

Why Europe Is Insanely Well Designed
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0u4f52w4qgQ>
Transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/cities2.pdf>

This is a map of Europe's mass transit railway system across 33 countries.

The yellow lines indicate the presence of a train line and as you can see it's very dense, there are hardly any spaces where there isn't any coverage for railways.

Now if we compare this to a map of railroad tracks in the US it's a different story.

While parts of the US have some good mass transit there are large areas of the country which isn't covered by Amtrak, the nation's largest passenger railroad service.

But let me show you another map, this time of high speed rail in Europe.

Now obviously high speed railways aren't going to be as common as regular speed railways as they require excellent design, strict planning and massive investment and yet as we can see, high-speed rail is present in Europe which is a stark contrast to the US as you can see from this map.

While the US does have some higher speed rail, like the Acela line in the northeastern corridor, it's hardly an effective map of transport solutions and the Acela line isn't really that fast either.

It can reach about 150 miles per hour but the average is less than 70.

This is not the case, for Europe's insanely well designed railroad system and you have to remember that Europe's system accomplishes this while spanning 33 different nations in a very diverse continent.

And I know what you're probably thinking, this is just because Europe is smaller than the United States which simply isn't true.

While the European union is smaller than the US, continental Europe has an area that is about 1.04 times as much as the US so we can dismiss this argument that the United States can't be that well designed because it's too big.

Europe simply is better designed but if you're American you might not understand why railroad tracks or public transport as a whole is so important.

I mean, driving a car works fine right?

Well, no, and Europe showcases why a primary focus on private transportation is so detrimental to a well-functioning transit system.

Look at these maps, they show the U.S. road network versus the EU's..

And as you can see, the EU's road network is not nearly as impressive as the US's and yet when you look at some of the most congested cities in the world, European countries don't feature particularly prominently in the global rankings.

This is pretty shocking information because you'd assume that the country with a more expansive road network has a lot less congestion especially considering the United States has devoted lots of time and money to their highways.

So how come Europe is less congested when they have fewer roads?

Well, it all comes down to disincentivizing the use of cars and most importantly making an attractive alternative.

Europe does this by having both private and public transportation infrastructure, which, technically the US has as well, it's just a lot worse.

But on top of this, Europe makes it pretty expensive to buy, own and use a car. This is achieved by having high taxes on vehicles and gasoline.

In fact, here's a ~~map~~ [list] of worldwide gasoline prices. As you can see, European nations are in the top rankings while the US lies at the bottom, charging very little.

But let me be very clear, it's only a good idea to make it expensive to drive a car if you have an attractive alternative which America doesn't have but Europe does.

I, mean, obviously, this wouldn't work in the US with its current transportation infrastructure but in Europe this is a great strategy because you make the roads less congested for those who actually need them and give everyone else an affordable and efficient alternative.

Besides Europe's amazing public transport like the trains on the railways this is arguably the better strategy because even though the vast majority of Americans have access to vehicles at around 91 percent, and gas is comparatively cheap, it still leaves nine percent who don't have access to vehicles.

What are these people who can't afford a car supposed to do?

I mean, sometimes public transport isn't even an option or simply too expensive for many, so you've now actively excluded those who aren't exactly the most well-off from society.

To make matters worse, some U.S. cities actually got rid of their public transport to make room for more cars.

I'm not joking, American streetcars like trams were actually removed to make way for bigger roads.

Absolutely insane compared to Oslo, Berlin and Madrid where discussions are underway to restrict or even exclude most cars from the city's center.

And let's not forget that when you have cars you also need somewhere to park them and this is where things start to become rather ridiculous.

You see, the United States has 2 billion parking spaces for 250 million cars. That's eight parking spaces per vehicle.

In Europe, it's pretty much a one to one, with around 250 million public parking spaces for 300 million cars.

But to emphasize the ridiculousness of this even further, the area that the US dedicates for car parking is actually larger than the area dedicated for housing people.

It's honestly unbelievable that people are being squeezed out of American cities due to regulators wanting to make more room for parking spaces.

This simply wouldn't fly in the EU as it has a whole policy dedicated to improving urban planning.

See, the EU spent 115 billion euros between 2014 and 2020 to improve city design by making it smarter, greener and more connected, simply meaning they allocated funds to make their cities more efficient, more connected and better for the environment.

And better for the environment they really are, as the average resident in a typical Western US city such as Los Angeles or Phoenix contributes approximately six times more carbon to the atmosphere per capita than an average European city resident.

This is purely the result of not having effective transport solutions which saves resources and allows people to move about efficiently.

And exactly that moving about efficiently is something most of Europe's citizens are able to do as a result of the European Union.

See, most of Europe's nations are in the European union, which gives the EU citizens a number of perks which includes a free travel area.

This has been one of the most important achievements of the EU as it makes it possible for an EU citizen to travel freely to other EU member states and stay for up to three months.

All they need is a passport or even just an ID card, no visas, no trips to embassies, no form filing just head straight over.

This makes it incredibly easy to travel, study and work in other countries and communities and having this level of centralization is very important to good design as it gives the smartest people the opportunity to work where they are most useful.

And since good design obviously requires a lot of complicated problem solving and planning this is very smart.

Another smart thing is the incredible biking infrastructure we see in Europe perfectly illustrated by this map of bike path density in Europe.

All the purple lines are bike paths and there's clearly a lot of them especially towards the left side of the map but that's just because this is the home of the Dutch, the Netherlands.

Now the funny thing is I won't be able to compare this to a map of bicycle paths in the United States because such a map hasn't been made, at least I wasn't able to find any, and I can only wonder why.

But, anyway, what Europe and also the European Union has achieved is pretty remarkable as it's hard to think of another set of such diverse countries where you would be able to travel so freely in an efficient and inexpensive manner.

I mean, you can literally get from Paris to Amsterdam, for example, in just 3 hours for around \$30.

Imagine being able to travel all over Asia without any border crossings, checks, or visas and being able to stay for months at a time.

That would be truly amazing and let's not forget that European design has always been distinctive and very successful.

In fact, the continent's history of design and interconnectedness serves as a model for the rest of the world but even though Europe and the EU are pretty great and have amazing infrastructure, they obviously aren't perfect.

I love to hear some of the reasons it might not be so.

Leave a comment down below if you have some thoughts on this, but that's it for this video. Thank you for watching and I'll see you in the next one.