

UNITED STATES VS AUSTRALIA: TRANSITION BACK TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND STREETS EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

This podcast was recorded in early May 2020. Some of the statistics discussed may no longer be up to date. Please check your local news and health authorities for more current information.

Intro: 0:17

You are listening to the People and Place podcast by WSP Australia. Over the next few weeks, we'll be talking with WSP experts, clients and leading industry figures to dive into People and Place. What does place and placemaking mean? And what are some of the challenges and opportunities we face in creating places for people to live, work, learn, play, and thrive in here's your host, Hannah Bleyerveen.

Hannah: 0:40

This week on the podcast, we welcome Taylor Gouge, Associate Transport Engineer with WSP, Michael Tyrpenou, a Social Strategy and Design lead with WSP and Stacey Matlin as Senior Mobility Strategist and WSP employee embedded in the City of Detroit. Today, Stacey is expressing her personal views as a resident of the city. We'll be talking about the impacts of COVID-19 on our access to public spaces and public transport, both in the United States. And here in Australia, we'll explore the role of New Mobility and how it can support people's health, wellbeing, and sense of safety. As we transition out of isolation to our new normal. Stacey, as our international guests, I'd like to start with you. Can you tell us a bit about your role as a Senior Mobility Strategist with the City of Detroit?

Stacey: 1:27

Sure. I'm a Senior Mobility Strategist as an embedded employee with the City of Detroit office of Mobility Innovation. And so I was hired specifically with the focus to plan and implement pilots to help Detroit residents get to jobs and understanding how all the New Mobility solutions from bikes to scooters, to shuttles, to autonomous vehicles, how they can help Detroit residents get around. And while I was hired with the intention, just to plan and implement pilots, I have transitioned more into a strategy role where I do a lot of broader thinking of how does the New Mobility ecosystem work with our existing public transit system and what are the ways they can be sustainable? How do we pay for them in the longterm? And ultimately, how do we help our residents get where they need to go?

Hannah: 2:12

And what does New Mobility mean exactly?

Stacey: 2:15

New Mobility is typically referred to as, or what I refer to it as, anything that's not a bus or a train that are some of the newer forms like TNC. So Uber and Lyft to bike share to scooters to even autonomous vehicles. Did I get that right? Michael can add in.

Michael: 2:36

I think it's kind of interesting though, right? Cause mobility means, you know, being able to move. So I think it's like whatever, you can move people with. The interesting thing about what Stacey's doing, and it seems a lot more tailored to the kind of economic outputs or public health outputs, as opposed to kind of a lot of the work that we do, I think here in Australia or in New South Wales in particular, it's about moving people around and it's often related to where people live, as opposed to having direct outcomes for people's quality of life, you know, income and all those kinds of things. So I think that's like a really interesting twist on it. And obviously the fact that you work for, what we call it, local government, which is kind of, you know, we do a lot of our work with state governments predominantly. So it's another interesting bent, I think on the way that the two different systems work on a much more localized level, but yeah, mobility, I think it's just, you know, for me, it's just moving people and however people choose to move.

That's the kind of interesting thing. And I guess the reason why I was so keen to talk to everyone was about how are we going to move now in the future with what's going on.

Taylor: 3:26

This is Taylor. I come from more of, maybe what we could call it, the old mobility. I focus mostly on public transport systems, particularly surface bus transport. And I think it is a really interesting question, particularly as we are dealing with this essentially very extended period of transition from COVID-19 of how does New Mobility and traditional mobility work together. And I think that's sort of the interface that I find really interesting. And here at WSP, we've been doing a lot of thinking about the traditional public transport networks. And what does that look like? I was one of the authors of the WSP white paper on public transport during transition and the distancing, which we're already seeing in Sydney. As of yesterday, they're now putting stickers on buses to say no dot, no spot. So I think that's going to be really interesting to see as we have this lower public transport capacity. How can New Mobility compliment that and work together as an ecosystem? Because the subways, the metros, the train lines, these are still the life bloods of our cities and they're not gonna go away. And I think ultimately they're still the backbone of the future.

Hannah: 4:29

Stacey, what is the situation looking like in Detroit and in the U.S. Right now?

Stacey: 4:34

So Detroit was definitely one of the first and hardest hit cities in the U.S. and a lot of that is due to health disparities. And the fact that we are a majority African-American city, we have a very high poverty rate and know that when there are compounding factors with COVID-19 and when you already are at risk for so many other health factors, you're going to have a higher mortality rate. So that's been really rough on Detroit and this community. There's the death rate and the whole emotional aspect of that in addition to all the social isolation, in addition to this new normalcy, but in the U.S. it's a very localized feeling because across the U.S. different states and different cities have had different responses. In the past couple of weeks, we've kind of seen a little bit of a curving of the curve, I should say, and like a declining of cases and the declining of deaths, especially in some of the hotspot cities, but that's not the case in more rural areas in the U.S.

Stacey: 5:32

And so there are a lot of places that are starting to open up now, and a lot of them against public health advice. So for example, in Texas, Texas relaxed restrictions on business closings in the beginning of May. And on Saturday, they announced their highest single day of COVID-19 cases. And they're still talking about continuing to open up business. So it's really scary when you have decisions that are being made because people are anxious. And they're thinking about the economic repercussions, which are important, but we really need to think about this from a people perspective. And if we don't have people to meet, you know, be in those jobs and to work, what does it even matter? So it's been frustrating personally, to see some of the response in the U.S. and from a public health background and knowing public health, like 101, what we should be doing and knowing that social distancing epidemiologists say is like the number one reason our cases have gone down, we should still probably be keeping that up until they tell us that it's okay.

Stacey: 6:33

And so personally it's been frustrating and I'm a little bit scared to see what happens next, when more cases start spiking. But while we were really hard hit, our mayor has been very proactive and has been really data-driven and listening to the experts. He said from the beginning, that testing will be one of the critical components of our returning to work. And so we've started to put recommendations in place about how the city will return to work. For example, a couple of weeks ago, the mayor said any contractor who is doing construction work for the city, they are required to get a COVID-19 test. And the city will provide that test free of charge, and we will schedule it for you.

Stacey: 7:16

And we will work with your employer to make sure you have access to that test. You really raised the blueprint of what is it going to look like to safely return to work? How do we give people that confidence to know that we're putting adequate precautions and how do we have that material there? The mayor also put surgical masks on buses and providing adequate materials. There is some hope that I see that there is a plan, and there's a way that we can do this. And if we do it smartly, we're going to have to have testing. We're going to have to have contact tracing, and hopefully we can get the economy back up and running in a safe way. So we're not risking lives.

Hannah: 7:49

I'd like to bring us to the public transport context. What are some of the issues we're seeing with supply and demand on public transport? And how can we tackle this?

Stacey: 7:58

I'll give a little bit of background on the City of Detroit and our COVID work. The City of Detroit, our bus system is incorporated in our local municipality. It's all in one. And we really just have our bus network. And right when COVID broke out, we were not adequately prepared. And we had a mini bus driver strike, and the buses stopped for a full day. And we really saw how our essential workers, especially our low income essential workers who rely on public transit to get to, and from work, how they were affected. And so that was really an eye opening that we need some redundancies, and we need to figure out other ways that we can support our public transit system. If this happens again, cause we already, even pre COVID, we had bus driver shortage and so post COVID we even more so when we had some drivers who were quarantined. Really thinking about our essential workers, we wanted to start with a more targeted plan and focus in on the few critical workplaces.

Stacey: 8:57

So we have two big hospital systems in the city and focusing there because we know they're big hotspots and they're going to continue to operate no matter what, when they have people working 24/7, we started there, we reached out to the employers and we asked them to distribute flyers that had enrollment forms so we can get some basic information from their employees. And we just ask, what is your address? Where are you coming from, where are you going to? What's your shift time? How are you currently getting to work? What would you like to use to get to work? Everybody responded said that they would like alternative methods, whether that be Lyft and Uber credits, taxi, shuttle, and social distancing, even the bikes and the scooters. And we followed up and had conversations with people. They were saying, I'm waiting for a bus and four busses will pass me by in the time that it takes for me to get to work.

Stacey: 9:46

I can't get to work on time because they're crowded or other people will say I took the bus and it's crowded. And I don't feel safe. It's crazy because something that is so essential, public transit and work, how are we able to get our critical workers? Are our heroes, our healthcare heroes, that we are all a and we can't even give them basic rights to get to and from where they need to go. For me, this is really basic rights. And so it's an obligation for us to respond and not just do the typical way of like, Oh, we'll have more buses or we'll figure it out, but we should be responding right away. Our office, we're thinking about what we can do. Right now, we've been responding with some emergency Lyft credits. That's not a perfect solution, but it hopefully helps fill the gap.

Stacey: 10:28

We're also evaluating what some micro mobility programs could be, whether e-bikes or e-scooters. Can we just give people these vehicles for a subsidized rate and see if it helps them get to, and from work, if they live close to their jobs, could we work with a shuttle provider and have safe social distancing, and what does even having safe social distancing mean in a shuttle. There are all these questions, but I really think that we need to start with our residents, especially those who are most vulnerable, understand their challenges and work with them to create solutions that will meet their needs.

Taylor: 10:59

I think you raise a really interesting point, and this is a difficult question with the social good, but it's this idea that people that do live closer, they have more options. And how do we help them make choices that are better for the network as a whole, so that people that

live farther out can get in. And I think that it's an interesting question. And just like some of the campaigns around stay home, cause it's for the good of your city, how do we get messaging out about, you know, what have you considered walking? Have you considered biking? Have you considered micro mobility because you're the people that maybe live within three kilometers of the city or you're the people that live within three miles of the city? I think that's a really interesting question that I would love to see local governments take on. It's sort of like demand management, but at a city level, it's very difficult.

Hannah: 11:42

And Michael, did you have any thoughts on that?

Michael: 11:45

Yeah, I think that's gonna be really important. How do we make it more equitable for people to come in? And a lot of our essential workers, unfortunately, they get paid a lot less than, you know, your bankers and your lawyers and your professional service workers that live on the outskirts of our cities, which is an hour and a half, two hours away sometimes. We don't want to lose those people off public transport. The best thing about public transport is that it is this melting pot of different people and it's for the public, without being too authoritarian and without telling people what to do. I think there needs to be a little bit of direction from public organizations around who can do what, because I think we risk everyone doing everything and working for their self interest. And everyone's been really good to this point. I think everyone's kind of been very compliant here in Australia, but I think we risk falling over it after we've done all this really good work. And I'd hate to say that suffer for the rest of the communities.

Hannah: 12:31

So what can we do for the people that are traveling long distances with public transport might be the only viable option for those people to make them feel safe and comfortable using public transport still. Do you have any ideas, Taylor?

Taylor: 12:44

Yeah. I mean, obviously cleaning is at the core of a lot of things and I know public transport agencies across the globe are really ramping up their cleaning and hiring more cleaners and changing the protocols and also thinking about what products they're using and all of that. So that's sort of the frontline system. And how do you get that communication out to your customers?

Taylor: 13:03

That that's what you're doing and feel confident that when a bus, you know, maybe starts it's run, it's been cleaned the idea of not packing buses. And we again looked at this in our white paper and this depends a lot on cities. And I know Detroit I've read in the newspaper, some challenges where a lot of the buses were still very busy and some issues, even with bus operators being on the front lines and not being protected by sneezing customers. And so I think keeping service levels high is a really important thing. And a lot of people in public transport have been talking about, there might be ways in this system where maybe not everyone has to go to work at 8:00 AM and come home at 5:00 PM anymore. It can actually be more efficient to operate public transport systems and more even service level across the day, running these high levels of peak service is very expensive.

Taylor: 13:51

And so thinking about it from a financial point of view, maybe we could sort of take that same amount of money that it takes to run our bus system. And we could actually get more service out of it if we spread it across the day. And so I think that's a really interesting question, particularly for heavily bus based systems like Detroit and a lot of U.S. cities and Australian cities, that would be something that could really provide customers a level of comfort and say, Hey, this bus route that used to run a lot in the morning and a lot in the evening, but not in the middle of the day, we're going to run it every 10 minutes all day long. So you know that you've got a bus coming every 10 minutes and I think that kind of messaging could give people confidence that, okay, there's going to be another bus coming it's okay. And it also could give operators the opportunity to think maybe a little bit outside the box of how they've traditionally scheduled public transport in a way that's more financially sustainable during this period of social distancing.

Hannah: 14:40

Do you see this as something that's long lasting, or do you think it's just going to spring back to how it always was once we've been given the green light or is this something that has more value in the long-term?

Michael: 14:52

I think only speaking from being a resident of New South Wales, I must admit I've been really, really impressed with the response of agencies like Department of Planning and their work they've been doing with transport. They've just gone, We're going to do cycle networks. We're going to create a new cycle network for our city. Traditionally, that's not been an easy thing to do with the car dominance of Sydney and most Australian cities. I think cycling has always been the poor cousin when it comes to kind of how people move. And I think now getting that to kind of push to the front of the lot is really interesting. So I think people have put their money where their mouth is. I think we've traditionally said,, Oh, we're really keen on walking and cycling, but we're actually seeing that now happen. And I think that's happening in places like the UK as well.

Michael: 15:30

They've just invested a couple of billion pounds to kind of change the width footpaths and you know, the active ways of moving around. I think that's a huge, huge opportunity. So I've been really impressed. I mean, I don't know about the other two guys, where do you think that from an observer? I think finally seeing these kinds of things is great, but I guess, like I said before, as long as that's spread out across the really built up urban areas and the regional areas, the suburban areas as well, I think that's okay. I think sometimes we have a tendency just to focus in on the big cities, like the Melbournes and the Sydneys. And I think that that equality of access in those other areas is just as well needed.

Hannah: 16:02

I live in the city of Sydney. And one thing they're doing for City of Sydney residents is offering free cycling lessons while the roads are sort of quieter. And this time to build people's road confidence, because I think that's a big inhibitor for people moving, cycling as a form of transport in Sydney. So I think that's a good example of something you can do to, I guess, opportunist on this situation, but for long term benefit.

Michael: 16:26

And then that speaks to the public health stuff as well. Right? So you're getting the double benefits. And then I think one of the things that we're finding is all of our social infrastructure has been absolutely pushed to the brink. So, you know, hospitals and healthcare services. So how can we use transport to serve more than just as Taylor said, flatten that curve, but also start to get people more active and moving outside. And, you know, we know we're going to be faced with a mental health crisis. Once all these things starts to kind of eke back into life. We know that we're going to have to deal with that. So getting people out, I think there's just huge opportunities with active transport. They just go beyond the getting people from A to B it's like, it's this whole ecosystem of benefits, I think. And that's really hard to kind of measure in business cases and those kinds of things, but from a human level, I think that's the benefit of it.

Stacey: 17:05

That's the other challenge is that when you're relying on active transit for a primary mode, when the weather isn't great, what do you do? So there definitely has to be other forms of transportation for those situations, which is a whole another thing. Like we're piloting our micro mobility solutions in the summer and hoping that can work and see what goes from there. And after that, we'll, we'll see what happens.

Michael: 17:30

Yeah. We've got the opposite problem where it's like 45 degrees and people are sweating their house down. People would choose not to use transport because of that. And that makes sense, but then it kind of throws it back onto the, okay, so what do we do for the urban form? How does urban form support that movement? Because if we want to get all these people on the streets, okay. What about shading? How do we plant some more trees? Whereas like people to take breaks, do we have bubblers won't exist in this kind of environment because people don't want to share things, but it's like, it's gotta be a holistic strategy. So, you know, the network has a transport thing works, but then we've got to start to work on these, these streets as spaces that people can kind of move around and,

and have enough space and support that movement. And I think we struggle in the more that we develop and urbanise our cities, the less we have of those kinds of spaces to, to rest and do those kinds of things. So I think that's the other component of all of this is that kind of public space debate. If we're pushing people out of buses and trains all into public space is our public space adequate enough to withstand that extra load. And I think that's going to be the real challenge and I'm not sure yet.

Hannah: 18:32

Absolutely. And then the other, other component of that is when you get out of the public space and you're going to your end destination, I think there's a lot to be said for end of trip facilities because well, someone like me, for example, I can't speak to everyone, don't choose some of these active transport forms because I don't want to rock up to work, you know, dripping in sweat and have to like then front all my colleagues, like, but having end of trip facilities, where you can have a shower and you know to do your hair again, changes that scenario. So I think there's stuff certainly in the public domain really, really important, but there's a role for the private development as well.

Taylor: 19:07

And I think it's an interesting thing to think about, which is plagues of the past and public health issues of the past have shaped what we currently know as our modern cities. How is this pandemic going to, or not going to shape cities in the future? Will they be less dense or differently designed or have a different priority of space usage? I think is really interesting to think about not necessarily my area of expertise, but that end of trip facility, the size of bus stops the size of footpaths, the ability to pause and have distance between other people, even when you have a lot of people. And that's what, you know, we've seen some really interesting stuff coming out of the U.S. and around the world of just shutting down entire streets, saying, we need the space for people that are not in cars. So we're just going to take over these networks or huge network of slow streets, I think in Oakland and different areas that have been doing that, which is pretty exciting to see.

Taylor: 20:03

And it will be the test of time whether they stay. What I think is also interesting though, is how cultural it is and how, in some ways it really does rely on the local expertise of the planners in the area to understand the cultural behavior of the environment they're working in. And I always remember I was in graduate school in California and there was a student from New York. We were doing an urban design project and he's like, well, what about the double parking? And all the Californians were like, what do you mean double parking, who double parks? In New York, like everybody double parks. So understanding what is that behavior? Or I'm currently working on a project in Hobart. And we talk about how Hobart drivers love to get in their lane, like as early as they can. And they want to stay in that lane the whole way. And so it's understanding that behaviour and designing systems for your culture and your city. For example, in Detroit, maybe the, I mentioned the economics of all of it is and what people might choose. And bus stigmas has always been a challenge. That's a global commonality. It's great that we can exchange global information, but I think it also still points out to understanding the specific cultural context of where we are designing a hundred percent.

Michael: 21:12

I'm probably saying this from a selfish perspective, cause it's kind of the work that I do, but it's like if we don't get that understanding one size fits all doesn't work. And I think we're seeing that. And I think that understanding that a human lens is crucial to all of this because we just don't know. And I think planning for those assumptions and those assumptions that we've carried forward forever. And, you know, the standards that have been written where we can, obviously you can't throw out the whole system that we've kind of built up, but I think we need to be testing and piloting things, given this new opportunity. And I think if we've got some evidence around people to support that, I think that gives us enough of a baseline to then start to play and test and prototype. And I'm super excited about all of that.

Hannah: 21:49

Do you guys think we're doing enough and quickly enough? One of the things our Transport Minister, Andrew Constance said recently is if you're not on public transport in peak hour now, as we transitioned back, don't put yourself in that position, but the numbers are staggering. When you look at the number of trips we had on our public transport system in April, 2019 or something like

59 million. And in April, 2020, it was something like 12 million it's like an 80% drop. But what are you going to do with those 80% of people when you're telling them they can't rejoin public transport at peak hour? Are we moving quickly enough? We're already talking about transitioning back with the step one, step two, step three. What do you think we should be doing?

Michael: 22:28

Oh, look, I'm a big advocate of decentralizing their cities. I think in big geographic areas like Australia. And I'm again thinking quite selfishly. So, you know, I have a soft spot for regional communities, but I think why are we so reliant on these big cities to be our anchors? I know definitely that people's perspectives around being in dense, urban areas have changed because of this because of what's just been happening. And you think of those areas that are less dense. People are wanting to look at other ways of working. And I think work, if we think about work as being that cultural pillar, that everyone's kind of revolving around, how do I do this, or we're trying to retain work, or, you know, for the people that don't even have work, how do we give those people opportunities to not have to be reliant on a city?

Michael: 23:06

That's how many hours away. And I think we've got to toy with the idea. It's kind of like the tide coming in and out. Sometimes we go out and we come back in, we'd go out and we'd come back in. And it seems like we're kind of being back in on the cities. I'd like to see the decentralization of our cities, spread it as much as possible and start to think of these, these areas of almost little hubs like that hub and spoke model and working from home and, you know, trusting people to be, do all these kinds of things. All these different things to me add up to a different way of living and have less reliance on cities. Are we doing enough? I think we are in a way, but I don't think we're necessarily pushing that angle hard enough.

Taylor: 23:42

I'll offer a slight counter opinion, which is I really am concerned in the Australian and the American context that de-centralization will result in an increase in car travel. And I think one of the big benefits we've seen of this period is air quality has improved and climate changes have improved. And I get worried at nighttime as an urban planner, that this is going to result in extreme decentralization, which then just puts everyone in their cars. So I think it is a question of, does everyone need to travel? I think that's probably one of the biggest questions that we can lock in. Like maybe we were just traveling too much before people can work from home. People can make different choices different times of day, but then I think it is a design question. If we are going to have some of maybe these regional centers or smaller cities that are going to play a role, how are we still supporting their design so that they're not car centric?

Taylor: 24:37

Unfortunately, I don't think that's a really easy short term answer from a form point of view, but this is the opportunity for behavior change. And you say, why are we doing enough? The cities are the ones that have had to react the quickest, but I think there's a real behavioral change opportunity for our regional centers and some of the smaller cities around the world to say, what are you using right now at a period where people are maybe willing to think differently about how they move to get in there. And so the social scientists, the travel demand management experts, I think those are the people that I would love to see stepping up right now. This is your moment.

Hannah: 25:14

So how do we measure success?

Stacey: 25:16

If you're talking about pure ridership, should that even be the measure we're talking about? With public transit and a pandemic when you have ridership and a lot of people on the pathed vehicle, that's the opposite of what you should be designing for. But our public transport systems are really primarily optimized for enhancing ridership. So it's really like looking this whole idea of what we previously thought success measures were on its head. And so instead this is an opportunity to really switch our thinking and not just focus on those operational efficiency goals, but more so what are their needs? What are our resident needs and how do we think about maybe more quality of life metrics that we can demonstrate? The value that public transit is providing and other forms of transit is

providing to understand what are people using it for? Why, how are we really helping them get where they need to go? Because ultimately that's the goal of public transit. And then therefore, if we can demonstrate the value we're providing, we can then make a case for increased funding, which we all know transit could definitely use. I think that's a universal thing.

Michael: 26:29

Yeah, it's really interesting. I sat in on a webinar, the committee of Sydney did a webinar a couple of weeks ago, and they mentioned that they've been doing surveys every week since pandemic started. And one of the questions they ask is the percentage of people that will use public transport in the future. And obviously when you're in the middle of a crisis, there's significant bias in people's answers, kind of take it with a grain of salt, but over time it's kind of diminished and we're 10 weeks in and 50% of people they survey every week is saying that I don't think I'll use public transport again. So what do we do with those 50%? I think, to Taylor's point, it's like, we don't want them to go into the car. Okay. So it's like, how do we limit that spill over? And I guess when I talk to decentralization, I think about not only just the way that people move, but where people live and how they live

Stacey: 27:10

This transition period that we're entering, depending on whether you want to take the optimistic or the pessimistic view, it could be quite a long time. And so I think this is the chance it's still early now is still the time for the economic planners for the land use planners and the transport planners to all be talking to each other because it is still a moment for everyone. And I feel like we are on this tipping point, but you know, I've been reflecting a lot on the difference between a pandemic and an emergency or a national disaster, or I've been through Hurricane Sandy in New York City. And it's very different. Like, yes, it's time sensitive. And when you're in the middle of it, it's a crisis. But the length of the effects in some ways are very long. You know, I feel like some people are worrying, Oh, I've missed the boat.

Stacey: 27:56

It's too late. It's not too late. You know, this whole year is going to be a transitional year for us and we can make the choice. Do we lock in some of these changes that we're seeing or do we let everything go back to the way that it was, or maybe even a little bit worse than it was?

Hannah: 28:10

Are there any other thoughts on how we can transition back to the new normal?

Taylor: 28:14

You know, we've been talking a lot about behavior change and how do we encourage people to do things and this question of greater good. And I go back to something that I once heard Enrique Peñalosa say, and it's about, you have to make things beautiful. And so I think as we think about our places and we've been talking mostly about sticks, I guess I would say, which is you have to do this cause it's for the good of the community.

Taylor: 28:37

And it still feels a little bit negative. Maybe one of the interesting ways we can transition is, well, what are the carrots? How can we create beautiful places that enable social distancing, enable community. Berkeley, California is opening up whole streets for restaurants saying we just want restaurants to be in the streets because we have restaurant industry is important to us. And that's a good use of space right now. And so I guess maybe starting to think about, okay, we can't have musical festivals, we can't have things with hundreds of people, but maybe there's a way that we can create beautiful spaces that are socially distant that make people want to come out and bring back these high streets and main streets around the world in a different way. So that's something that's been floating around in my head, which is how do we find the carrots in these situations.

Hannah: 29:25

Thank you, I like your positivity.

Michael: 29:28

I want to see music on buses and public transport. I want to say like, you know, stuff like that, playing around with some things like that. But I think you're right. Taylor, I think it's kind of looking at it with that open mind and being able to play with these things in a way that we can still get really good outcomes.

Stacey: 29:41

Yeah. I like this positivity aspect that I like the thought of, instead of saying no public transport, can we think about public transport more broadly. Can public transport instead of just being buses and trains, be anything that helps facilitate movement and helps people get where they need to go, especially those most vulnerable. So can we change our mindset about what we think of public transit can that includes bikes can that include scooters or shuttles or other things that might need more. And so what can transit agencies do? How can they pilot an experiment and try new things and in a structured way. And so like starting small, starting with specific employers and employees and working with them to understand what works for them. And then we'll be scaling as we understand what really works for our most vulnerable residents. And then also those metrics of success. How do we change those to be more representative of our residents and their needs. And instead of just ridership, really focusing on, you know, where they're able to get to jobs, where they able to safely get where they needed to go. And if so, then, then we exceeded our goals. And that's what we should be focusing on.

Michael: 30:53

We have a responsibility with the planet that we live on to do something about what that looks like for us now and in the future generations. And I think the same applies as Taylor's just mentioned, if we want to shape the way we live, let's do it. We've got the opportunity to do that. You don't have to do what you thought you had to do. You know, our workplaces are saying to us, you don't have to come to the office five days a week, if you don't want it, that's cool. It's like, okay, they have that. How do you want to best live your life and get that opportunity to do so. It's a really difficult thing. I think it's like the carrots are coming in some ways and we don't know how to, what to do with the carrots sometimes because we're so used to the stick. So it's balancing that out a little bit more and taking that opportunity.

Hannah: 31:27

I think in some ways we're lucky as well. We live in an age where it's cool to be these things like it's cool to be sustainable. Talk about flexible work. Like, so there's an opportunity to make the most of it.

Michael: 31:40

Yeah, don't lose it. I think about my grandparents, who came from, you know, Europe during the war and they came to Australia and they used to get so angry at me about not trying hard at school cause they didn't have the opportunity to do that. We've got an opportunity here to do something. If you lose it, look back and go, well, you blew it kind of didn't do it. We didn't take it serious. I think it's on us really.

Hannah: 31:58

I think there's a real opportunity to rethink what a successful place looks like and create better experiences for people in the public realm. Outside of our COVID-19 response, there are already some really great mobility initiatives happening around the world that are building community and creating better places that we could learn from. Stacey, we spoke offline earlier about some examples in the U.S. like the 'slow ride' initiative. Can you tell us a bit about that?

Stacey: 32:24

So every Monday, I don't know now, but at least in the nice weather, Monday, there's a spot people roll in like literally there are like police cars that block off the streets, how your street, and you're just like hundreds of people on their bikes, just hanging with music and it's a party on a bike and it's free. It's great. You don't go very fast. So it's, you're going to be there for a couple of hours and you'll, there's like a good route, but yeah, it's fun and it's definitely fun, but it's a cultural thing.

Michael: 32:54

That sounds like an amazing introduction to cycling in the city.

Stacey: 32:56

It is, it is. And I know there's a local bike shop. I don't know their involvement in slow roll, but there's definitely programs here that are tailored to bike education and then giving kids bikes and also teaching them how to repair their own bikes. Like there, there are programs that are in conjunction with that.

Tracey: 33:14

Yeah. I just spent six months in Belgium and they do a Friday night ride. That sounds similar. Cause I lived on the street where it went down and yeah, it had some police escort-ness and it was with music and it was like this rolling party. So that's really cool.

Stacey: 33:27

Yeah. And Cape Town has, I think it's like moonlight party or something like that. I've been in Cape Town where they have like once a month at the full moon, they'll do a bike ride, which is funny.

Hannah: 33:38

That's really cool. Tyler, you were talking about what are the carrots? That sounds like a good little carrot, you know, especially with the loss of some about arts and culture right now has been really hammered, that's kind of an interesting opportunity.

Taylor: 33:51

And I think they do this globally, but in New York they did summer streets, three weekends in August when it's kind of like the equivalent to doing it in January in Australia, like when things are quieter over school holidays, they shut down some of the major streets and it became like a big street festival. But that's the kind of thing. Even if you didn't have as many stands, if you had a big enough space, you could do that with social distancing. That's the kind of thing that could be a fun spread out community activity.

Hannah: 34:18

Thank you, Stacey, Taylor and Michael for joining me today, it was a really interesting discussion as always. And finally thank you to our audience for listening in. I hope you enjoyed today's episode and I look forward to next time.