

Can Car-Capital of the World Become a Green Community?

Assessing Livability and Public Transit in Los Angeles



photo from Image Bank

By Daria Mazey

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Abstract:

This paper seeks to understand the origins, effects, and possible ameliorating solutions to Los Angeles' dependence on the private automobile as the dominant mode of transportation. It will look at changing street function into a vector for automobiles and large-scale privatization of infrastructure, which leads to secessionary spaces of luxury for the rich. It will explain problems of congestion, pollution, and equity while analyzing various solutions such as improving transit, supportive policies, and market based solutions. It will address the importance of non-state actors in public participation and market demand and will ultimately advocate for a plan that creates urban cores, which are densified with TOD and infill development and less reliant on automobiles due to increased walking, biking and transit availability.

Introduction

Los Angeles is a city known for its terrible traffic and car-oriented culture. Tourists and non-native Los Angelinos who have yet to figure out how to best maneuver their trips and commuting, or who have simply not yet accepted that Los Angelinos spend a good deal of time per day in their cars, bemoan LA's shortcomings in comparison to say, New York City, or London. What they don't realize is that original LA planners planned the city this way on purpose to get away from the jumbled, "dirty", dense city styles of Europe and the East Coast. The ironic result of the now problematic sprawl is congestion, pollution, limited accessibility and equity issues. LA had the first ever city planning commission in the U.S. In setting up LA the way they did, city planners used zoning statutes and redlining to ensure homogenous, segregated (both by income and race) neighborhoods of single-family dwellings that are separate from industry. This is a model that relies on the automobile to connect places and was thought to be far superior to the settlers of LA. This paper will tell the story of how LA's transportation system came to be the way it is. It will address various means that are being used or proposed to get people out of their cars such as increased density via transit-oriented developments, tax incentives, incentives and disincentives, market based approaches, and improved transit to name a few.

The Problems

Congestion, pollution, health issues, global warming, and social inequity are all problems that are caused by LA's reliance on the private automobile as the primary transportation mode share. Los Angeles has one of the worst traffic-congestion problems

in the world. This impedes accessibility and causes social and economic losses because of the opportunity cost of time spent in traffic congestion (Frick, 2006). Pollution in Los Angeles has been a problem for a long time. While smog makes for beautiful sunsets, it has plagued Los Angeles with highly unhealthy air for decades. With the passage of the Clean Air Act and subsequent higher standards in 1997, air quality has improved dramatically since the early 1980s (California Air Resources Board, 2007). However, Los Angeles continues to claim the number one spot for worst air in the nation, with about 50% of summer days considered “dangerous” for the roughly 225,000 children with asthma in Los Angeles County. Asthma remains the fastest growing chronic disease, which is directly linked to pollution from cars (Balbus, et al, 2004). Carbon dioxide emissions from cars have also been proven again and again to create an alarming greenhouse gas effect, otherwise known as ‘global warming’. Americans are becoming increasingly aware of the presence and dangers of global warming with the increase in attention from world leaders and the media. In addition, there is a large contingency of people who either cannot afford to, are physically unable to, or are legally restricted from driving. For them, the city’s emphasis on cars means restricted accessibility to work, school, doctor’s appointments, and social venues. Impaired accessibility is both an equity issue and an economic one—generating opportunity costs from time lost on inefficient travel. Environmental Justice is also a concern as evidence points to unequal burdens from polluting roads and freeways being sited in poor and non-white communitiesⁱ (Bullard, 1990).

The History

Los Angeles began developing around the 1880s and in 1923 the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission was created. The immigrants that came to Los Angeles were mostly wealthy and American-born and brought with them a vision for a new kind of city, one that is low-density and decentralized. They came in search of “good life”. Real estate development was one of the largest industries driving LA growth (Marchand, 1986). The real estate market was regulated by the government through zoning and court-enforced racially restrictive covenants which determined what size and types of buildings, roads and parks could be placed where, but also what racial groups were allowed to settle in which parts, ensuring the “good life” stratification and privilege of the wealthy settlers but marginalizing, Blacks, Jews, Latinos, and the urban poor (Roy, 2007). Los Angeles grew quickly and its population had broken a million by the time the depression hit (Fogelson, 1967).

Growth necessitated an effective and efficient transportation system. It started off as rail with the building of electric rails that ran throughout the area, but gradually got replaced with the emergence of the automobile, as well as cheaper diesel-run buses (Richmond, 2005). Electric rails were expensive to maintain, had higher labor costs compared to early diesel buses, and competed for the same space as cars on roads--making it much slower the more cars that came (Richmond, 2005; Wachs, 1984). However, street rails did enable LA growth early on. The more land that railways touched increased the amount of land able to be developed and sold. Thus, land speculation in early Los Angeles drove up the demand for an effective transportation system in order to integrate more land into the market, and the street railways provided the initial infrastructure. However, with the development of the automobile, Los Angelinos

consumer demand for private automobiles soon resulted in a huge mode shift. By far, Los Angeles emerged as an auto-dominated city long before any other region in the country. The first working cars were produced at the end of the 1800s, but by 1931, autos constituted over sixty percent of the all trips in the central business district (CBD) of Los Angeles (Wachs, 1984).

In 1925, the city made an attempt to create a comprehensive rapid transit plan for the region. They hired an outside firm that recommended construction of subways and elevated rail with bus lines extending out (which is very similar to the recommendations I make here). Yet, public fear of the potential depreciation of land value due to elevated rail, and misgivings about funding private projects with public money caused the voters to turn down the comprehensive plan. These issues still exist today, though counter examples to the objections as well as research that debunks many fears about crime and depreciating land value associated with rail are doing their part to quell objectors.

More current attempts to build railways in LA have been disjointed and wrought with new problems, such as the methane explosion in 1985 caused by subway drilling at Ross Dress For Less on Wilshire. This explosion caused Congress to prohibit tunneling in the “methane risk zones”, which happened to be located along the densest travel corridor in LA—the area which could have most benefited from subway [Figure 1 about here]. Safe drilling has since been deemed possible and plans to overturn the ban are now stalled in the Senate (Simon, 2007). The rail that was built is successful but fragmented since it does not extend to West LA, UCLA, Santa Monica or LAX [Figure 2 about here]. However, by many accounts it is still considered a success, attracting large ridership and

generating demand for extensions (Stein, 2006; many more editorials and blogs). [Figure 3 about here]

The Expo light rail which will run along old rails from downtown LA, past USC, through Culver City and West LA, all the way to Santa Monica is in its planning stages. It would run south of the proposed subway extension. NIMBYism and fear mongering characterizes half the debate in the struggle to choose the path [Figure 4 about here]. Cheviot Hills residents, whose neighborhood contains part of the proposed path, are divided over the light rail plans. Some fear increased crime, decreased property values and harm to local schools and are proposing an alternate, longer route along Venice Boulevard. Venice Blvd. lacks the rail infrastructure already in place along Exposition Blvd (which runs through Cheviot Hills), but advocates point to a lower income bracket demographic which they say would benefit more from having access to light rail and would use it more often than the middle to upper class Cheviot Hills residents. Others welcome it as a potential traffic alleviator and amenity (Anonymous homeowner flyer, 2006; public meeting accounts, 2007)

Changing Street Functions

The book *Splintering Urbanism* by Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin is a critical analysis of the ways that infrastructure systems like transportation are changing throughout global cities. They point to large-scale privatization of services that create what they call “luxury spaces of secession”. These spaces are made possible by the auto-dependent transportation systems and exclusionary quasi-public spaces. Across the globe, we see extreme differentials in quality of life and access to technology, goods and services.

In this new system, individual automobiles take on new significance. What better way to secede from the city than to never have to walk on its streets? *Splintering Urbanism* analyzes in great depth the changing function of streets from spaces for people to walk, bike, shop and interact into vectors for automobiles. They detail the increasing non-accommodation of pedestrians in street and building design as an entrepreneurial tactic for excluding those too poor to drive. Entrances to malls and entertainment centers are located in the parking garage bowels of the building. Other entrances are hidden, heavily secured and monitored. The walking *other* knows he is unwelcome. These quasi-public spaces are increasingly consumption based, adding to the exclusion of the poor. Graham and Marvin point to “skywalk systems” as proof of the continuation of this exclusionary trend. Skywalks are bridges that connect buildings together, so that the consumer never has to enter the street, except in the safety of their car.

With the reliance on the auto, and people spending more and more time in their cars, cars are taking on multiple roles. They are now extensions of offices and living rooms, with phone, music, TVs, and internet. “Cyborg” (hyper-technological) cars become spaces where we live, work and play. They also place a barrier between the individual and the city they navigate, producing a “paradox of connection with distancing” (Graham, et al, 2001). Some cars are even made bullet proof in cities like Johannesburg and São Paulo where car-jackings and hostage taking incidences are rising. Even the streets, once built to connect people, are being used in some instances to create secessionary space. Graham and Marvin cite Albert Pope’s theory of *grid erosion* which describes how the relatively even and publicly developed infrastructure “grids” are

“splintering” and being remade into “infrastructure ladders” that service single secessionary spaces, controlling and limiting other possible connections.

With distancing and unequal provision of services (often the quality and reliability of services is calibrated to the potential profitability of the receiver), a huge issue of equity arises. As the rich choose to acquire their own infrastructure (even some highways and roads are becoming privatized with electronic tolls based on congestion), we see a push for the “fiscal equivalence model”, the “get what you pay for” approach that advocates for increased services for those who pay the most taxes, or now the most tolls. This affluent response to ‘being forced to pay for services they do not use’ (since they have their own privatized superior services in place) implicitly negates the very premise of progressive taxation as a means to level the playing field and provide the basic essentials of infrastructure to every citizen. It instead seeks to further the divide and protect the vastly uneven distribution of wealth that we already see in LA. This is why it’s important to provide inclusionary zoning and policies that support mixed income housing when creating TODsⁱⁱ.

Splintering Urbanism is a very important book because it details the systematic marginalization of the urban poor and *othered* bodies through the privatization of services and the splintering of urban systems. It helps us to understand how provision of goods and services relate to the creation of power hierarchies and inequality, something that is not readily apparent without some excavation.

The fear of “incursion” by the urban poor, as described by Graham and Marvin, creates this “hostile privatism” (McKenzie, 1994) of infrastructure and intense surveillance of luxury spaces. The “culture of nonparticipation” (Flusty, et al, 1999) is

what leads to the secession from the city. The separation of spaces, or ‘city within a city’, is discussed by Flusty and Dear as a combination of enclaves, such that you see in LA. Flusty and Dear mirror themes of inequality and alienation from the city as well. They cite Jencks’s idea of “minoritization” (1993), “a typical postmodern phenomenon where most of the population forms the ‘other’” (Flusty, et al, 1999). As the rich secede with their bundled and protected services, there is a need to *other* the rest, so as to ease anxiety and guilt over their own massive consumption. In LA, the majority of the population is Latino, yet Latinos are commonly referred to as “minorities”, along with African Americans, and other non-whites. Minoritization perhaps reflects the anxiety of whites over what is often racially-bound class privilege.

Alienation from the city, through the seclusion of cyborg cars and skywalk systems, leaves the streets and spaces of connection void of human energy. Flusty and Dear describe this as well:

What is missing in this new cybernetic suburbia is not a particular building or place but rather the spaces between, that is, the connections that make sense of forms. What is missing is connectivity and community.

My recommendations for improving LA’s transportation system get at just this. It is not enough to create viable alternatives, we must also change the way that people are relating to the streets and their cities, creating spaces of energy and community that entice people out of their cars and make possible a new type of city life, one that is not auto-based.

Land Use and Planning-Oriented Solutions

“LA has managed to develop at a density that is too low for transit to be cost-effective and too high for the automobile to be cost-effective. Worst of both worlds... It’s too late to go with low density in LA, we’re past that... Now we need to try to create real centers in LA. That’s how you can make transit, or even walking and biking work.”

—from an interview with Director of the University of California Transportation Research Center Elizabeth Deakin, J.D.

An approach that some city planners and developers are attempting to adopt in order to achieve higher densities and increased transit and non-motorized mode shares, is the creation of transit-oriented developments (TODs). These are projects which seek to create denser cores of living, recreation and business around transit so that people can walk, bike and take transit and don't have to drive to get places. The effectiveness of TODs at solving these problems, however, can vary greatly depending on how they are implemented and coordinated. In fact, the distinction has been made between "transit-adjacent" and "transit-oriented" development, the former being inadequately integrated, planned and supported. LA currently has a number of TODs under development in an effort to boost transit ridership and decrease driving as LA's population continues to rise. The idea is to direct growth into TODs, densifying and creating urban cores that are less reliant on autos.

The original sprawling settlement of LA was guided in part by rails that pre-empted growth—so too can new types of transit developments re-shape continued growth into a more sustainable model. As Elizabeth Deakin said in an interview: "California has the great advantage and disadvantage that we're still growing. We don't have infinite air quality or water resources but by the same token, growth gives us the opportunity to make changes." It is important to learn from past developments and studies, however, to direct growth in areas where it is most appropriate and can be most impactful. These are areas with rapidly growing economies, where the land surrounding stations is conducive to development and accessibility will be significantly improved. They should also have an involved public sector with supportive land use policies and capital investments.

These things are key because installing rail alone will not necessarily attract growth or reduce driving (Handy, 2005).

“Enterprise Zones” are one method of incentive used to encourage TODs. Enterprise zones qualify for reduced taxes, and may enjoy relaxing of regulatory controls that impede private investment (Lefaver, 2001). The city of LA should make a conscious effort to grant enterprise zone status, with reduced taxes, to areas that become TOD sites. In addition, more city bond money could be allocated to TOD projects by changing the eligibility requirements. Currently, the California Debt Limit Allocation Committee’s system for allocating state bonds is based on a point system. The amount of points awarded to projects that would be built in a “public transit corridor” should be increased (Lefaver, 2001), as well as points for projects that support other modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking. Another suggestion would be to extend this transit corridor to include half a mile of the transit station. If TOD is made a primary focus of regional and city planners, we may see some of these suggestions actually implemented.

TOD projects illustrate the importance of connecting the goal to the implementation. In both the Longbeach and Hollywood/Highland TOD projects [Figure 5 about here], it was mostly private developer initiative supported by the city’s redevelopment agency that got the projects off the ground. These parties do not necessarily care about increased accessibility, reduced pollution or congestion. These stakeholders are out to make money. Currently the city’s power to direct TODs is only in the form of incentives which make TOD standards voluntary for developers. For example, city enhancements such as special paving or bicycle storage facilities are given by the city under “pedestrian enhancements.” However, “pedestrian enhancements”

incentives are often “negotiated down” in joint development agreements, meaning there is no coordinated standard for street lighting, orientation of building entrances, etc. which make people more likely to walk to and from transit (South San Francisco General Plan, 1998). These standards cannot be voluntary if TODs are to be effective. Furthermore, incentives by themselves do not increase the city’s ability to attract transit-oriented development in an area that doesn’t have sufficient market appeal. Either city planners need to undertake and run their own TODs, or be more involved in their execution to insure maximum efficacy.

The solution to key problems goes beyond physical TOD projects. Bicycle paths, street calming (speed bumps), trees, benches, widened sidewalks, minimized parking facilities, planning for walkers and bikers within TOD complexes are some other options that make the city more enjoyable and safe to walk and bike in. The more of these options that are implemented, the more successful congestion, pollution, and accessibility mitigation will be. For example, the EIR report for the proposed Amerige Court complex in Fullerton cites “no planned roadway or traffic-related improvements” (Amerige Court EIR, 2006) around the project area yet claims repeatedly that this project will mean more bike and pedestrian traffic. Without widening sidewalks, implementing stop signs, or speed bumps that make the non-motorized transportation priority, how will car usage be de-emphasized? More importantly, how will walking and biking be encouraged (Millard-Ball et al, 2003)? Despite the political reluctance to such measures, economic tools such as disincentives to park, market rate parking fees (Shoup, 1999), incentives to take alternative modes of transport (enforce the parking buyout program), tax breaks for not owning a car, higher gas tax (Wachs, 2003), and subsidies for more fuel efficient or

alternative fuel vehicles are all possible plans toward mitigation which must be pursued in conjunction with TOD's in order to make TOD's more appealing alternative living styles. If driving is just as easy in the future, a major incentive for car-owning residents to inhabit transit-oriented developments will still be missing.

Policy and Market-based Solutions

Policy and market-based solutions can be a powerful tool in controlling choices made by citizens as to when they drive and how much. These tactics are based on economic principles that the higher the price for elastic or relatively inelastic goods, the less consumers will demand them and in lesser quantities. Some examples of these that would work for LA are:

- Raising the gas tax
- Changing the parking policy
- Parking Cash Out Program

These solutions are simple in theory, but politically very difficult. Raising the gas tax, or at least adjusting it against inflation, would be a huge benefit for transportation agencies since gas taxes help fund transportation projects. A gas tax, however, is currently viewed as the quickest way to kill a person's political career. Voters don't want to pay more for gas and gas/auto related special interests groups work hard to keep this from happening as well.

Parking is a vital, often overlooked piece of the transportation policy puzzle. Los Angeles has a parking coverage rate that is off the chart (it's the highest in the world). The parking coverage rate is calculated by taking the combined area of all the parking spaces in the CBD and seeing what percentage of the total CBD area it occupies. While

other cities such as San Francisco have only 31%, Los Angeles has a whopping 81% (Manville and Shoup), and much of this parking is “free” to the consumer. High costs of providing parking are, however, never free. Instead they are absorbed and hidden in the development costs, rents, and prices (Frick, 2006). Providing less parking and at higher rates, by reducing the “minimum parking requirements” for developers building new projects and raising rates to market price (to increase parking turnover and decrease congestion from people cruising for parking) can potentially provide strong disincentives to drive and challenge the current LA sentiment that we are entitled to free or cheap parking everywhere we go (Shoup, 1999). These options are relatively easy to implement logistically, but politically they are very hard. However, as “smart growth” ideals and New Urbanism gain momentum, planners and developers are changing their tune on parking. Los Angeles currently has in place an innovative but un-enforced program called the “parking cash out” program that requires employers who provide “free” parking to their employees to offer them a cash alternative for not using their spots. Alternatively, they can supply transit passes to employees (Frick, 2006). This program has large potential to further decrease the amount of workers who drive to work, mitigating congestion, pollution and health problems and uncovering the true costs to parkingⁱⁱⁱ.

The thing that is most important to remember in analyzing these market-based policy approaches, is that they only work if there are sufficient alternatives to driving, thus making it a more elastic good. It would be unfair and ineffective to go ahead with these disincentives without simultaneously improving upon alternative transit modes.

The Role of Non-State Actors and Market Demand

NIMBYism has stopped or halted many plans to create a more comprehensive transportation system. Unfortunately, agency experts have thus been largely unsuccessful at dispelling many of the fears that NIMBYists have—most of which are unfounded. Fear of crime and depreciating land values are prime examples of common fears that evidence shows do not materialize (Liggett, et al, 2002). In fact, housing and land values have been known to *rise* with the advent of rail (Handy, 2002).

In order to gain citizen support for new densifying, pedestrian and transit-oriented developments there must be a conscious public outreach effort to build support for these types of changes. Attempts to build rail have and continue to be mired and thwarted by public opposition which can be very effective at getting heard through public meetings, outreach, communication with representatives and editorials. This effort can be matched or outdone *in support* of improving and extending transit. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like Non-Profits and citizen groups concerned with pollution and livability are beginning to enter into this role.

Efforts should also be made to market the Metro Transit and bus systems so that more middle and upper class people take it. Perhaps having the mayor of a city or celebrities visibly ride transit on occasion will change the social stigma around riding transit which is much a part of Los Angeles' history. Similarly, photo ops of Kate Hudson and Jennifer Aniston biking to work and the grocery store could spur whole new attitudes around biking as transportation and exercise in one! If people—both city leaders and residents—don't realize the importance of curbing congestion, pollution, and improving transit accessibility, and make a bold effort to change the way things have

been in LA, even the best transit, TOD plans and city legislation will be ineffective. Deborah Lynn Guber in her piece the citizen-consumer and marketplace environmentalism points to consumer decisions as a way citizens can be environmentally conscious. She notes that they are often more likely to “buy green” than “vote green” and explains a number of reasons she thinks this is: sense of personal efficacy, self-interest, political ideology and product advertising. These are all motivators that can be used in getting people out of their cars. There is a tangible sense of pride and accomplishment if one eliminates a daily commute. There is self-gain to be had in walking or biking more and decreasing pollution. Los Angelinos are rather liberal in general and often claim to be environmentalists. If you make travel mode a political issue and advertise alternatives effectively this will have a huge affects on people’s willingness to drive or take transit.

All in all the role of the individual and other non-state actors in helping bring about a mode share shift has been underestimated in its importance. We have seen again and again throughout LA’s public transportation history that consumer choices, individual preferences and philosophy, citizen groups and stigmas have a huge effect on city and transportation planning. Beverly Hills has changed its tune on wanting subway stops from being adamantly opposed to them roughly 20 years ago to lobbying for two of them if an extension goes through (Guccione, 2006). Steps like this tell city planners that they will not encounter opposition and give them much-needed courage to proceed with plans that have historically been fought by NIMBYists tooth and nail. Susan Handy in her piece entitled *Smart Growth and the Transportation-Land Use Connection: What Does the Research Tell Us?* concludes that there is evidence of an unmet demand for

more neighborhoods where people can drive less. This demand needs to be made more vocal if it is to be heard.

The Role of Government

City and transportation planning agencies are very specialized. They have specialized experts, but don't always take the big picture into account. This is in part due to the way that projects are funded. Local sales taxes are often the chosen means, which makes taxpayers very adamant about funds only being used locally. Zev Yaroslavsky even passed a law ensuring this unless a 2/3 vote approves otherwise. This can be counter-productive and narrow-minded since traffic, pollution and accessibility problems are rarely contained in one neighborhood alone. Commuters are one example of people that affect many neighborhoods en masse—usually concentrating in temporal zones rather than spatial ones. What Elizabeth Deakin calls “local provincialism”, this fighting for local causes without really understanding how they affect the whole and visa versa may be the biggest obstacle to change (Deakin, 2007).

We now come to the role of government in regulating transportation as an environmental concern. Transportation affects air quality and climate change through vehicle emissions; it also affects sprawl and habitat destruction. We see in this case study how transportation and planning policy and administration is “environmental” in many ways-- not only in the environmental problems that cars produce, but in the way that the city relates to nature and the environment and the type of consumption the current city setup supports. Under NEPA and CEQA, and now under the Clean Air Act, the government has the power to regulate transportation systems as an environmental concern. Hitherto, environmental regulations and the building of new roads or addition of

buses/bike lanes were considered separately. But we see now the importance of looking at them together. In fact, the way that we conceptualize “environment” and current environmental problems greatly affects the types of solutions we produce (Shellenberger, et al).

Professor Ananya Roy in UC Berkeley’s City Planning Department calls the quixotic city planning in Las Vegas “ecoterrorism”; Flusty and Dear in a paper entitled *Invitation to a Postmodern Urbanism* call it “ecodystopia” but the point is the same. City planners failed to acknowledge or work with the environment in planning Las Vegas and the auto-based splintered urbanism of LA makes this same mistake. Individual gasoline-consuming cars are polluting instigators of sprawl and global warming. They are extravagant claims to power and resources that cannot be supported for a majority and thus intrinsically lay claim to power hierarchies (Roy, 2007). The decision to ignore ecological constraints in postmodern city building is one that is already providing challenging ecological lashbacks at a global scale. If true solutions are to be found, we must be willing to reconsider our sense of entitlement to things like personal vehicles run on non-renewable fuel.

A New Type of Accounting

Cost has often been the major obstacle to rail in LA and indeed is often pointed to as the insurmountable obstacle for many greening projects. Cost-analysis is beyond the scope of this short paper but a new type of accounting is in order if we are to seriously work toward “greener” communities. Hawkins, et al discuss what they term “natural capitalism” in contrast to traditional capitalism. They argue that conventional capitalism sees the world as an open system with unlimited flow of resources and outflow of waste.

This has been the model for development in LA. We see where it has gotten us environmentally, but also in terms of public health and fiscal losses from congestion, pollution and global warming. *Natural capitalism* would include the costs of supplying limited resources of oil, clean air and carbon sinks and take the tactic of “radical resource productivity”—increasing the efficiency of resource use. This slows resource depletion and lowers pollution and waste. Another strategy of *natural capitalism* is diminishing reliance on material goods as a measure of prosperity and wealth. If Cheviot Hills homeowners were to place value on vibrant communities and accessibility [Figures 6 and 7 about here] versus large quiet private homes, this would help reduce negative externalities, creating healthier natural economies as well as more sustainable communities less reliant on cars.

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Figure 1



Wilshire Corridor where Red Line Intended & May Be Extended (densest travel corridor in LA)

Figure 2



Metro Rail Map LA
Figure 3



These “prank” signs were posted along Wilshire Blvd. to point out lack of subway

Figure 4

**LIGHT RAIL ONCE AGAIN AN ISSUE IN
CHEVIOT HILLS**
July 2006

Phase I of the light rail from downtown Los Angeles to Culver City will begin this year and will end in 2010. Phase II, presumably beginning in 2010 or shortly thereafter, plans to extend the Aqua Line to Santa Monica. The question is: Will it run through Cheviot Hills along the Exposition Right-of-Way or along the Venice/Sepulveda corridor?

The Cheviot Hills Homeowners' Association (“The Board”) had a Light Rail meeting last night, Thursday 7/27, at the Riddick Center from 7:00-9:00. About 20 residents showed up, including Joseph Lee and Marty Bischoff. Surprisingly, several members of the Board are **ardent supporters** of light rail running through Cheviot Hills (Jonathan Weiss, Kurt Kroner, Alan Levine among others). The old Board was very much against light rail coming through our neighborhood; the new Board (elected this year) is unashamedly in support of it.

The Board is supposed to protect the quality of life of the residents of Cheviot Hills—traffic mitigation, sound walls, making sure that Phase II of the light rail is built along the Venice/Sepulveda corridor, not through our peaceful neighborhood.

Why the Board would even consider, much less actively embrace, having the light rail come through our neighborhood is inexplicable, especially since **THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE—WHICH IS FOR THE LIGHT RAIL TO RUN ALONG VENICE/SEPULVEDA.**

Example of anonymous incendiary NIMBYism poster
Figure 5



Metro Station, TOD location

Figure 6



Vibrant walkable community, walking street, mixed use, bike parking

Figure 7



More walking boulevards and good crossings

ⁱ According to Robert D. Bullard in a book, entitled *Dumping in the Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*, “virtually all of the studies of exposure to outdoor air pollution have found significant differences in exposure according to income and race. African Americans and Latinos are more likely than whites to live in areas with reduced air quality.” Major contributors to outdoor air pollution are of course vehicles, freeways and roads.

ⁱⁱ An East Bay non-profit called Urban Habitat created a toolkit on avoiding gentrification and TODs. Their recommendations are as follows:

Policies to Prevent Resident Displacement

Ensure no affordable housing is lost by...

- Adopting a “no net loss” policy for homes (see example below);
- Replacing all affordable housing units that are lost to the new development in the transit zone (called an “housing replacement ordinance”); or
- Keeping a portion of the new condos affordable to current tenants when multi-family rental buildings are converted to for-sale condominiums (called a “condo conversion ordinance”).

Ensure current residents can stay by...

-
- Giving local, long-term residents priority over outside applicants in new transit zone housing developments or when their units are converted to condos; or
 - Providing locals with living wage jobs and contracts associated with the new development by giving them preference in hiring or contracting or developing workforce training programs for locals so they will be competitive applicants.

Reduce the rate at which rents rise by...

- Adopting a “speculation tax” which discourages outside investors from buying up property just to fix it up and turn around and sell it to make a quick profit, thus reducing demand for housing and slowing the pace of inflation.

Redirect the rise in property values into affordable housing programs by...

- Charging new businesses that benefit from having employees housed nearby and from new amenities a “linkage fee” that would fund affordable housing programs;
- Requiring that all businesses that locate in the newly developed transit zone and receive money from the government, share a fixed portion of their revenues for affordable housing; or
- Requiring that any increase in property tax revenue that occurs because of the new development be directed toward affordable housing program (also called “tax increment financing”).

Develop new affordable housing by...*

- Passing an inclusionary housing ordinance;
- Setting aside government-owned land for affordable housing;
- Zoning and planning station areas for mixed-use and mixed-income housing; or
- Tapping into the numerous affordable housing funds at the local, state and federal level.

(*For details on these and more, see the Housing Equity piece in the toolkit.)

ⁱⁱⁱ About \$50,000 per space for underground garages (Manville and Shoup). The average in-lieu parking fee that developers can pay the city in lieu of providing parking is \$11,305 per space (Shoup, 1999)