ITS SEMINAR

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE U.S. AND CANADA: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES -- POLICIES OR PREFERENCES?

Co-sponsored by the Department of Planning, Policy and Design

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12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m.
Social Ecology I, Room 306

Smart growth advocates in the U.S. and elsewhere worry about urban sprawl and typically advocate new controls on urban growth, including tougher land use planning and regulation. Is auto-oriented development simply the market's way of meeting widely held lifestyle preferences? Or is it, as some critics complain, attributable to policies that favor such development? In the case of the U.S., critics suggest that policies are the problem and smart growth is the solution. Yet if U.S.-type development (suburbanization and widespread auto use) can be observed in non-U.S. policy settings, critics may really be objecting to people's preferences. Comparing recent U.S. and Canadian settlement and travel trends suggests a test. Cultural differences are minor but urban policy differences are significant. How do settlement patterns and urban transportation choices compare? Our analysis of recent data shows substantial similarities. Preferences appear to trump policies, and the "smart growth" platform may have to be reconsidered.

Peter Gordon is a professor of policy, planning and development and economics, and director of the Master of Real Estate Development Program at the University of Southern California (USC). He has recently written on new urbanism and is currently working (with Harry W. Richardson) on a book on the "sprawl debate". Professor Gordon is the co-editor of Planning and Markets, an all-electronic refereed journal. He has published in most of the major urban planning, urban transportation and urban economics journals. He has consulted for local, state and federal agencies, the World Bank, the United Nations and many private groups. He holds a Ph.D. in Regional Science from the University of Pennsylvania.