

# AICP STUDY GUIDE

*Podcast*

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## Episode 32: Get Your Motor Runnin'

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And welcome to the 32nd episode of The VERY UNofficial AICP Study Guide Podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller and thank you so much for joining.

Well, apologies everyone for the long break. I had a book and a lit review paper due for my M.P.A. program. While my wife said it bores her death, the lit review was on affordable housing and housing that's affordable, public private partnerships, and how the private sector is trying to help solve the housing affordability crisis. Spoiler alert: they aren't, and can't. At least under the current system we're working with, but you know how it goes. Point is, thanks for being patient.

Anyways, essay windows are closed and done. So, with those behind you, it's time to switch gears to the exam. The registration window for that is open until October 29th, but you don't want to wait and stuck with a crappy time, so just login in as soon as possible and lock that down so it isn't a surprise later.

Last week we got all legal and talked about three early court cases that related to zoning and land use regulations.

- Hadacheck v. Sebastian - Determined that cities can regulate the locations of land uses;
- Pennsylvania Coal Co. v. Mahon - Determined that those regulations, should they go too far, would constitute a taking; and the granddaddy of zoning court cases
- Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co. - which decided that zoning is a legit use of police powers;

Now that we're back from my one-week break to focus on a book review for my M.P.A., let's put the pedal to the metal and talk about some firsts for automobiles, unfortunately.

To start though, let's get a crash course in the four (five?) transportation epochs.

### **(02:11)**

So, transportation epochs. You might be aware that transportation modes have evolved over time, and you also might be aware that those evolutions had a strong impact on how our cities, towns, and communities, in general, developed.

Well in 1967, Geographer John Borchert wrote an article called American Metropolitan Evolution, and in that article he sorted out the development of cities into four different epochs based on the developing, or predominant I guess, modes of transportation.

If you look around, you'll see references to the five epochs. I have no idea - to be honest - when the fifth got added, but these four are like, the O.G. epochs.

The first of these is the Sail-Wagon Epoch, followed by the Iron Horse Epoch. Next is the Steel Rail Epoch - sort of confusing since the names both sort of relate to rail-ish, and rounding out our four main epochs is the Auto-Air-Amenity Epoch.

**(03:27)**

So, the Sail-Wagon Epoch is generally defined as the time period between 1790 and 1830, and relates to - well - sails and wagons. Basically, this time period is categorized by development around waterways, major port cities, the use of rivers to transport goods, and wagons carting all the crap around town.

1830 then, to 1870 is where we turn to the Iron Horse Epoch which does relate to rail, but more generally it relates to modes of transportation developed by steam engine technology. Steam engines allowed larger amounts of goods to be transported, and transported more quickly and more easily, and that includes both regional steam engine railroad networks and steamboats.

1870 to 1920 then is the Steel Rail Epoch. This is basically rail, just on steroids. Rail goes national - think the Transcontinental Railroad that was finished in 1869. Streetcars are developed during this time too. This is basically where the concept of "regional" turned into a concept of "national," and when rail started affecting where we live.

And finally, we round it out with the Auto-Air-Amenity Epoch which runs from 1920 to 1970. Remember, Borchert wrote this in 1967. This is where the automobile takes off.

Cars themselves were invented way back before this though in 1886 in Germany, but it really wasn't until 1908 when Ford developed the moving assembly line that cars became widely available. This assembly line dropped the amount of time it took to build a car and subsequently made it affordable.

And that, ladies and gentleman, is how we started to get mass adoption of the car.

It happened pretty quick too. The Auto-Air-Amenity epoch starts in 1920. Well, first Federal-Aid Highway Act was in 1916. Coincidence? I think not.

**(05:59)**

So, what exactly prompted the 1916 Federal Aid Highway Act?

Well, none other than shitty roads; which is probably why the 1916 Federal Aid Highway Act was also known as "The Good Roads Act."

You see, previous to this, roads and highways were a State/Local thing and they did a real bang up job. As in the roads were literally all banged up. I mean so bad that a movement started literally called "The Good Roads Movement." For instance, General Stone - the first special agent and engineer for road inquiry - said that bad roads were a "disease."

Long trips basically requires some ability to fix your car on the fly since driving through the muddy, pot-hole filled roads was bound to result in flat tires.

Interestingly though, the revival of bikes - like bicycles - in the 1890's got The Good Roads Movement going, and that spurred on some early attempts at Federal Funding for Roadways.

Of course, the rural farmers said, "Nope. We don't want our taxes to go to those fancy city folk and their bicycles."

**(07:21)**

But, eventually the Federal Government was able to put together a proposal that made everyone happy: something that just doesn't happen anymore.

The difference maker was a government program called "Rural-Free-Delivery," which would have the post office deliver mail to rural addresses for free. And this program, obviously, required roads that were good enough for the delivery of mail.

Subsequently, this also meant that farmers could use these improved roadways for their farm-to-market

operations. So really, it was a win-win for rural and urban people alike.

So, what exactly was in the 1916 Federal Aid Highway Act?

After a bunch of political back and forth finagling, they finally settled on the following. Seventy-five million dollars in matching funds - 50/50 - to states over a 5-year period. This money had to be used to build up to 6% of the statewide roads. Of course, this couldn't exceed 10,000 dollars per mile.

The formula though, on how to divvy these funds up between the states, definitely skewed a little towards rural states. A third of the money was divvied up according to the total area of the state, a third divvied up based on population (the one factor that benefits urban areas), and a third based on miles of rural delivery roadways (definitely benefits rural communities, and also is sort of a function of the total area of the state - isn't it?).

Anyways, within a year - by 1917 - every state had an agency to apply for and administer the money.

### **(09:21)**

Now, you'd think this would lead to the first parkway that was built in 1919, but it doesn't. Bear with me now; we're going to take a little digression/clarification/disclaimer.

If you were so inclined to look at the Chapter President Council's AICP study guide and looked at the timeline on - oh, I don't know - page 3, you'll see, "1919 - First parkway in America completed in Bronx River Parkway, New York."

Now, for the life of me, I can't actually find any information which verifies or indicates that the Bronx River Parkway was completed in 1919. But, let's move forward and pretend like we did because, well, the Chapter President's Council said so, and I assume they got it on some sort of authority somewhere. Although the links in the show notes say it was completed in 1922, 1923, and 1925. I have no idea.

And that doesn't even cover the confusion between this whole "first parkway in the U.S." thing. You'll see when we go through the story: it wasn't the first parkway. Period. It wasn't even the first parkway with limited access. It was the first parkway with limited access, restricted frontage, and grade separations, and a median; which makes it - and this is pretty universal - the first modern parkway.

### **(11:04)**

Anyways, the first parkway in the U.S. - the Bronx River Parkway - did not result from the first Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1916 because it was actually started way back before then in 1907; meaning that it was funded entirely by local dollars, specifically New York City and Westchester County.

But 1907, you ask? Isn't that before the mass adoption of the automobile?

Correct! It is, and that would be because the Bronx River Parkway was not initially built primarily as a way to move cars. It was initially designed as a tool for river conservation.

The New York Central Railroad - built decades earlier - had spurred on lots of industrial growth in this valley, thereby mucking up the Bronx River. So, the Bronx River Parkway Commission - with approval from New York City, of course - started the process of surveying and acquiring land in order to build a park along the River.

And New York City agreed to pay for 75% of it, while the County put up the other 25%. And by 1909, the property was fully acquired.

### **(12:23)**

Construction though, that didn't start until 1916 when they got some grading done, and then because of delays it was off again until 1919. I mean, there was this thing called World War I going on at the time. So, fair enough.

When they got back to it in 1919 though (maybe this is where the Chapter President's Council got the 1919 from) automobiles had sort of permeated life like, everywhere; resulting in the parkway being designed not for carriages, but instead for automobiles travelling between 25 and 35 mph.

It really does sound amazing though, and was also pretty pivotal in a lot of ways as well.

For example, the parkway was designed to limit at-grade crossings by utilizing bridges that - although constructed from concrete - utilized local stone facings to make it more picturesque. But, as I'm sure we're all aware, very few things that revolved around automobiles ended up being picturesque; especially regional suburban shopping centers.

"That's a gorgeous shopping center!" said - well - no one, ever. Unless they were talking about the first one, of course.

### **(14:05)**

For the first regional suburban automobile-oriented shopping plaza, we need to travel to the City of Fountains: Kansas City.

First though, let me clarify - Country Club Plaza in Kansas City was the first regional, suburban, auto-oriented shopping center. Regional, because it was over 400,000 square feet. Market Square in Lake Forest, Illinois - built before Country Club Plaza - was only 100,000 square feet; meaning it was a neighborhood shopping center, and since it was built downtown, it wasn't suburban. So, Market Square is the first planned shopping center that was auto-oriented, but it didn't check the boxes for regional and suburban. Back to Kansas City though.

Constructed in 1922, Country Club Plaza - very automobile-oriented sounding - was actually a burgeoning idea 10 years before that. J.C. Nichols - no relation to J.C. Penny's - decided he wanted to build a, "Spanish marketplace magically transported to Kansas City," which is really random; but sure, let's role with it Nichols.

The site he picked though, was 5 miles from downtown and nowhere really close to any substantial population. Basically, based on today's metrics, there weren't enough rooftops to support a regional marketplace. So people started calling it Nichol's Folly, and they would definitely come to eat those words.

### **(16:40)**

On a trip to Spain in 1921, Nichols ended up finding the inspiration for his shopping center in Seville, Spain. Part of the southern region of Spain, Seville had strong Moorish influences in the architecture, and that is what translated over to Country Club Plaza. There's even a replica of a tower in the plaza in Kansas City.

This feature also make Country Club Plaza the first suburban shopping center with a unified architectural theme and common management, but the real differentiating factor here was the orientation towards automobiles.

Nichols really did sort of pioneer this idea. I mean think about it. It's the early 1920's and they're designing this shopping center with the idea that space would be needed for visitor's cars and trucks carrying goods. I mean that kind of foresight just doesn't occur that often.

### **(17:49)**

Well, today we cruised through some of the landmark events related to the automobile.

We did a quick drive-by of the four transportation epochs by geographer John Borchert: Sail-Wagon, Iron Horse, Steel Rail, and Auto-Air-Amenity.

Then we changed gears a little to talk about the 1916 Federal-Aid Highway Act that marked the first time

the federal government was getting into the highway funding game.

Then we picked up some speed a little by talking about the first-ish parkway: the Bronx River Parkway in New York in 1919 (according to the Chapter President's Council of the APA, or 1922 according to like everyone else)

And then we coasted to the finish line with the construction of the first regional, suburban, auto-oriented shopping center: Country Club Plaza in Kansas City in 1922.

## **(18:59)**

Well, thanks again for joining me! If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at [theveryunofficialaicpguide@gmail.com](mailto:theveryunofficialaicpguide@gmail.com) and I'll do my best to help out if I can.

This week we went auto, and then planning went to shit and now engineers run everything. I'm kidding, sort of.

For those who tuned in several damn weeks ago, our question was, "Which of the three cases that we talked about, did the land owner claim a taking?" ...

The answer there would be – well - all of them. Hadacheck claimed a taking because Los Angeles prohibited his brickyard, Pennsylvania Coal claimed a taking because the Kohler Act prevented them from mining all of the coal on their subterranean property rights, and Ambler claimed a taking because Euclid's zoning deprived them of the most profitable uses.

If you want to play along this week, our question is, "What event really kicked off the mass adoption of the automobile?"

As always, don't forget to subscribe to this podcast on whatever platform you use for podcasts, and feel free to sign up on the show's website so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement all of your other study regimens. And share this out with any planners you know, and don't forget to leave a review either.

Also, congratulations to Renee. Hopefully the 'Test Yourself' bundle from Planning Certification will seal your fate as "Renee, AICP".

Tune in again next week when we hit the Great Depression and start on the New Deal, which I can't even begin to say where that episode will go because the New Deal is huge, and will definitely, probably take a couple of episodes to cover.

Thanks again everyone, 'till next time.

## **Links:**

Transportation Epochs:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borchert%27s\\_Epochs#:~:text=Borchert's%20epochs%20refer%20to%20five,of%20growth%20of%20American%20cities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borchert%27s_Epochs#:~:text=Borchert's%20epochs%20refer%20to%20five,of%20growth%20of%20American%20cities).

[https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=geosciences\\_facpub](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=geosciences_facpub)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5gDWNE7fs>

1916 Federal Highway Act:

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96summer/p96su2.cfm>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal\\_Aid\\_Road\\_Act\\_of\\_1916](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Aid_Road_Act_of_1916)

<https://historylink.org/File/7243>

1919 First Parkway in the U.S.:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronx\\_River\\_Parkway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronx_River_Parkway)

<https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/X004/history>

<http://npshistory.com/publications/colo/colo-pkwy-context.pdf>

1922 First Auto-Oriented Shopping Center:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country\\_Club\\_Plaza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country_Club_Plaza)

<https://www.visitkc.com/2017/06/27/today-i-learned-history-behind-country-club-plaza>