



John Whitelegg: A Man for All Seasons

By Charles R. Rivasplata

This article explores the work and accomplishments of Professor John Whitelegg, the founder and past publisher of *World Transport Policy and Practice*. Through his example, he has provided us with the inspiration to fervently continue his quest to publish quality articles on transport, further highlighting the industry's vital role in making the ongoing adjustments necessary for creating a more sustainable future.

To say that he has been passionately involved in envisioning a more integrated environment and making transport more sustainable is an understatement. For decades he has vigorously promoted policies and strategies aimed at coordinating investments in transport with local land use planning, striving to lower society's dependence on fossil fuels. In response to the need to effectively reduce the negative impacts of motorisation, in 1995 he founded *World Transport Policy and Practice*, a journal focused on providing alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle and



linking transport research to the implementation and evaluation of projects

A native of Greater Manchester in Northwest England, Whitelegg initially studied Geography in Britain, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA) and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. His PhD thesis explored stochastic process modelling and spatial statistics in the analysis of the birth, death, growth and decline of firms. In addition, he earned a Bachelor of Laws degree (LLB). Throughout his professional career, he has held key posts and has led a diverse set of projects and campaigns, not only as a scholar, author and teacher, but also as an advocate and politician. In the early 1990s, he chaired the Department of Geography at Lancaster University and was Director of the University's Environmental Epidemiology Research Unit. In the 2000s, he was a local councillor in Lancaster, and served as the Green Party's Sustainable Development spokesperson. In



2020, he was appointed a Senior Fellow at the Federation of Integrated Transport (FIT), collaborating with Professor Phil Goodwin on topics related to transport and climate change.

As an author, Whitelegg has written over 50 journal articles and numerous books, including *Urban Transport* (1987); *Transport for a Sustainable Future: The Case for Europe* (1993); *Critical Mass: Transport, Environment and Society in the 21st Century* (1997); and *Mobility: A New Urban Design and Transport Planning Philosophy for a Sustainable Future* (2015). In the last book, he called for radically modifying the manner in which transport and land use planning are managed in Britain, citing public transport best practices in such cities as Vienna and Zurich. In the book, he also highlighted Sweden's Vision Zero policy, aimed at drastically reducing pedestrian road injuries and deaths.

Currently, he is Visiting Professor of Sustainable Transport at Liverpool John Moores University and Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of York's Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). His research interests include transport and the environment, sustainable transport systems, transport in developing world cities (e.g., sustainable transport strategies in Kolkata), sustainable transport and human health, and development of environmental management standards. He has also worked on other projects outside of Britain, including in Denmark, Australia, Sweden, Netherlands and China.

According to Whitelegg, there are projects that exemplify his vision of what the future could look like. For example, he points out that Lund, Sweden sets a very high standard with its approach to transport decarbonisation, including a long-term strategy for transport and mobility in the city. It is a city that he has visited frequently and written about in his *Mobility* book, as well as his blogs. In addition to Lund's strategy, he cites the Baltic Sea Region Competence Centre on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans project in Poland, as well as the Towards a Zero Carbon Vision for United Kingdom Transport project in Britain.

Furthermore, he has identified three achievements that he is particularly proud of:

- his call for strengthening the policy ties connecting transport, climate change, social justice and regional planning;

- his campaign to save the strategically significant Carlisle rail line in the north of England, which featured support from the World Health Organisation; and
- his extensive efforts to establish a 20 mile-per-hour maximum speed on local roads and streets, primarily in the northwest of England, but also in Wales and Scotland.

As editor of the journal for 25 years, Whitelegg consistently published articles based on empirical studies, tying these directly to transport policy options. These articles have explored a wide range of topics, including safety, aviation, social issues, women in transport, and freight transport. Many featured the quantification of environmental impacts, whilst others focused on transport for children and behavioral change. The present resurgence of the journal will continue to articulate and disseminate a diverse set of sustainable transport themes and issues.

Through the journal, Whitelegg has encouraged the inclusion of articles with innovative ideas and alternative ways of promoting sustainable development and mobility. Above all, he has highlighted the urgent need to promote active transport options and reduce the impacts of all forms of motorised transport, constantly striving to establish policies and encourage strategies that result in a more sustainable future for all sectors of society.

References:

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Author details:

Charles R. Rivasplata, PhD, is a Principal and Board Member of Transportation Choices for Sustainable Communities. He is also a Research Associate at the Mineta Transportation Institute and a Lecturer in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at San Jose State University, California USA.