Tale of Three Cities (Seattle Times)

Portland

New urbanism: light rail, streetcars, close in upscale neighborhoods w/restaurants and shops, big parks along river, relatively less congestion, streetcar line to Pearl District incentivized its dev.

Urban growth boundaries since 1970s, metro. scale more than local planning

urban growth has relief valve (Vancouver WA), taxes used to finance urban improvement projects

Vancouver, BC

Traffic advantage as “end of line” location (no I-5 Freeway through)

A mini-Manhattan, huge downtown park, very large share of greater metro area lives downtown (high density), with more rapid downtown than suburban population growth – and downtown traffic declining

Very significant role of planning, working with large developers in exchange for huge urban park areas

Huge influx of wealthy from Hong Kong before and after control went from Britain to China

Seattle

Antithesis of approach used in Portland and Vancouver

Geography of Puget Sound waterways and glacial-origin steep hills complicates transportation dev.

Political history of conflict: Big business ethic spurred backlash – including radical unionism, ethnic activism, university and church liberalism

Metro area governments are splintered, competitive rather than collaborative, the needed centralized leadership and decision making hasn’t happened for efficient transportation and related concerns

Traffic delays horrible, rapid suburbanization