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THE MEGA CITY

FIA Mobility Conference delegates get an
insiders' view of how London stays on the move

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CONFERENCE Q&A

GREG LINDSAY

The urbanisation expert examines how the cities of the future might manage transit in an age of airport cities and autonomous vehicles

Q It's almost five years since your book, Aerotropolis, was published. Does its forecast of a world of urbanisation built around airports as central transportation hubs still hold true?

A I think air travel matters more than ever. When the latest rankings for airports came out last year we saw six or seven per cent growth rates in Asia-Pacific and around the world. The notion of air travel connecting the world and the notion that the world is speeding up rather than slowing down is still valid. I think people are reaching out and reaching further than they have before.

Q With more than half the world's population living in cities, urbanisation is the future. In your opinion what are the main transportation issues this raises?

A The first question is what is a city for? Cities are not the sum of their roads or infrastructure. The most interesting thinking I've seen recently comes from some physicists, who are positing the idea that cities are essentially stars and instead of the sun, where you're compressing hydrogen into helium, you are taking social networks of people, compressing them in time and space and what comes out is ideas, quality of life, productivity, everything we need to advance human civilisation.

So the question is what infrastructure do we need to compress those people in space and time?

That's the trouble we're having now with the automobile paradigm. We are reaching physical limits on how dense we can make the cores. I think when it comes to cities we need to upgrade transit, make them more walkable. I think we need to change the way we live and work. Buildings need to become more multi-use; the typical office building is 40 per cent empty at any given moment. That's crazy.

Q All the indicators point towards the coming decades being a period of enormous transition in the world of the automobile. Are we heading towards cities predicated on on-demand transportation?

A Totally. That's the great revolution with the smart phone. We now have the ability to not only summon mobility on-demand but the data that comes off the back end of that allows us to coordinate formerly individually private vehicles on scales we could never previously imagine. We already know, for example, that with Uber and Lyft, a quarter of their journeys in the San Francisco peninsula or Los Angeles are to metro or train stations. We're seeing the extension of transit that way. It will be interesting to see how people choose to enrol their cars in car-sharing programmes, how they make them available to others, how they choose to use mobility services such as Uber. I think we're going to start to see a revolution in the car not just being a private vehicle but a service I call when I need it. That's quite the cultural shift.

Q Is there an element of wishful thinking in the world of autonomous vehicles when you consider the possible infrastructural changes that may need to be made and the possible difficulties in implementing operational standards?

A The automobile as we know it is highly standardised by all sorts of international agencies. Computing operates on a completely different paradigm, where you fight over standards, where companies clash until one can muscle the other into finally submitting. Imagine your car doing that at 90km/h, where your car is trying negotiate with another car over a protocol that only half works.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done on how cars are going to talk to each other. All the competing vehicle manufacturers are going to want their own versions, with their own safety tolerances and government is way behind on negotiating open standards for this. Really we should have one standard and it should be the equivalent of TCP/IP for autonomous cars, but no, I think we're going to thrash it out for a while first.

Watch an exclusive video interview with Greg Lindsay at:
mobilityconference.fia.com

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Today's seminar on News Technologies at Work with Rasmus Lindholm (above), and Richard Harris (top left) and Susanna Suokonautio-Hynninen (bottom left).

CONFERENCE SEMINAR

TECHNOLOGY IN TRANSIT

This morning's seminar on how connected technologies are already being used in the urban mobility arena gave delegates an insight into how cities manage transport networks

Day two's opening seminar saw delegates discover how urban centres are managing the integration of connected technologies with transport to deliver improved mobility and a better quality of life.

"The essence of the session was to talk about new technology in the context of how cities are changing," said seminar facilitator Rasmus Lindholm, an Intelligent Transport Systems expert working with the ERTICO Partnership of 115 companies.

"The delegates learned about advances in car connectivity and also about the amount of data that comes out of those systems and what that data can be used for."

"That led to a good discussion on data privacy," he added. "There was some scepticism about privacy in cars when we're all connected by our smartphones and as to who will own the data from cars, which was interesting. Delegates were curious about whether services exist that are only available

if you provide data and whether there may be options for the consumer to switch off data provision and whether that has been taken into account in the design of new technologies."

With presentations from Mika Rytkönen, Head of Business Development, Connected Driving at HERE and Richard Harris from Xerox Transportation, the session also covered the area of mobility as a service – as exemplified by car and ride-sharing companies.

"There was a good discussion as to how it is organised in terms of governance, who will be the future mobility operators and whether there exists the possibility for automobile clubs to get into that space as there is a direct connection to the consumers – their members. They wanted to find out if there is the opportunity for them to say 'hey, we can provide this service, we are the ones who can integrate public transport, taxis, etc', as that space is not taken yet."

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CONFERENCE SEMINAR

Designs on Mobility

Automotive Consultant Graeme Banister outlines the outcomes of the day's second seminar on city dwellers' engagement with changing mobility networks

Q The session was based around city dwellers and how they use transport networks. What were the major themes that developed during the session?

A We had two presenters: Iain Macbeth from Transport for London and Patrick Ségal, the former Deputy Mayor of Paris. Iain gave some insights into what TfL had to do to put into place to deal with the 2012 Olympics as well as the mobility legacy the event left behind in terms of behavioural change.

Patrick, meanwhile, is a champion of the disabled and talked about the challenges disabled people face in terms of basic access to mobility and also he spoke about the ageing population. That is particularly relevant to clubs as many also have an ageing demographic. There are a billion disabled people globally and two billion people aged over 65. Put those together and you have the third largest economy in the world. So the question was: how do clubs collaborate to better champion the needs of these individuals?

Q What elements of that debate did the delegates particularly respond to?

A I think there was an appetite from delegates to say ''yes, we need to be lobbying more to make sure that within mobility by design there is a design for all'' and that they can lobby municipalities, governments, car manufactures. They are, after all, the voice of the motorists.

Q What were the lessons clubs can apply in running their businesses?

A That although clubs have a responsibility to be the voice of motorists, fundamentally they are businesses and there are opportunities in this sphere. If they create the right initiatives and the right partnerships there is an opportunity for them to play a much larger part in this kind of mobility.
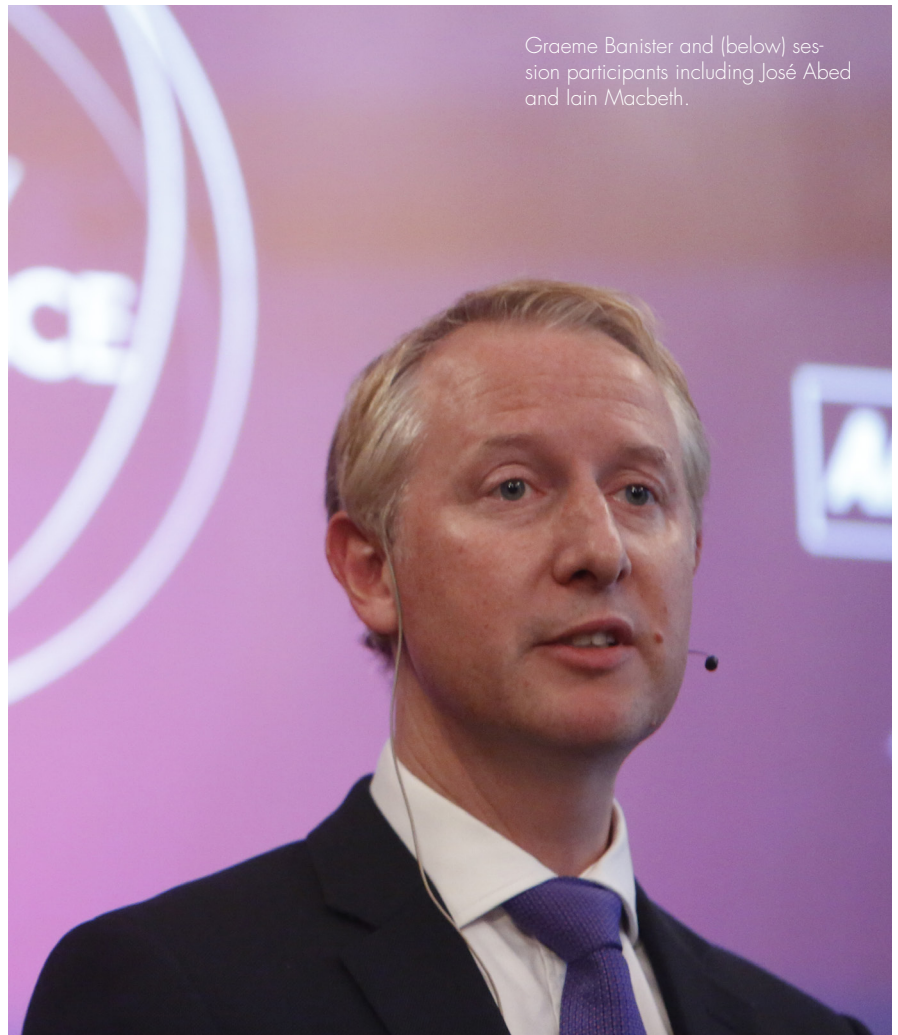
Graeme Banister and (below) session participants including José Abed and Iain Macbeth.

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INSIGHTS INTO A MEGA-CITY
LONDON ON THE MOVE

This afternoon delegates were given a unique insight into how Europe's fastest-growing city stays mobile

The inner sanctums of London's complex urban transport management system were opened up to delegates this afternoon as they were given a guided tour of Transport for London's facilities at its Palestra building headquarters and at City Hall in Southwark.

Palestra was the first stop on the exploration of how a mega-city stays on the move and there delegates were greeted by Ben Plowden, TfL's Director of strategy for Surface Transport.

The visitors were then taken through how technology is used to keep transport systems functioning smoothly with an explanation of the city's SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique) system, which via the use of sensors detects the quantity of people waiting to cross the road. If a susbtantial number are gathered the system automatically gives them more time to cross.

The second part of the tour saw delegates visit TfL's control centre.

Established in 2009 the centre features three separate control rooms: Centrecom to deal with bus transport; Metrocom to monitor the metropolitan police and a third centre which acts as London's street traffic centre, controlling the 6,400 traffic lights operated by TfL. A tunnels control room will soon be integrated into the complex.

The in-depth look at the management of London's transport network then moved on to City Hall, where Leon Daniels, TfL's Managing Director of Surface Transport, gave delegates a broad picture of how the organisation coordinates its management of a complex network that includes public transport, roads, cycle ways and river transit.

He outlined how the organisation is responding to the surging population of London, which he said would top 10 million by 2030. He then explained that the city was already preparing for the advent of autonomous vehicles, adding that with manufacturers already busy testing vehicles cities need to prepare for a shift in mobility patterns.

"The pace of change is accelerating and we need to make sure we keep pace with the changes so that we do not have unintended consequences," he said.

Daniels pointed to the city's embrace of automated Tube trains on the Victoria line, with up to 36 trains per hour, as an example of London's readiness to embrace new technologies and added that he believes London is an ideal city in which to test automated vehicles.

He further pointed to a rise in car- and ride-sharing and the falling numbers of people obtaining driving licences as further examples of rapid changes in the mobility landscape.

Following afternoon tea in City Hall's rooftop Living Room event space, the delegates returned to the conference venue aboard one of the city's more picturesque transit systems – a Thames Clipper river bus.

Leon Daniels addresses delegates at City Hall..

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WEDNESDAY 16.09.15

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MUSEUM TOUR

BACK TO THE FUTURE OF MOTORING

Delegates were this afternoon treated to a journey back to the golden age of motoring as they headed to the birthplace of British motorsport and aviation – Brooklands.

The legendary circuit was built in 1907 and much of the track and many original buildings still survive. For over 80 years it served as a centre of technological excellence and today delegates got in with that history as they toured the Brooklands Museum. The visit became even more immersive when they got a driver's eye view of a lap of the track in the 4D theatre.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

FIA Mobility Conference 2015 has connected technology as its theme but as ever it's the links forged between clubs and people that are the most important connections of the week.

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LONDON NIGHT
LICENSED TO THRILL

FIA Mobility Conference took on a covert operation tonight, whisking delegates to a top secret London location for a very special networking night of spy-flavoured motorised fun.

The venue for this clandestine rendezvous was the British Film Museum and its Bond in Motion exhibition of vehicles used in some of the most popular movies ever made.

The evening saw delegates enjoy Bond-themed martinis (shaken not stirred we presume) and the chance to have their photo taken 007-style against the famous opening titles graphic.

Guests also had the opportunity to get up close and personal with some of the most iconic vehicles used in the James Bond films, including the archetypal Bond car, the Aston Martin DB5, Goldfinger's majestic Rolls-Royce Phantom III and the unforgettable Lotus Esprit S1 submersible from The Spy Who Loved Me.

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