

## THE MYTH OF RAPID MASS TRANSIT

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The idea that rapid, mass transit can solve L.A.'s transportation problems is a myth. **This delusion harms us!** By pretending that the present traffic and parking problem will be solved by either reviving the Red Car or by building more subways, we allow more and more high density development. **In reality, L.A. will never have rapid, mass transit.**

The demise of L.A.'s prior rapid mass transit system was caused by L.A.'s increased density and increased affluence during the post WW II years. While people are enamored with conspiracy theories such as the oil industry destroyed the Red Car, the truth is quite different. People chose the auto over the Red Car and as more and more people could afford to buy cars, they ceased to need the Red Car. Also, as vehicle density increased on the surface streets, the trolleys interfered with traffic.

The Red Car system might have survived side by side with the autos if the **residential density per square mile had not dramatically increased in 1950's.** Take a walk up and down the streets between Sunset and Franklin and see how many single family craftsmen home were torn down for large apartment



complexes. Instead of each lot having one or two cars, there were up to thirty cars per lot. *Below* Post WWII crowded apartments

When one comes upon East Hollywood after 2000, one can see how beautiful Hollywood became a overly congested traffic nightmare. Some photographs allow us to glimpse what occurred. Thousands of stately single family homes like this one were demolished. Those that survived were turned



into boarding houses and butted up against mega-apartment complexes as shown below. Where there had been on family, now there were 15 to 30 families, all owning automobiles. With a 15 to 30 increase in the number of vehicles, no wonder Hollywood's air became foul and the streets congested.



The Hollywood Freeway was constructed to alleviate the congestion on the surface streets as they went over the Cahuenga Pass into the San Fernando Valley. The trolley tracks take up one lane in each direction. Notice that the trolleys are not sufficient as there already is a city bus going in the same direction. The masses of large apartment complexes cannot be seen in the distance because they have not been built.



**1949-1950: Hollywood Freeway under construction at Hollywood Blvd.**

Of course, much of the demand for the San Fernando Valley came from the influx of people after WW II. That immigration, however, was no excuse for the destruction of Hollywood. L.A. City Planners were still two and three thousands years behind in their thinking, harkening back to ancient times when farmers and other merchants needed a single central plaza to bring their produce and wares for sale. By the end of WW II, there was no need to treat the entire L.A. area as if it were a small village in Mesopotamia. There was no rational reason for businessmen to congregate in a single downtown area. The men who worked on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of One Wilshire seldom, if ever, conversed with the men on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor. If they did speak, it was probably by telephone; the same way they spoke to colleagues in New York and San Francisco.

By 1950's, L.A. County's court system had realized that they had to build branches **where the people lived**. At the same time the courts were being spread around the entire county from Santa Monica to Pomona, law firms were behind the razing of Bunker Hill and the construction of 20 and 30 storey office buildings in downtown L.A. Why did the lawyers and other businessmen need to huddle together? A lawyer was as likely to have a case in Van Nuys as he was to have one in the Central Courthouse downtown. In fact, having an office downtown when your lived in Woodland Hills and tried cases in Van Nuys or San Fernando was an extreme inconvenience. Of all the designs one could envision for the L.A. area, the most foolish was to concentrate business in a downtown area. Why did L.A. chose the worse plan?

**Real estate developers!** If a developer can make \$1,000 by renting out a one storey building, he doubles his income with a two storey building, he triples his income with a 3 storey building, he quadruples his income by a 4 storey building, etc. A 20 storey building makes for a 2,000% increase in profit.

That same philosophy applies universally; so, it was no wonder that developers applied it to Hollywood. The best way to destroy a stable middle class neighborhood of single family homes is to build a ugly apartments in the middle of the block. That puts the owners of the single family homes in a situation with one realistic choice: sell to the developers.

Few people chose to remain in a neighborhood where large apartment complexes dominate the streets. When the homeowners can sell their small lot for double, triple or quadruple its value, they flee the deterioration and crime. Those homes that do not sell to developers soon become rooming houses. Then, people wonder why Hollywood filled up with transients.



As this photo shows, the post WW II apartment complexes consumed the entire lot. They were built along streets which had been designed for single family homes.



As a result the high density development over burdened the local transportation system. These apartments stuffed 30 or more units onto the same lots that had only one family.



This 30 fold increase in population density is what turned Hollywood into a slum in the 1970's. Due to the efforts of many people, this portion of Hollywood has struggled back from corner of Hollywood-Western being identified as the country's most dangerous intersection – only to be ravaged by an atrocious high density CRA monstrosity.

Notice the small windows. The color blotches were used to deceive the eye into not noticing that the CRA used tiny windows to increase the developer's profit to the occupants' detriment.



Homes similar to these were torn down,



Notice how L.A. allowed tall apartments to tower over people's backyards.

and in place of these large and small single family craftsmen homes, we found large apartment complexes. How did L.A.'s City planners respond? More and more high density developments in Hollywood, driving thousands more people into the suburbs.

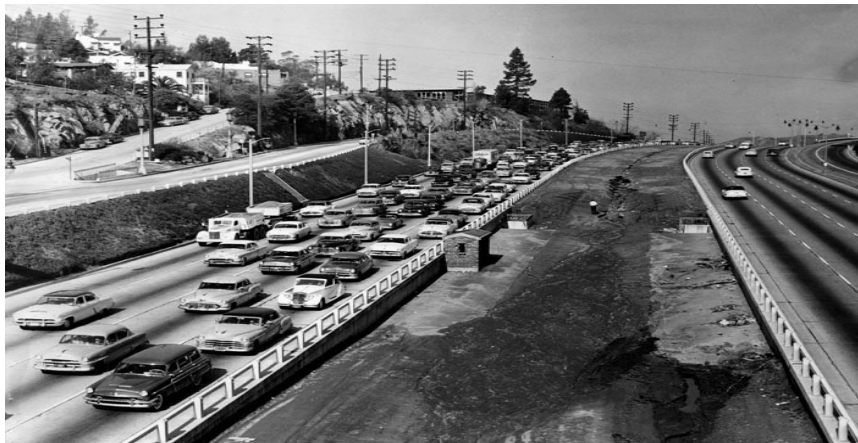


As you will see, the high density building in Hollywood made it impossible for Hollywood to continue its trolleys which require much lower density due to the mathematical relationship between population density and road width.

The construction of the Hollywood Freeway shows what everyone knows. After WW II people could afford to buy automobiles, making freeways necessary. The trolleys interfered with traffic, in part due to their fixed rails, which provided no flexibility and took up an entire lane in each direction. Buses were already necessary. No oil company conspiracy caused the end of the Red Car.



As this photograph from 1940 shows, the spacious boulevard over Cahuenga Pass adequately handled the traffic burden. Within a decade, however, the increased population density required a freeway.



It does not take a genius to figure out that the more people who have to go from point A to point B, the more traffic. More traffic means wider roads. Simple math tells us that there is a traffic saturation point.

Rather than learn from history, logic or sound planning practices, L.A. it used the freeways as a pretext to increase square mile density through the city – a folly that continues to this day.

## **Traffic Saturation Cannot Be Ignored**

The City and its developer cohorts do not discuss traffic saturation. If they told the people, the traffic saturation points, people would demand reduced population density.

### **What is the Traffic Saturation Point?**

Although the Traffic Saturation Point can be mathematically calculated, the decision of where to place the Traffic Saturation point is political. Most people would agree that total gridlock would be a Traffic Saturation Point, i.e. a surface street Sig-Alert. Since the 1930's Hollywood has experienced these traffic nightmares rather regularly.



As one can see from the traffic congestion and the smog, there are too many cars on the street for the health of Hollywood. Developing a political consensus on the Traffic Saturation Point is complex. Basically, it should begin with a ratio of the flow of traffic at the speed limit to the flow of traffic in reality. Television and radio traffic reporters are using this concept, advising us that normally it should take 10 minutes to go from the Cahuenga Pass to downtown but during a particular rush hour it takes 45 minutes.



The essence of a Traffic Saturation Point is that traffic moves much slower than the speed limit.



When traffic backs up along Hollywood Boulevard creating gridlock, one should not increase density. Of course, this spot is where Los Angeles chose to place its new Fire station #82

When drivers who would take Los Feliz Boulevard from Western to the 5 Freeway instead take Franklin Avenue to Vermont or Hillhurst, Los Feliz is beyond its Traffic Saturation Point. Yet, the developers still increase population density. The cause of Hollywood's reaching its Traffic Saturation Points is not a mystery – all one has to do is LOOK!



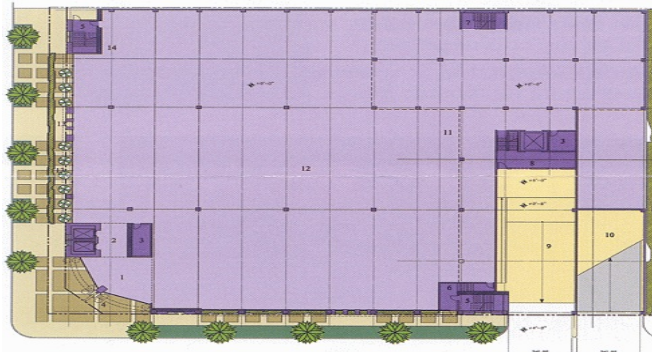
Sunset & Western Apts. 📍

📍 Metro Apts; Hollywood & Western



People who live in The Oaks know that the time for trips from the Westside to their doorstep have doubled over the last 10 years, the Traffic Saturation Point has been reached. Yet, the developers still press to increase population density.

Until recently, developers wanted to put a 52,000 square foot mega-store at the corner of Hollywood-Garfield; the lot was only 42,000 sq. ft. In an area already past its Traffic Saturation Point, they wanted to construct a mega-store **with no ground level parking!**



Purple shows the floor area; brown is the sidewalk. The yellow portions are (1) the single unloading dock which required the semi-tractor trailers to back into the underground dock and (2) the ramp to store-top parking.

As the developer's floor plan (*right side above*) shows, the store was going to consume the lot's entire footprint, which was about 42,000 sq. ft, which was 10,000 sq. **feet less** than the 52,000 sq. ft store itself. There was no ground level parking for customers and a significant portion of the two levels of parking were going to be taken by the store's employees. The delivery vehicles and the sole customer ingress-egress was on Garfield, a residential street which also has over 240 buses per hour. Thus, the store's sole loading dock and customer entrance was going to clog one of the MTA's primary bus turn-around streets. Buses turning right of Hollywood Boulevard would have backed up along Hollywood, extending the congestion into the intersection of Hollywood and Western.

This nightmare was fine with the City, despite the fact it violated almost every applicable provision of the Specific Area Plan.

After the Whole Foods discovered that the developer planned that:

1. There was no street level parking,
2. Employee parking was going to take up customer parking,
3. A 52,000 sq. ft store was planned with one loading docket
4. The sole customer entrance was right next to the sole loading dock where the semi-tractor-trailers would be parked waiting to unload
5. there were going to be only two elevators from the roof to the store requiring all the customers to wait and wait with their full grocery carts to get to the roof top parking,
6. The surrounding streets were at their Traffic saturation Points for much of the day,

the Whole Foods itself changed its mind and withdrew from the site.



Had Whole Foods not learned about the myopic nature of project being pushed through City Council in its name, Hollywood would have been left with a huge empty mega-store. A 52,000 sq. foot store on a 42,000 sq. ft lot is like **stuffing a sumo wrestler into bikini briefs.**

Aristotle's Golden Mean applies to people and out-sized developments

## **SUMMARY TO EXPLORING THE MYTH OF RAPID, MASS TRANSIT**

Unlike cities where rapid transit functions, e.g. Manhattan [2.7 sq, mi.], the Los Angeles County spans four thousand eighty [4,084] square miles spreading out virtually in endlessly in all directions. Thousands of people who live in L.A. County need to travel to Orange, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties on a daily basis. Thus, residents need a transportation system will take them from Hollywood to Santa Ana or from Alhambra to Thousand Oaks. Presently, we have a system which accomplishes this result, but with ever decreasing efficiency. The demise of our transit system is the myth that rapid, mass transit will overcome all the ills created by ever increasing population density. The converse is true: **increased density makes all transit systems, freeways, fixed rail, buses a congested nightmare.** Mega-density can overburden any transportation system to the point of being a daily nightmare for inhabitants.

Because the developers know rapid, mass transit is a delusion, they propose Mixed-Use Complexes. In brief, some people will be crowded into high density neighborhoods where driving to the store or anywhere else for that matter will be too time consuming and aggravating. Thus, they want to build the apartments over the grocery stores. Before, we discuss the hidden agenda behind Mixed Use Development, we will additional reasons that rapid, mass transit is a myth.

### **1. The First Goal of Mass Transit Is That it must Go Where People Need to Go.**

This goal is a geographic impossibility. A lawyer from Los Feliz cannot walk seven blocks down the hill to the Metro Station and take the subway to the courthouse and walk back up the hill in 80 degree hat or when it is raining. He certainly cannot carry 3 or 4 boxes of trial documents. A construction worker who lives in Hollywood cannot take the subway or a bus to Pomona or Pacific Palisades.

## **2. The Second Goal Is That the Trip Must Be Accomplished Within a Reasonable Time Frame.**

A bus trip from Long Beach to Claremont can take five hours, but can be driven in 45 minutes.

The logic of geography shows that **rapid, mass transit** cannot function in the Los Angeles-Orange County basin. The basin does not even include the area from Arcadia-Pasadena over to Glendale onto to the San Fernando Valley and out to Thousand Oaks. Who would take a bus from Hollywood to Warner Ranch – a trip which can be accomplished by car in 30 minutes?

### **High Density Over-Burdens The Freeway System**

Contrary to fashionable P.C. rhetoric, the freeway way system functioned very well for Southern California, but any system which is **habitually abused** breaks down. The proponents of higher and higher density development have been abusing the freeway system since its inception. If a freeway is designed to carry 2,000 cars per hour, it cannot handle 10,000 vehicles per hour. The problem is not the freeways; **the problem is the abuse of the freeways.** The problem is not cars; the problem is high density developments which dump more cars per hours onto the streets and freeways.

### **The Ruse of Mixed Use Development**

The developers know that higher density buildings will bring the freeways to a halt and turn the surface streets into gridlock — and they have a “solution” – Mixed Use Development.

People old enough to remember the slums of the Eastern Cities of the 1950's remember Mixed Use Development. That's where the storekeeper lives over his shop; where women bring home piece work. Those with memories know what Mixed Use Development means – SLUMS!

There is nothing new about Mixed Use Development. It's back and uglier than ever.



Over crowding is not a new phenomenon. We've been there before and we know people's response – to flee.



☞ This mixed-use CRA project still has ½ its retail space empty after 7 years.

When people are crammed into small apartments over stores, then they can get their groceries and dry cleaning from the bottom floor. Kids can play in the hallways. For this reason, the City is concentrating high density public housing projects into East Hollywood. The result is blocks of buildings filled with Default Tenants, that is, people who cannot afford to live in a better place. For these pockets of the Disadvantaged, there is the subway for going to work downtown. They have no need to go to the beach or visit relatives; they have no need for a car. They can survive on the stores within walking distance of their high rise apartments. Don't expect any of the developers to live in the tenements along with the Default Tenants.

In brief, the plan is to trap people in their crowded high rise apartments. Without a viable transit system, the only solution of ever increasing population density is Mixed Use Development. People will be expected to be happily segregated in their own little areas, except when they venture out to the office towers downtown and factory zones to the east and south of downtown.

### **Why Subways Will Never Solve Traffic Congestion**

The subway system can never solve the problem of Hollywood's traffic being past the traffic saturation points for a few simple reason. The main reason is subway does not go where people want to go.

The assumption that cramming people into ultra-high density projects near subway stations will force people to use the subways is foolish. The vast majority of travel decisions are for non-work purposes. When one wants to go to the gym and then shop at the grocery on his way home from work, the subway is useless. Not only cannot one carry all the stuff he/she needs, but the likelihood that the gym or store is even along the subway route.

Assuming the unlikely situation where a person works downtown and lives within two blocks of the Hollywood-Western Metro Station and his gym and grocery store are along the Metro Line, the subway is virtually useless. One has to take the subway to the station nearest to the gym or store, and then walk to the surface and then two or three blocks to the gym or store. Returning from the gym may be easy, but returning from the grocery store with the bags or groceries in addition to one's brief case and gym bag is unrealistic. Of course, the extra time it takes to exit the subway, get to the street level and walk to and from the gym and grocery all consume a lot of time.

What alternative have Angelenos chosen since WW II? They drive their cars. As the 2001 Report from San Jose State University, [A New Planning Template for Transit-Oriented Development](#), shows the practicality and versatility of the auto is so great that it is the logical choice for most transportation needs in California.

Angelenos are being scammed by City Hall to provide hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to these developers, whose only plans are to make the city denser and denser and hence more dysfunctional. It is a myth – or perhaps the correct word is “lie” – that subways will improve the situation.