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Original Articles
Volume 21, 2006 - Issue 3
Planning Perspectives

'Roping the Wild Jitney': the jitney bus craze and the rise of urban autobus systems

Views 190 | Citations 5 | Altmetric 1 | Pages 253-276 | Published online: 18 Jul 2006

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Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665430600731179>



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Abstract

During the
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routes. After some national press attention, this practice became a craze that swept the

nation in early 1915. As the jitney experience blossomed into demands for more reliable autobus systems, urbanites began to consider the possibilities of motorized public transit, though they were divided by class and neighbourhood. Suburbanites, however, demanded that cities retool around their automobiles. This article examines the jitney phenomenon as it emerged across the USA, which although handled locally and over varying lengths of time, did lead to a distinct national shift in urban politics and planning. It is argued that the jitney bus was not merely a transition point between rail service and the private automobile. Its real meaning lies in a political shift away from attempts by city dwellers to reform the streetcar trusts, for years a doomed struggle, and toward achieving municipally-owned mass transit through a new technology that was not as expensive or inflexible as rail. Few were satisfied with the jitney when experimentation with it waned in much of the country as quickly as it had appeared. The automobile was not inherently a democratic technology, but the divisive politics it inspired within and between classes in city and suburb developed a tense compromise between private individual and public mass transit that is still a central debate in the nation's cities.

Notes

1. The ti
2. Chica
3. D. F. D m in the
Canadia
4. B. Birmingham
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5. C. A. S ment, and
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19. P. Ba
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21. Chic
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✕ Cambridge:

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28. The Survey (June 26, 1915) 280.
29. Chicago Evening Post (June 14, 1915) 1, 2.
30. The Survey (June 26, 1915) 280
31. Chicago Evening Post (June 14, 1915) 1.
32. Chicago Evening Post (June 15, 1915) 2.
33. Chicago Evening Post (June 15, 1915) 3.
34. Chicago Evening Post (June 15, 1915) 8, 9.
35. Chicago Evening Post (June 16, 1915) 2.
36. Chic
37. Auto
38. C. M city. New York: Co
39. The automobile age. Cambri
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41. Auto n 13, 1915) 385; (Ap



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