

Singapore's Urban Transport: Sustainability by Design or Necessity?



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Outline

- A. Singapore as 'sustainable transport' exemplar?
- B. What priorities actually guided Singapore's approach since early 1970s?
- C. Change in the recent policy review?
- D. Conclusions

(Some) consensus on urban transport and susdev agenda?

Susdev in transport is NOT merely working for less impact per vehicle km in short term

- better served by 'efficient movement of people and goods' or better still, more convenient accessibility or better places

(Some) consensus on urban transport and susdev agenda?

Low impact transport

Avoid "locking in" dependence on high energy consumption

Translates to avoiding "automobile dependence"

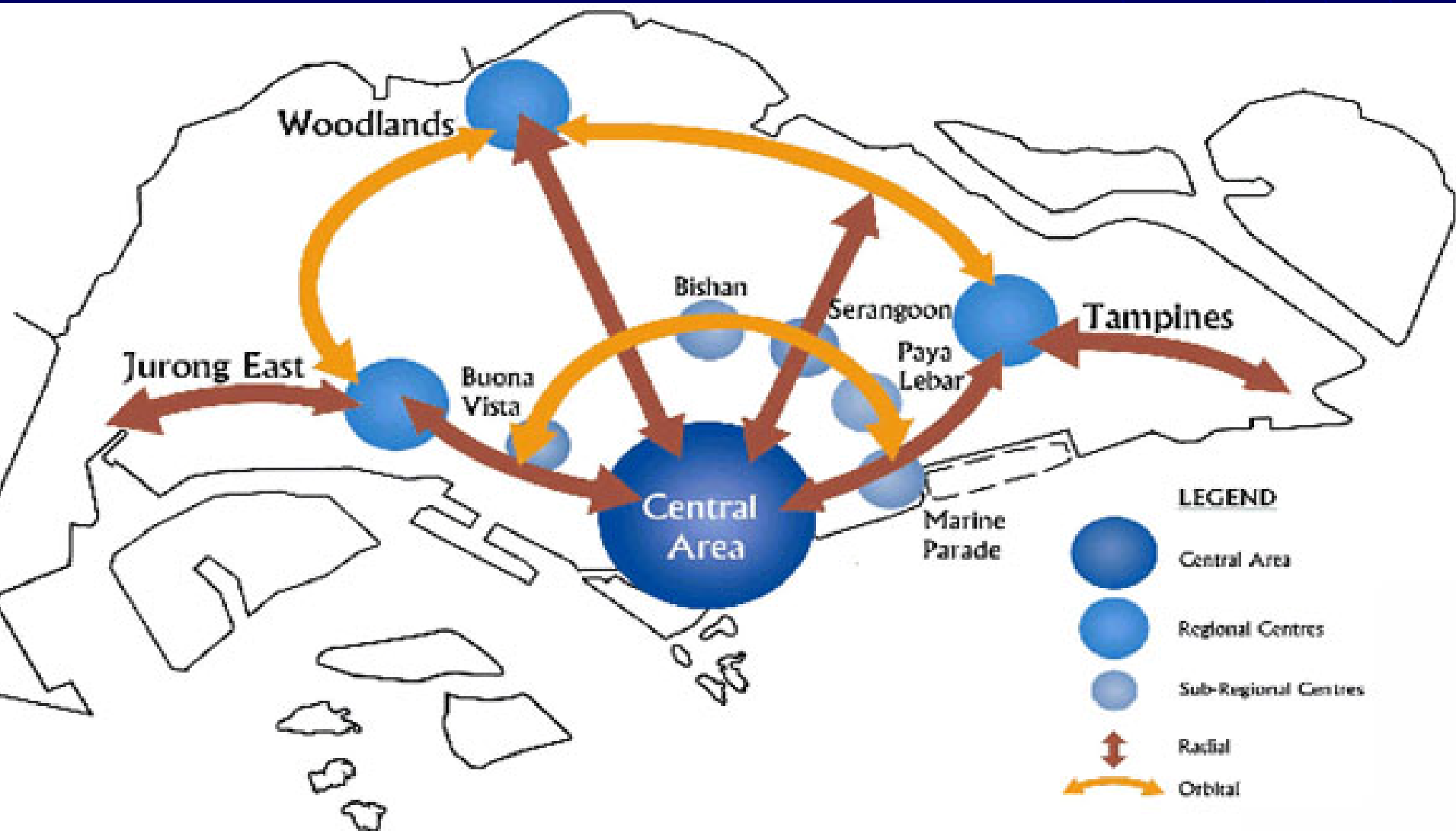
A. Singapore as 'sustainable transport' exemplar?

- ▶ A hard-headed 'bargain'
- ▶ steady improvements in space-efficient public transport

at the price of

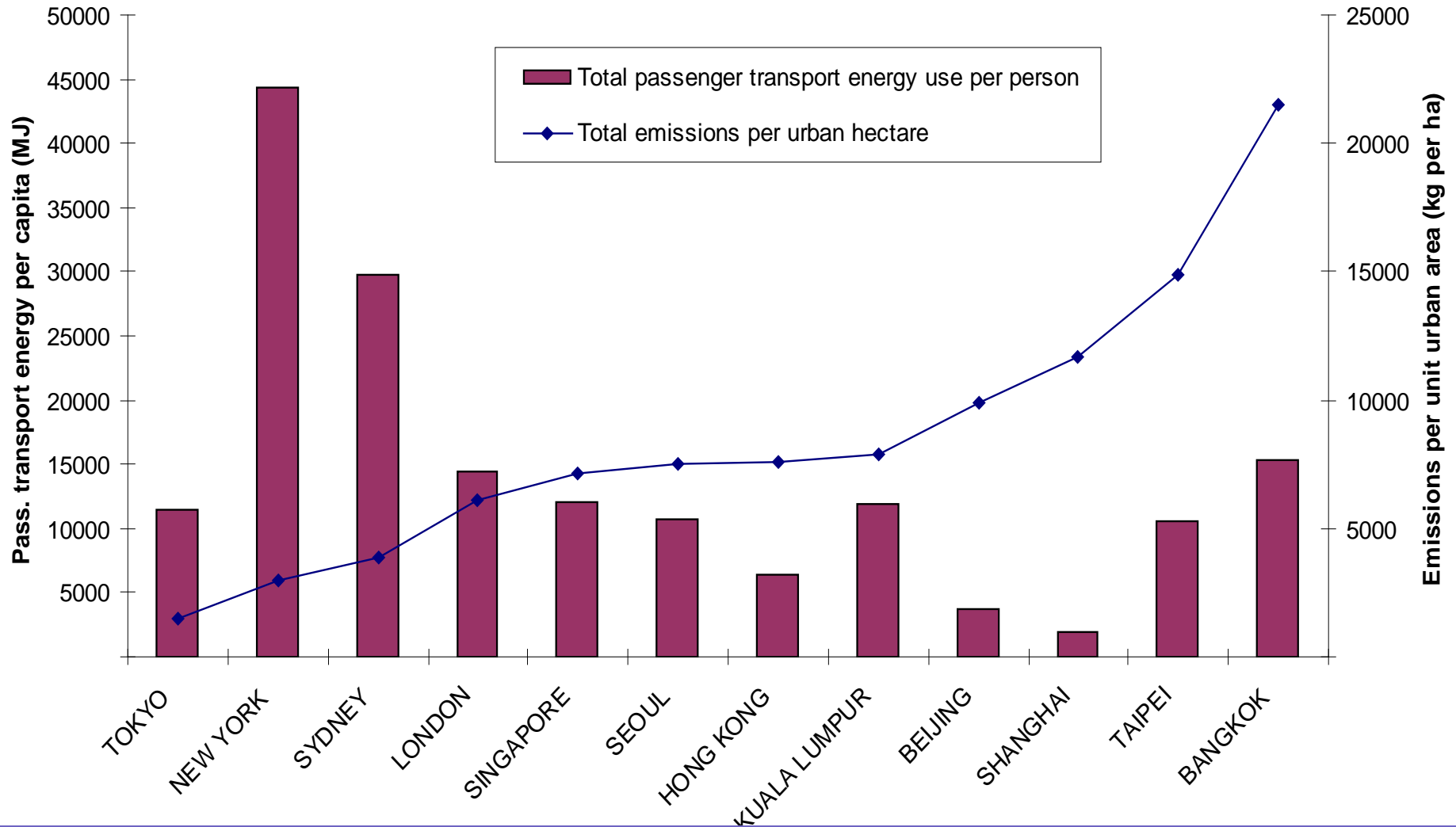
- ▶ making ownership of space-wasting cars unattainable for most

Transit-oriented concept plan – consistently pursued since early 1970s



Singapore passenger transport energy use in perspective

Energy use per person versus local transport noxious emissions per unit of urban area



This is 1995 data from Kenworthy and Laube, 2001

Low access levels ←-----→ High access levels

Low mobility/
low traffic movement

Bus/jitney cities
(Seoul, Singapore, HK, Bangkok, KL 1970;
South Asian cities 1990s)



Rapid motorisation

Mobility management

Invest in public transport
(first bus, BRT, later others)

Traffic-saturated bus cities
(eg, Jakarta, Manila, Delhi?)



invest in walking and cycling facilities

Transit-oriented land-use

'Balanced' modern transit cities
(Korean cities Hong Kong, Singapore, Bogotá soon)

More motorisation
??

Massive road building

suburbanisation
??

Traffic Disaster?
Bangkok?

???

Automobile Dependence?
Kuala Lumpur in 20 years?

High mobility/
high traffic movement

Differences between 'sustainable transport' and Singapore's priorities

- ▶ Priority to high-speed traffic flows
(at expense of public realm)
- ▶ Public transport focused on captive users
(until recently)
- ▶ No planning for bicycles as transport
- ▶ Nevertheless, transit-oriented, modest car use transport system well entrenched

B. What priorities guided Singapore's approach?

- ▶ Economic efficiency
- ▶ Modernity (and later, excellence)
- ▶ Faith in state activism
- ▶ Awareness of spatial limitations

- ▶ Coincidence that these prompted strategies that resemble 'sustainable transport'?

C. Update: looking ahead from 2008

- ▶ Review of land transport policy 2008
- ▶ Accelerated MRT investment
- ▶ Bus failings addressed
- ▶ Reasserts ownership control
- ▶ ERP politics addressed
- ▶ Rise of liveability as priority?
- ▶ Bicycles mentioned but ...

D. Conclusion

- ▶ Relatively 'sustainable' transport but for other reasons
- ▶ Local imperatives often dovetailed with 'sustainable development' agenda in transport
- ▶ Liveability emphasis growing perhaps but dominant theme remains economic efficiency
- ▶ Several dilemmas remain to be resolved

Thank you

