

Read the “Car-Free Cities” passage set.

Car-Free Cities

Source 1: In German Suburb, Life Goes On Without Cars

by Elisabeth Rosenthal

- 1 VAUBAN, Germany—Residents of this upscale community are suburban pioneers, going where few soccer moms or commuting executives have ever gone before: they have given up their cars.
- 2 Street parking, driveways and home garages are generally forbidden in this experimental new district on the outskirts of Freiburg, near the French and Swiss borders. Vauban’s streets are completely “car-free”—except the main thoroughfare, where the tram to downtown Freiburg runs, and a few streets on one edge of the community. Car ownership is allowed, but there are only two places to park—large garages at the edge of the development, where a car-owner buys a space, for \$40,000, along with a home.
- 3 As a result, 70 percent of Vauban’s families do not own cars, and 57 percent sold a car to move here. “When I had a car I was always tense. I’m much happier this way,” said Heidrun Walter, a media trainer and mother of two, as she walked verdant streets where the swish of bicycles and the chatter of wandering children drown out the occasional distant motor.
- 4 Vauban, completed in 2006, is an example of a growing trend in Europe, the United States and elsewhere to separate suburban life from auto use, as a component of a movement called “smart planning.”
- 5 Automobiles are the linchpin of suburbs, where middle-class families from Chicago to Shanghai tend to make their homes. And that, experts say, is a huge impediment to current efforts to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from tailpipes Passenger cars are responsible for 12 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in Europe . . . and up to 50 percent in some car-intensive areas in the United States.
- 6 While there have been efforts in the past two decades to make cities denser, and better for walking, planners are now taking the concept to the suburbs Vauban, home to 5,500 residents within a rectangular square mile, may be the most advanced experiment in low-car suburban life. But its basic precepts are being adopted around the world in attempts to make suburbs more compact and more accessible to public transportation, with less space for parking. In this new approach, stores are placed a walk away, on a main street, rather than in malls along some distant highway.
- 7 “All of our development since World War II has been centered on the car, and that will have to change,” said David Goldberg, an official of Transportation for America, a

fast-growing coalition of hundreds of groups in the United States . . . who are promoting new communities that are less dependent on cars. Mr. Goldberg added: “How much you drive is as important as whether you have a hybrid.”

8 Levittown and Scarsdale, New York suburbs with spread-out homes and private garages, were the dream towns of the 1950s and still exert a strong appeal. But some new suburbs may well look more Vauban-like, not only in developed countries but also in the developing world, where emissions from an increasing number of private cars owned by the burgeoning middle class are choking cities.

9 In the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency is promoting “car reduced” communities, and legislators are starting to act, if cautiously. Many experts expect public transport serving suburbs to play a much larger role in a new six-year federal transportation bill to be approved this year, Mr. Goldberg said. In previous bills, 80 percent of appropriations have by law gone to highways and only 20 percent to other transport.

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Source 2: Paris bans driving due to smog

by Robert Duffer

10 After days of near-record pollution, Paris enforced a partial driving ban to clear the air of the global city.

11 On Monday motorists with even-numbered license plates were ordered to leave their cars at home or suffer a 22-euro fine (\$31). The same would apply to odd-numbered plates the following day.

12 Almost 4,000 drivers were fined, according to Reuters¹ . . . [Twenty-seven] people had their cars impounded for their reaction to the fine.

13 That’s easier to imagine than a car-free Champs-Elysees.²

14 Congestion³ was down 60 percent in the capital of France, after five-days of intensifying smog . . . [The smog] rivaled Beijing, China, which is known as one of the most polluted cities in the world.

15 Cold nights and warm days caused the warmer layer of air to trap car emissions.

16 Diesel fuel was blamed, since France has . . . [a] tax policy that favors diesel over gasoline. Diesels make up 67 percent of vehicles in France, compared to a 53.3 percent average of diesel engines in the rest of Western Europe, according to Reuters.

17 Paris typically has more smog than other European capitals . . . [Last] week Paris had 147 micrograms of particulate matter (PM) per cubic meter compared with 114 in Brussels and 79.7 in London, Reuters found.

¹Reuters: an international news agency headquartered in London

²Champs-Elysees: a famous street in Paris

³congestion: car traffic

18 Delivery companies complained of lost revenue, while exceptions were made for plug-in cars, hybrids, and cars carrying three or more passengers. Public transit was free of charge from Friday to Monday, according to the BBC.

19 The smog cleared enough Monday for the ruling French party to rescind the ban for odd-numbered plates on Tuesday.

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Source 3: Car-free day is spinning into a big hit in Bogota

by Andrew Selsky

20 BOGOTA, Colombia—In a program that's set to spread to other countries, millions of Colombians hiked, biked, skated or took buses to work during a car-free day yesterday, leaving the streets of this capital city eerily devoid of traffic jams.

21 It was the third straight year cars have been banned with only buses and taxis permitted for the Day Without Cars in this capital city of 7 million. The goal is to promote alternative transportation and reduce smog. Violators faced \$25 fines.

22 The turnout was large, despite gray clouds that dumped occasional rain showers on Bogota.

23 "The rain hasn't stopped people from participating," said Bogota Mayor Antanas Mockus

24 "It's a good opportunity to take away stress and lower air pollution," said businessman Carlos Arturo Plaza as he rode a two-seat bicycle with his wife.

25 For the first time, two other Colombian cities, Cali and Valledupar, joined the event.

26 Municipal authorities from other countries came to Bogota to see the event and were enthusiastic. "These people are generating a revolutionary change, and this is crossing borders," said Enrique Riera, the mayor of Asunción, Paraguay. . . .

27 The day without cars is part of an improvement campaign that began in Bogota in the mid-1990s. It has seen the construction of 118 miles of bicycle paths, the most of any Latin American city, according to Mockus, the city's mayor.

28 Parks and sports centers also have bloomed throughout the city; uneven, pitted sidewalks have been replaced by broad, smooth sidewalks; rush-hour restrictions have dramatically cut traffic; and new restaurants and upscale shopping districts have cropped up.

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Source 4: The End of Car Culture

by Elisabeth Rosenthal

- 29 President Obama’s ambitious goals to curb the United States’ greenhouse gas emissions, unveiled last week, will get a fortuitous assist from an incipient¹ shift in American behavior: recent studies suggest that Americans are buying fewer cars, driving less and getting fewer licenses as each year goes by.
- 30 That has left researchers pondering a fundamental question: Has America passed peak driving?
- 31 The United States, with its broad expanses and suburban ideals, had long been one of the world’s prime car cultures. It is the birthplace of the Model T; the home of Detroit; the place where Wilson Pickett immortalized “Mustang Sally”
- 32 But America’s love affair with its vehicles seems to be cooling. When adjusted for population growth, the number of miles driven in the United States peaked in 2005 and dropped steadily thereafter, according to an analysis by Doug Short of Advisor Perspectives, an investment research company. As of April 2013, the number of miles driven per person was nearly 9 percent below the peak and equal to where the country was in January 1995. Part of the explanation certainly lies in the recession, because cash-strapped Americans could not afford new cars, and the unemployed weren’t going to work anyway. But by many measures the decrease in driving preceded the downturn and appears to be persisting now that recovery is under way. The next few years will be telling.
- 33 “What most intrigues me is that rates of car ownership per household and per person started to come down two to three years before the downturn,” said Michael Sivak, who studies the trend and who is a research professor at the University of Michigan’s Transportation Research Institute. “I think that means something more fundamental is going on.”
- 34 If the pattern persists—and many sociologists believe it will—it will have beneficial implications for carbon emissions and the environment, since transportation is the second largest source of America’s emissions, just behind power plants. But it could have negative implications for the car industry. Indeed, companies like Ford and Mercedes are already rebranding themselves “mobility” companies with a broader product range beyond the personal vehicle.
- 35 “Different things are converging which suggest that we are witnessing a long-term cultural shift,” said Mimi Sheller, a sociology professor at Drexel University and director of its Mobilities Research and Policy Center. She cites various factors: the Internet makes telecommuting possible and allows people to feel more connected without driving to meet friends. The renewal of center cities has made the suburbs less appealing and has drawn empty nesters back in. Likewise the rise in cellphones and car-pooling apps has facilitated more flexible commuting arrangements, including the evolution of shared van services for getting to work.

¹incipient: at an initial stage; beginning to happen or develop

Grade 10 Scoring Sampler Passage Set and Prompt

- 36 With all these changes, people who stopped car commuting as a result of the recession may find less reason to resume the habit. . . .
- 37 New York’s new bike-sharing program and its skyrocketing bridge and tunnel tolls reflect those new priorities, as do a proliferation of car-sharing programs across the nation.
- 38 Demographic shifts in the driving population suggest that the trend may accelerate. There has been a large drop in the percentage of 16- to 39-year-olds getting a license, while older people are likely to retain their licenses as they age, Mr. Sivak’s research has found.
- 39 He and I have similar observations about our children. Mine (19 and 21) have not bothered to get a driver’s license, even though they both live in places where one could come in handy. They are interested, but it’s not a priority. They organize their summer jobs and social life around where they can walk or take public transportation or car-pool with friends.
- 40 Mr. Sivak’s son lives in San Francisco and has a car but takes Bay Area Rapid Transit, when he can, even though that often takes longer than driving. “When I was in my 20s and 30s,” Mr. Sivak said, “I was curious about what kind of car people drove, but young people don’t really care. A car is just a means of getting from A to B when BART doesn’t work.”
- 41 A study last year found that driving by young people decreased 23 percent between 2001 and 2009. . . .
- 42 Whether members of the millennial generation will start buying more cars once they have kids to take to soccer practice and school plays remains an open question. But such projections have important business implications, even if car buyers are merely older or buying fewer cars in a lifetime rather than rejecting car culture outright.
- 43 At the Mobile World Congress last year in Barcelona, Spain, Bill Ford, executive chairman of the Ford Motor Company, laid out a business plan for a world in which personal vehicle ownership is impractical or undesirable. He proposed partnering with the telecommunications industry to create cities in which “pedestrian, bicycle, private cars, commercial and public transportation traffic are woven into a connected network to save time, conserve resources, lower emissions and improve safety.”

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Writing Prompt

Write an explanatory essay to inform fellow citizens about the advantages of limiting car usage. Your essay must be based on ideas and information that can be found in the passage set.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to

- use evidence from multiple sources; and
- avoid overly relying on one source.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your essay in the space provided.