

## William R. Black

William Black completed his Ph.D. at the University of Iowa in 1969 and joined the Department of Geography at Indiana University in the same year. In his long career at Indiana he became a leading figure in research on transportation. He also made invaluable contributions to the university as an outstanding teacher and served in an exceptionally large number of administrative and service positions for national and international agencies, for the state of Indiana, and for Indiana University.

Bill's leadership in research on transportation is universally recognized. He authored five books, is the principal author of more than 200 articles and reports on transportation, and has directed at least 20 major research projects for federal and state agencies. He has been a member of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) of the National Research Council for virtually his entire career and received the Distinguished Service Award of the TRB in 2002. He served for six years as chairman of the TRB Committee on Social and Economic Factors in Transportation and continues to serve on that committee as well as the International Activities Committee and the Transportation and Sustainability Committee.

He edited the leading journal in transport geography and currently serves on the editorial boards of four international journals. He has been a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution. He served two terms as chairman of the transport research group of the Association of American Geographers, was a recipient of that group's Edward Ullman award for contributions to transportation geography, and delivered the prestigious Fleming lecture at the meetings in 2000 of the association. From 1996 until 2006 he headed the U.S. side of efforts by the National Science Foundation and the European Commission to develop transatlantic research networks on sustainable transportation. He is currently a scientific member of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile Foundation's Mobility Venice project.

Lists of awards and positions held fall far short, however, of describing Bill's contributions to the analysis of transportation and related issues. The interdisciplinary fields of transportation studies and transportation geography look far different today than they did at the beginning of Bill's research career, and the changes have been produced, in large measure, by Bill's research activities. Although Bill has carried out research on virtually every aspect of transportation systems, two of his contributions have been especially important in reshaping research in the field. He was largely responsible for introducing the technology of geographic information systems to scientific research on transportation. He showed how the capacity of these systems to organize large amounts of locationally specific information could serve not only to solve management problems but to make it possible to analyze important and previously intractable questions about complex transportation systems. Bill was also the leader in recognizing and researching the very important interface between transportation systems and environmental sustainability. Bill's specification of the most important research problems in the relations between transportation and sustainability and the visibility of his research in international forums were major factors in moving environmental sustainability from a peripheral to a central issue in transportation research.

Bill has demonstrated throughout his career an exceptional ability to combine academic research with public service and to solve practical as well as abstract problems. He has been a transport adviser to the state of Indiana since 1971. In 1980 he received the Sagamore of the Wabash award from Governor Otis Bowen for his service, which included directing rail planning for Indiana during the rail restructuring of the 1970s, serving as the first director of the Indiana Department of Transportation in 1980, and carrying out numerous research projects for the state. When the federal government reorganized the bankrupt northeastern railroads as the Consolidated Rail Corporation (better known as Conrail), Bill took a leave in order to work on the activation task force for the new

corporation. His colleagues in the Department of Geography were much relieved when he declined an offer to become a vice president of Conrail and returned to Indiana University. His activities have taken on an increasingly international character since the middle of the 1990s when he was asked by the National Science Foundation to head U.S. efforts to form transatlantic research networks on sustainable transportation. That project took Bill to Europe on almost a monthly basis for the next 10 years, but his efforts were extremely successful in launching a new era of international cooperation in research on transportation and sustainability.

Bill also served Indiana University in a variety of administrative positions, including director of the Center for Urban and Regional Analysis, chairman of the Urban and Regional Analysis Faculty of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and acting director of the Transportation Research Center. He served as chair of the Department of Geography from 1985 to 1989, and his second term as chair of the department will culminate with his retirement.

Bill has also been an extremely valuable teacher. He has been very generous and helpful to graduate students and especially effective in helping them to formulate rewarding research problems. In addition to teaching courses in transportation, he regularly taught very popular undergraduate courses on environmental issues.

Bill's retirement will end his formal commitments to teaching and administration, but he will continue an active research program, including investigations into the environmental impacts of transportation, indicators of sustainability, and regional flow modeling. He plans to remain in Bloomington, and we are looking forward to the continuing benefits of his advice and friendship.

*John Odland*