

# COMMUNICATING WHEN TALKING TRANSPORTATION

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JOAN G. HUDSON, TEXAS A&M TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

TEXAS PEDESTRIAN SAFETY FORUM

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# WORDS USED WHEN TALKING TRANSPORTATION

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- Improvement and improved
- Upgrade
- Delay
- Enhancement
- Alternative Transportation
- Acceptable/Unacceptable
- Level of Service
- Mobility
- Efficiency

  
Car Talk?

# WHY?

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- Generations of transportation professionals are taught and trained this way
- Many tools exist to measure cars and the occupant's experience
- Lack tools to measure the demand and experience for people walking, bicycling, using wheelchairs/walkers
- It takes time and extra words to be specific and clarify meaning – to tell the whole story

# Be Specific to be Clear and Complete—Then Check Again

Table 1. Transportation Glossary

Biased Word or Phrase	Suggestions of Objective Substitutes
Accident	Collision/Crash
Alternative Transportation	Active Transportation/Human-powered/ Non-automobile
Capacity	Maximum motor vehicle volume
Capacity deficient	Motor vehicle use predicted to exceed the maximum motor vehicle volume.
Demand	Use/Expected use
Desirable/Acceptable	Desirable (for whom)/Acceptable (for whom)
Undesirable/ Unacceptable	Undesirable (for whom)/ Unacceptable (for whom)
Efficient/Efficiency	Increase speeds/Faster
Enhanced	Increase/Reduced (depending on the subject)
Impact (noun)	Effect
Improvement	Modification/Change
Level of service	Queueing time at an intersection for motorists
Movements	Motor vehicle trips
Reliable	Predictable travel time
Road capacity	Maximum motor vehicle volume
Roadway	Street
Traffic	Motor vehicle traffic
Traffic demand	Motor vehicle use
Urban Freeway	In-city highway
Upgrade	Expansion/Reconstruction

- If you mean cars, say cars
- Take it a step further: Where are you assuming that a concept only applies to people using motor vehicles?
  - Table source: Ian Lockwood, “Making the Case for Transportation Language Reform: Removing Bias,” ITE Journal (Jan. 2017)

# BECHDEL-BLUE-CHAMBERLAIN TRANSPORTATION TEST

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- Are people (of all ages/abilities) using every mode on the street represented (considered, designed for, counted in data, asked to comment, etc.)?
- If the modal descriptions were reversed, can you make the same statements about outcomes?
  - “We need to increase the width of this sidewalk due to congestion and unacceptable wait times during peak hours.”
  - “This project will decrease wait time at this intersection for people walking and bicycling.”

# DOES THE VOCABULARY IMPACT PEDESTRIAN SAFETY?

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- Ian Lockwood says so
  - “this institutional bias helps explain why the U.S. has struggled to reduce traffic deaths.”
  - He said, “There’s a pro-speed, pro-automobile bias that’s built into the traffic engineering culture dealing with these sorts of issues.”
- If modes are represented as legitimate uses of the system instead of an afterthought, would they be seen differently, treated differently?
- What are your thoughts?

