

Public Lecture by SFU Visiting Fellow in Urban Sustainable Development



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The Sustainability Dividend of Building a Better Bus System: Evidence from Seoul's Public Transit Reform

Thursday, March 31, 2011, 7:00 p.m.
Room 2600 , SFU Surrey
13450 102 Avenue, Surrey
(just south of the Surrey Central SkyTrain station)

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About the Talk:

Better bus transit can make an important contribution to urban sustainability. Seoul took its metropolitan bus services to a new level beginning in July 2004, through a reform of operating practices that greatly enhanced performance and service quality. This widely acclaimed reorganization of policy and operations demonstrates the capacity of local government leadership to make a positive difference on the economic efficiency of public transit, the consumer welfare of transit users, and the sustainability of urban mobility.

Before the reform, the privately operated bus system had not kept pace with economic and population growth. Over 90 private firms focused on competing with one another in a ‘race to the bottom’ of reduced operating costs and lower service quality. Poor conditions on the bus system led to plunging ridership and a corresponding explosion in urban automobile use as citizens left the buses behind.

Seoul’s bus reform was accomplished through regulatory reform and new policies which eliminated obstacles to developing modern and attractive road based transit. Various incentives were introduced to renew the industry. A new governance structure for the bus industry included a committee engaged in participatory planning and self-regulatory functions. Following these reforms, Seoul’s bus operators were able to design and implement a more efficient route and network system, modernized fare system, improved infrastructure, effective marketing, and more efficient management and monitoring systems.

The benefits of the bus reform were felt immediately and widely across Seoul. In its first year of implementation, bus accidents declined by 27 percent, particulate matter (PM) emissions dropped by 23 percent and other air pollutants, i.e. carbon monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Oxide (NOx), and Hydrocarbons (HC), fell by 17 percent. Moreover, the new policy encouraged the use of compressed natural gas engines, and the share of buses powered by this clean-burning fuel increased 17 percent in its first year.

About the Speaker:

Hwang Kee Yeon (Keith) is the President of the Korea Transport Institute (KOTI). Dr. Hwang obtained his Bachelor in Social Science from Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea, his Master in Science in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Oregon, USA and his PhD in Urban and Regional Planning majoring in Transportation from the University of Southern California, USA.

For his contributions, Dr. Hwang received the 1st Seoul Citizen’s Award on Transportation in 2003, the 2nd Seoul Policy Award in 2004 and the Order of Merit in 2005. He has published 2 books in Korean: *Transportation Demand Management: Policy and Analysis Method* in 2001, and *Project Cheonggyecheon: Conflict Management Strategies for Public Project* in 2005.

Prior to his tenure as President, KOTI, since 2005, Dr. Hwang was a Professor in the Department of Urban Planning & Design in Hongik University, Seoul, Korea, from 2005 to 2008. From 1992 to 2005, Dr. Hwang was Director, Research Center for Cheonggye Stream Restoration at the Seoul Development Institute under the Seoul Metro Government, and was seconded to the Presidential Office on Competitiveness from 1994 to 1995.