non-capitalist motivations. Secessionists, for example, value the spaces of the periphery in a very different way than do both the metro growth machine and automobility growth machine. A massive devaluation of the periphery due to congestion may not mean a massive devaluation in the minds of secessionists. They see the periphery as part of an ideal way of life, one that, while seeking to preserve "rural values" or escape from the city, nevertheless depends on

automobility for its existence. Unwittingly, the secessionist opposition to the further intrusion of more automobility could aid in the production of spaces closer to that envisioned by the accessible, ethical, and new urban bourgeoisie, while also contributing to the ends of the metro growth machine. Hence I argued in Chapter 8 that visions with radically different motivations could politically defeat the Northern Arc, and thus also politically challenge automobile hegemony in Atlanta.

Moreover, automobility as a system designed to decrease overall circulation times of capital, as a system that opens more raw land for exchange value, as a system that imposes more reproductive labor costs on workers instead of on capitalists, and as a commodity for consumption in and of itself, exhibits contradictions that some factions of capital now realize must be confronted. This realization came to the metro growth machine in Atlanta as a set of federal regulations and pressures from mobility reform groups and combined with the very real possibility of a local overaccumulation crisis. This local overaccumulation crisis loomed because of smog, congestion, and a possibility of the loss of the city's competitive edge in the wider post-industrial capitalist space economy, leading the metro growth machine into openly questioning the future of automobility in Atlanta. For a moment at least, it looked as if the metro growth machine was in an informal coalition with the articulators of an accessible-ethical-new urban bourgeoisie mobility vision, yet it remains to be seen if such an informal coalition could be formalized into a real political force.

It is worth re-emphasizing that considering mobility visions and *how* urban space should be configured and organized is not a rejection of the role place-based struggles have in producing urban space. Rather, the consideration of mobility visions should be

seen as an enrichment and a more nuanced lens from which to understand both the politics of places and the production of urban space. Certainly, the articulators of the seven mobility visions hold varying sentiments towards place, but also, as this research has shown, strong sentiments towards ideal spatial organizations regardless of where in space.

9.2 Policy Implications

The most significant policy implication of this research is that many of Atlanta's political and economic elite continue to engage in a rhetoric in which they universalize values and ideology regarding the automobile, but fail to recognize a more complex process of contesting mobility. Unfortunately, this narrative of a "car culture" and essentializing automobility frames choices and constitutes the political possibilities while at the same time it attempts to delegitimize other possibilities for urban futures. As I have shown, the notion that automobility is inevitable and is somehow part of a natural spatial evolution comes under challenge when its politics, values, and ideologies are critically examined. The dominant spatial order of automobility is not inevitable nor essential. This means that decision-makers should abandon the rhetoric of there being a universal "car culture" because it is an immature and unsophisticated excuse for public policy making. Culture is integrated human knowledge. It is the sum of customary beliefs, social norms, and material traits. Culture is a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices. When we use this definition of culture, we need to be careful about claiming that a hegemonic culture dominates a region. We need to ask how constructions of a hegemonic culture are deployed for some other means. When ideas of culture are

deployed, we must also understand that a range of possibilities are being implicitly defined. I argue that the idea of a car culture fits this pattern of abuse and distorts the range of possibilities for solving serious environmental and social problems that plague all American cities.

Abandoning such a "car culture" rhetoric would allow for clearer policy-making and a more critical examination and discussion of the urbanization process. For example, in many discourses about why average middle-class families "choose" to live in suburban areas, the concern over schools is often mentioned. Racism aside, this is indeed one of the emerging concerns of sustaining a process of recentralization in Atlanta where an all-black school system is considered one of the state's worst. In suburban counties, the land-use is typified by low-density automobile oriented sprawl. Is there some sort of public perception that low-density sprawl is the equivalent of better schools? How is this reflective of some of the secessionist ideologies I outlined in Chapter 7, whereby dense cities are considered by many to be places of vice and disorder? This amounts to environmental determinism because the periphery, where the "better schools" are located, is considered attractive while the central city, where the "bad schools" are located, is considered undesirable by many middle-class families. Is this but an extension of essentializing space, in this case the low-density spaces of automobility as being a superior education environment? By unpacking and deconstructing the rhetoric of a car culture, and considering different mobility visions and their spatial configurations, perhaps some clarity can be infused in issues such as schools and where middle-class families should live.

The rhetoric of a car culture and the inevitability hypothesis are deployed in the Northern Arc debate. The Northern Arc is the single most important development issue facing the Atlanta region in the foreseeable future. This is not an issue of growth but, rather, an issue of where growth will occur, and how that growth will be configured. Given the discussion in Chapter 8, it would not be surprising if portions of the Northern Arc were blocked. The articulators of the secessionist automobility vision, coupled with environmentalists, may defeat the western portion of the Northern Arc on environmental and political grounds. A federally mandated environmental impact statement has yet to be released, although a release date of summer 2002 has been announced. The portion of the Northern Arc more likely to get built is between 316 and GA 400, where the Gwinnett Mafia envisions a future city. While this scenario bodes well for landed interests in Gwinnett County, it does not address the stated needs for the Arc, which are to alleviate east-west traffic on I-285 and to supply a route for trucking between I-85 and I-75. Therefore, without all sides appeased, the Gwinnett portion of the Arc loses political support from parts of the automobile growth machine. Yet another factor could stop the Northern Arc: litigation.

A defining moment in Atlanta's sprawl debate was the grandfathering litigation brought forth by a coalition of environmental and social justice organizations in 1998. The groups that made up this coalition drew from the ethical, accessible, and new urban mobility visions. Although there has been a hiatus in the success of litigation in the last year, a renewed round of litigation is formalizing. Locally, the same organizations that are part of the accessible/ethical mobility reform coalition are appealing cases they lost (Hairston, 2002f; Hardin, 2002). Yet perhaps the most significant is the possibility of a

national lawsuit against the EPA. In late May 2002 national environmental organizations filed a notice of intent to sue EPA for not enforcing the 8-hour standard for ozone (American Lung Association, 2002; Nesmith, 2002). This standard is a stricter standard than the 1-hour standard, which Atlanta violated repeatedly, eventually leading to the conformity lapse that suspended highway building. The Bush EPA has claimed it would not be ready to implement the new stricter standard until 2004 but the EPA under Clinton devised new rules and standards in 1997, 5 years earlier. The implementation of these standards was delayed by lawsuits from defenders of automobility, specifically trucking interests (Seabrook, 2001c). The Supreme Court ruled in March 2001 that EPA did have the right to implement the new standards, giving weight to the accessible/ethical mobility litigation (Seabrook, 2001c). If they are successful this will make the restrictions on roads in Atlanta's long-range transportation plan and on powerplants even stricter (Hebert, 2002). This means that the ARC will have no choice but to "front-load" bike lanes, sidewalks, and public transit projects that are already in the plan but years, even decades, away from funding because many roads received priority. One road that is surely to be questioned is the Northern Arc. Already there is speculation that if the Northern Arc absorbs a significant portion of the region's allotted pollution budget, taking away from roads on Atlanta's southside or from powerplants, then there will be even greater political opposition to the mega-road (Interviews #3; #27; # 30).

9.3 Future Research Directions

In this research I only identified mobility visions expressed by stakeholders who are openly engaged in the sprawl debate. Therefore, I did not interview or examine in any analytical manner the opinions, ideas, or values of the wider general public. Indeed,

many of the interviewees (regardless of what mobility vision they held) cast the general public as very unsophisticated and incapable of realistically confronting the problems of sprawl and automobility. This was, of course, touched upon in discussing the secessionist automobility vision, which many interviewees alluded to as a frustrating faction in the debate that simultaneously opposed new roads, transit, higher density, and further sprawl. However, in terms of further research on the politics, values, and ideologies of competing mobility visions and the wider sprawl debate, further questions such as "what are other visions of mobility?" should be asked. For example, what of the thousands of office workers who make up the clerical staff, computer processors, and paper handling workers? While articulators of the accessible mobility vision address their mobility concerns in terms of the jobs-housing mismatch, and is there a cohesive shared vision of mobility among lower-paid workers that is missed simply because they do not actively engage in the sprawl debate?

Another research concern for exploring mobility visions is the significant process of black middle-and upper-class suburbanization underway in Atlanta. Is this an extension of the Malthusian/secessionist mobility vision? It can be argued that many upper-class blacks have sentiments about growth and development similar to those of affluent suburban whites. For example, middle-class blacks in some southside suburbs are becoming vocal against new apartments near their neighborhoods, while some affluent black subdivisions have opposed MARTA bus routes through the subdivision (McCosh, 2001b; Interview # 22). What are the possible conflicts between a civil rights-based accessible mobility vision and the process of automobilization of many affluent blacks?

Beyond expanding this inquiry on sprawl and mobility in Atlanta, further research agendas should include a replication of this research in other metropolitan areas across the US. In particular, places like Portland, Oregon, where the sprawl debate has resulted in more recentralization and more open challenges to automobile hegemony should be explored with the approach I have provided in this dissertation. Are the mobility visions in Portland different from those in Atlanta, or is it simply that the challengers to automobile hegemony have more political power and therefore can assert their agenda onto urban space in a more direct way than can be exerted in Atlanta? In a similar vein, an exploration of the politics of mobility in Western European countries would be very useful. Are the ethical and accessible mobility visions prevalent in Western Europe and does this reflect an open criticism of capitalism and tolerance in political discourse of non-capitalist futures? Does the rise in automobility in many Western European countries reflect a rise in secessionist values and ideologies as immigrants enter the nation, or is it a reflection of the widespread diffusion of neoliberal ideologies?

Moreover, what do the success and failures of mobility visions in many European cities tell us about the future of parallel vision in the US? For example, can the politics of an ethical mobility vision in countries like the Netherlands or Germany inform the parallel ethical mobility visions in places like Atlanta? Is there a potential for a Democratic-Socialist Mobility coalition emerging out of Atlanta's sprawl debate, a combination of ethical, new urban bourgeoisie, and accessible mobility visions? Insights for what kinds of politics are deployed in other nations could inform such a movement. A better understanding of the dynamics of a Democratic-Socialist form of mobility means that understanding the political economic framework of mobility in Western European

countries is necessary. This can serve to establish a clearer and more open dialogue that informs the wider ecology and social justice movements and scholars of urban problems in America.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

I used an ethnographic approach to unpack the ideologies, values, and conceptualizations of mobility held by individuals who were explicitly engaged in Atlanta's sprawl debate. To identify who these individuals were, I conducted extensive archival research. The archival research enabled me to reconstruct the major events and processes that characterized the sprawl debate in Atlanta. Generally speaking, I maintained an extremely detailed archival analysis of the transportation and growth debates from 1996 - 2002. However, I also conducted a detailed archival examination of some key issues, such as the Outer Perimeter, that extended back into the 1980's. I accumulated historical narratives from other scholarly works on Atlanta, including the important background work of Stone (1989), Bayor (1996), and Keating (2001). Additional sources on Atlanta's racial and class history included the work of Bullard, Johnson, and Torres (2000) and Pomerantz (1996). Reports by think-tanks such as Brookings Institute (2000), Research Atlanta (Hartshorn, 1994; Hartshorn and Ihlanfeldt, 1993), the Georgia Public Policy Foundation (2000a), and government reports from agencies such as the ARC (1993, 1994, 1995, 2000a and 2000b) and GDOT (1995) were important sources for understanding the transportation debates in Atlanta. Also of vital importance were the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and the editorial pages of both the liberal morning and conservative afternoon versions, as well as the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* and *Creative Loafing*. I also referred to the literature or websites of

organizations explicitly involved in the debate. Moreover, Atlanta's national stature as both poster-child of sprawl and the possibilities of transportation reform made it easy to find plenty of material from newspapers around the nation, national news magazines, and even limited scholarly research.

Participant observation over the course of two years between 2000 and 2001 provided insights into the inner workings of the transportation decision-making process in Georgia and how competing visions were formulated, articulated, and deployed. Participant observation also enabled networking and the development of contacts. I attended numerous conferences, workshops, and board meetings, and observed the mundane mechanics of public policy and political maneuvering that is often not transferred to the general public because it is considered boring. Examples of these included ARC board meetings, forums on sprawl such as "Spra'll ya'll come on" held at Georgia State University in February 2001, and open houses for ARC and GDOT plans, environmental organization meetings, and special guest presentations to civic groups. However, the attendance in public meetings in no way provided a full representation of ideologies, values, and conceptualizations of key stakeholders. To do that, I needed to talk to participants one-on-one.

Hunter (1953) studied Atlanta's ruling elite using what was called the reputational method. This empirically oriented strategy looked at key community organizations in Atlanta and drew from them the sources of names for top civic, business, political, and social leaders. These key players, or stakeholders, were then interviewed to ascertain the extent to which they interacted with each other (Whitt, 1982, page 14). Taking a similar "snowball" approach, I identified key actors in Atlanta's sprawl debate by a combination

of archival analysis of leading newspapers and other media sources, by attending public meetings, hearings, and conferences related to sprawl, and by seeking the advice of individual interviewees as I engaged in the interview process.

The interviewees I targeted included government staff, elected and appointed public officials (especially board members of GRTA and ARC), academics who have explicitly engaged in Atlanta's sprawl debate, prominent and vocal business leaders, and environmental, neighborhood, and civil rights activists. I targeted these stakeholders with the expectation that they held considerable influence over all or part of the debate and because, as I have observed in Atlanta, there are not many people that are intimately knowledgeable and engaged in the debate. This means that a select few individuals actually contest the destiny of the 4 million people living in metropolitan Atlanta. I eventually interviewed 47 people between March 2001 and July 2001. I requested far more interviews than that, and some were declined or deferred. However, to my surprise most requests were granted, even by persons thought to be a long-shot. Not every granted interview was conducted, mainly for the time and financial constraints to conduct the research. For that reason, I view the expansion of interviewing to be a key component of future research.

Discussion of interviewing

A complete list of the interviewees and interview questions is provided in the following two appendices. I interviewed 47 stakeholders, 46 of whom agreed to have the interview recorded. I assured interviewees of confidentiality with the assumption that it would enable the interviewees to speak more freely and without concern for future

repercussions. Therefore, I did not, unless permission was granted and the opportunity was necessary for effect, attribute quotes to specific individuals. In general, I started an interview with background questions, such as how long the interviewee had been familiar with Atlanta's sprawl debate and what was their role in it (refer to Appendix C for the full list of interview questions). I asked interviewees to share how they were informed, what their assessment of the mechanics of the air quality/ non-conformity issue was, and their perspective on ARC and GRTA. From this I gathered a lot of stories that, when reconstructed and connected to other stories, helped me understand the history of the struggle over mobility more clearly than was the case when simply following the debate in the newspaper. I found that having people tell the story in their own way revealed a lot about values and ideologies, providing me with material upon which to base the identification of the seven mobility visions. I also asked people about their visions of transportation policies, allowing the interviewees to hypothesize that anything was possible. I then asked how feasible they thought their vision was, and who shared their vision.

Unfortunately, I could not ask all interviewees all the questions I wanted because of time constraints. Although the average interview lasted one hour, some were brief, at 30-45 minutes, yet others extended to two or three hours. Additionally, although the questions were structured in such a way as to build towards the next question, I often allowed interviewees to focus on whatever they wanted, and this enabled me to get a good sense of what was important to them, thus contributing to understanding underlying ideologies and values. Some interviewees, for example, preferred to talk about their vision at length, while others said they did not have a vision per se, but that they were

simply responding to the demand of consumers and that they preferred to discuss the actual mechanics of the Clean Air Act or the process leading to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Almost all interviewees were vocal about who they saw as allies and whom they saw as opponents in the debate. This was extremely insightful, and was much more informative than the archival materials I used.

I asked key stakeholders in Atlanta's sprawl debate to provide their own conceptualization of the debate. Interviewees were asked to provide their definition of "sprawl" and to discuss how they conceptualize the term. They were asked if they preferred to use the term and if they saw sprawl as a problem in Atlanta. If they conceptualized sprawl as a problem, they were also asked to explain how problems could be addressed. If they concluded that sprawl was not a problem, they were asked what, if any, problems they did see in the general growth patterns in Atlanta. I also asked every interviewee about their conceptualization of the automobile. I asked them to explain why they thought people drive, for example, and in many instances interviewees made cultural arguments and observations about automobility.

I gained a lot from these interviews, especially the longer ones that evolved into conversations rather than question and answer sessions. One surprising finding was that people actually liked talking about the idea of a car culture and whether or not it was possible to reduce automobile dependency in Atlanta. Virtually everyone had something to say about this, and sometimes the interviewee would jump right to a discussion of the automobile before I had a chance to bring it up. This reinforced my belief that automobility is at the core of the sprawl debate. Almost all interviewees were involved in

the day-to-day debates, or had been, and were informed about the issues, and they stressed that they thought extensively about the debate.

One of the sets of questions I asked in the interviews was about how the stakeholders in the debate perceived each other. I asked each interviewee to briefly mention what they saw as the key barriers to implementing their vision. I also asked for interviewees to discuss who they saw as their allies in the debate, and who they saw as their opponents. The responses to this line of questioning were extremely insightful. Hearing how people characterized opponents could get emotional and, to a varying degree, people answered this question without pause, knowing exactly who they perceived as the "enemy." Some interviewees verged on seething as they listed all of their opponenents. For example, I interviewed a handful of politicians and business people who identified "environmental extremists" as their main opponents. These same political and business interests were identified by many environmentalists, neighborhood activists, and urban interests as the main barrier for political and social change.

Many interviewees identified their opponents by name. Others remained silent and instead simply listed a summary of broad labels such as "NIMBY's," "racists," "environmental extremists," or "greedy developers." How stakeholders characterized their opponents revealed something about the values and ideologies that they held, and common themes were articulated. Many of these themes were repeated in guest editorials, promotional materials, and reporting by the *Atlanta Journal-Consitution* and other local media sources, including television. Nevertheless, asking vocal participants to explain who and what they saw as the barriers to their specific vision was revealing. This

provided an insightful perspective for understanding the entrenched ideological and value-laden positions taken in the debate.

Of course, there is room for caution. Keating (2001), in focusing on the City of Atlanta (and not the metropolitan region), comments on the difficulty of research in Atlanta's political and economic history because of the "insider government" of business and political elite. He notes that almost all of the important policy decisions that have guided the city over the past several decades have been made not by government itself, but by small groups of men in private meetings. He notes that Hunter's (1953) study of the ruling elite, and Stone's (1988) study on Atlanta's white and black elite, show that Atlanta is ruled from behind the scenes by a small, extra-governmental elite. This governing process is hidden from the public and much of it is inaccessible to researchers. Atlantans are unaware of how decisions are really made and future generations will find it difficult to know the real history of Atlanta's development by the elite. Researchers find it difficult to discover or document the identities of the people who make important policy decisions, what their motives are, and how they reached their decisions. Keating stresses that a completely accurate history of Atlanta has never been written. With that in mind, I must stress that what I have produced is also, by its nature, a partial accounting of the visions of mobility in Atlanta. Nevertheless, for anyone interested in how urban space is produced, and particularly questions of transportation policy, these interviews allowed better understanding of how decisions are made, and what values and ideologies underpin the competing visions.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW LIST⁴¹

- 1) Environmental advocate
- 2) Neighborhood advocate
- 3) Environmental advocate
- 4) Civil Rights advocate
- 5) Transportation advocate
- 6) Transportation planner
- 7) Developer
- 8) Transportation planner
- 9) Director of state transportation agency
- 10) Member of state transportation board
- 11) Advisor to member of US Congress
- 12) Neighborhood advocate
- 13) Transportation advocate
- 14) Professor
- 15) Journalist
- 16) Environmental advocate
- 17) County commissioner
- 18) Transportation advocate
- 19) Member of state transportation board
- 20) Doctor
- 21) Land-use planner
- 22) Transportation lobbyist
- 23) Environmental advocate
- 24) Director of planning agency
- 25) Transportation manager
- 26) Transportation lobbyist
- 27) County commissioner
- 28) Civil rights advocate
- 29) Government administrator
- 30) Transportation advisor
- 31) Member of state transportation board
- 32) Professor
- 33) Transportation advisor
- 34) Land-use planner
- 35) Transportation manager

⁴¹ In order to maintain confidentiality, only one title was designated to each interviewee. For example, a member of a state transportation board can be a developer, environmental advocate, or executive of a corporation, but their role as board member is only listed.

- 36) Environmental advocate
- 37) Journalist
- 38) Developer
- 39) Transportation advocate
- 40) Member of state transportation board
- 41) Member of state transportation board
- 42) Member of state transportation board
- 43) Land use planner
- 44) Member of state transportation board
- 45) Environmental advocate
- 46) Transportation advocate
- 47) Neighborhood advocate

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background information

- How long have you been familiar with the urban sprawl debate in Atlanta and more broadly?
- What motivates your involvement?
- What do you see as your role in this debate?

Participant's perspective on urban sprawl

- How do you define urban sprawl? Do you see urban sprawl as a problem in Atlanta? Why or why not?
- How do you define Smart Growth?
- How are you informed?
- Are there places in North America, Europe, etc that you see as models?
- Is there a way to have urban sprawl without the environmental and social problems it is blamed for?

Participant's perspective on federal sanctions and the Clean Air Act

- Are you familiar with the federal sanctions imposed in 1998?
- What was your reaction to the conformity lapse (sanctions) imposed by the federal government in 1998?

- Why did Atlanta get sanctioned, in your mind (and not places like Baton Rouge, Houston)?
- In your mind, did the sanctions force Atlanta to recognize the problem of urban sprawl?
- Did the sanctions make you aware of a problem, or did you already feel there was a problem?
- Do you view sanctions as a necessary evil or a useful tool, or as a cumbersome burden?
- What was your reaction when sanctions were lifted?
- Do you think the sanctions should be extended temporally or re-imposed?
- Do you think the area of non-attainment coverage should be expanded to more of North Georgia?

The formation of GRTA

- Did you support forming the GRTA (Why/ Why not)?
- Were you involved in the formation of GRTA, and if so, in what way?
- Should GRTA have the power to force counties to have transit?
- Now that the GRTA is in place, do you see it as a permanent fixture?
- Should GRTA powers be expanded to other counties in North Georgia?

The RTP

- Are you involved in the debate over the RTP?
- What do you see as your role in this debate?
- What do you like or not like about the current RTP?
- What do you dislike about the RTP?

- Will the RTP significantly reduce automobile dependency?

Automobiles

- What should the role of cars be? What about car-sharing, etc...?
- Vision of roads (arterials)
- Vision for HOV (take-away v. new lanes, etc...)
- What is your vision of the proposed Outer Perimeter?
- Do people naturally want to drive?
- Traffic Calming - vision? Road diets, etc....

Transit

- In your mind, what is the role of transit in urban futures? Where should it go....etc.?
Light rail; commuter rail; MARTA heavy rail; bus, etc...
- Developmental rail v. developmental highways?
- Do you think transit can replace cars? Overall, or in certain contexts?

Bike-ped

- What can the role of bicycles be in Atlanta's future? Recreational...or as real urban transportation?

Land-use

- What land use changes do you see happening in the future?
- What is your vision of Atlanta in 25 years (in the context of transportation)?
- Does the RTP fit that vision?

Politics

- How realistic do you see your vision in terms of the political process?
- What do you see as the key barriers to implementation of your vision?

- Who do you see as your allies in this debate?
- Who are your opponents?

Concluding questions

- Where do you live and where do you work? How far is your commute?
- How did you get to work?
- Do you have different transit options?
- Can you park for free?
- How much time do you estimate it takes to commute daily, and how would that compare to transit, cycling, walking (or driving)?
- How was your commute?
- How many cars are in your household, and how many drivers?

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