

To: City of Los Angeles

From: Hollywoodians Encouraging Logical Planning [HELP] and Citizens Coalition Los Angeles [CCLA]

Re: Mobility Plan 2035 (MP 2035) Council File # 15-0719  
**Analysis of The Mineta Transportation Institute May 2015 Changes in Transit Use and Service and Associated Changes in Driving Near a New Light Rail Transit Line**<sup>1</sup> by Richard Lee Abrams

Date: Monday, August 3, 2015

In May 2015, The Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University published a study, Changes in Transit Use and Service and Associated Changes in Driving Near a New Light Rail Transit Line [Mineta May 2015 LRT Study], which is directly relevant to Mobility Plan 2035. LRT = Light Rail Transit.

**1. Preliminary Note: Air Pollution and Cars:**

Air pollution due to auto exhaust is has ceased to be a long term factor. By 2035, cars will be electric and they will not be adding toxins into the local air. Where and how the electrical energy is generated in 2035 is not germane to the issues in the Mineta May 2015 LRT Study or to Mobility Plan 2035.

Short term impacts of air pollution are, however, a factor for Bike Lanes and Walkability for the next 10 to 15 years. Bike Lanes and Walking are too often planned to be inside the zone of maximum air pollution, but those problems with Mobility Plan 2035 are not discussed in this analysis.

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This comment should be read in conjunction with other HELP and CCLA comments, e.g. HELP's and CCLA's Comment on Mobility Plan 2035 for Failure to Study CEQA Alternative of Virtual Presence submitted August 3, 2015. It has full description of Virtual Presence.

## **2. Who Rides the LRT?**

According to Mineta May 2015 LRT Study, distance from the LRT station is the mayor determinant. Mineta May 2015 LRT Study places it at .08 mile as they use 1 kilometer. Thus, this study verifies the significant drop off in ridership more than ½ mile away from the LRT station.<sup>2</sup>

Mineta May 2015 LRT Study fails to then address the issue that as more population is concentrated near to the LRT station, there will be more car congestion in this area since cars drive more than ½ mile. The increased traffic congestion does not arise directly from the subway, but from the increased population which the City brings to the ½ mile radius of the subway station. As a result, LRTs often have the oxymoronic result of increasing traffic congestion after the additional mixed-use projects have been constructed.

Mineta May 2015 LRT Study did not study this aspect of the problem. That may be due to the fact that the population density has yet to occur near the two lines which Mineta studied. It's been shown to be true in Hollywood which had a 30% increase in car ownership per household after the Hollywood Subway opened and the CRA/LA projects were constructed.

The City has failed to admit that more people living within a small area means more cars within that small area and that means worse traffic congestion not only in that small area but also in contiguous areas. Unlike some older eastern cities like Manhattan, no Los Angeles LRT can serve the transportation needs of its residents Angelenos need to cover vastly greater distances than New

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<sup>2</sup>Others have recently said that the radius is 1/4 mile. The data behind that close a radius seems to come primarily from real estate developers who want to maximize their profit per square inch [ppsi]. Thus, developer's land is worth more, theoretically, if the radius that people will walk drops from ½ mile to one 1/4 mile. Then, all the increased density which they planned to squeeze into ½ mile radius has to fit into an area with a much smaller radius. That increases the people per square inch and theoretically results in a greater ppsi.

Yorkers and the residents in the other areas which Mineta studied, e.g. Charlotte North Carolina, a single neighborhood in Salt Lake City, one rail line on Portland, Oregon's westside, Seattle, or Harris County, Texas. As the City of Los Angeles wrote back in 1915 in its Study of Street Traffic Conditions in the City of Los Angeles,<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles is not comparable to small urban areas and the infeasibility and the harm of LRT is disguised when the city bases its decisions on data from dissimilar areas.

### **3. Bus Riders Union:**

The major finding of Mineta May 2015 LRT Study is that LA has harmed bus riders by cutting back bus service. Although Mineta does not address the reason for reduction in bus services, it is locally understood that by diverting money from buses to subways forces Metro to reduce bus service. Thus, the Mineta study provides additional support for the Bus Riders Union that the Metro is making life harder on people who use buses.

When Los Angeles significantly reduces the number of buses, the City needs to study not only the hardship that places on bus riders, but also the impact it has on surface traffic. Does the reduction in the number of buses make surface traffic faster by removing the impediments of buses, or does it make surface traffic more congested as more people use private cars?

### **4. The Efficacy of LRT Cannot Be Assessed Without Assessing Virtual Presence**

Mineta May 2015 LRT Study is like studying traffic in 1920 Los Angeles, while omitting the automobile and only focusing on trolleys and horses. All the

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The City has already been provided copies of its 1915 Study of Street Traffic Conditions in the City of Los Angeles and there is no need for the public to continue to provide the City full copies. An excerpt of 7 pages is submitted herewith.

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conclusions based on the data may logically follow, but all the conclusions for Los Angeles would be 100% wrong.

The premise that the study should be on *cars and buses vs LRT* or *between LRT and buses* is fatally flawed. The impact of cars, buses, LRT cannot be understood without an in depth study of Virtual Presence. The City would be much wiser to dump a huge ton of cash into Mayor Garcetti's proposal for free WiFi throughout the City. That is where we need to spend our time, our money, and our research dollars.

We need an Internet Service that looks forward, and Los Angeles as the nation's second largest city is in a position to jump start the upgrading of our inadequate Internet systems.

Mathematically and financially we can construct the infrastructure for Virtual Presence within a short time frame. We can also become the world leader in this technology (if we don't repeat prior foolish error of shipping all the technology overseas). In contrast, we have known since 1915 that it is mathematically, topographically and financially impossible to construct a LRT that serves Los Angeles.

**5. No One Can Assess the Efficacy of Any Physical Transportation Mode Without Assessing the Transportation Impact of Virtual Presence.**

In its 1993 Telecommuting Study, the City found that traffic would be reduced by 30% with Telecommuting and that the need for new high rise construction would similarly decrease by 30%. The City under Mayor Riordan, however, was run by developers who made billions of dollars by constructing LRT and mixed-use projects.

It is two decades later, the Virtual Presence is far, far more advanced than it was in 1993. For purposes of this analysis, we shall stick with the 1993

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estimates of 30% reductions. The idea that we should be squandering billions of dollars to construct LRT, when Virtual Presence could handle a one-third of our physical travel needs is fiscal malpractice.

Also Virtual Presence provides unheard of opportunities for us to reach out and touch the world. By devoting our funds to constructing a few exorbitantly expensive rail lines, when we can be the world leaders in Virtual Presence will prove to be one of the world's largest myopic blunders to rival China's dismantling its naval fleet.

With 1/3 less traffic, the roads and freeways would not have bottlenecks. Buses would become much more efficient as they could travel a decent rate of speed. Instead, the miles per hour a bus travels is being reduced as the city foolishly adds pockets of density, e.g. Hollywood, Century City, DTLA

**6. The Mineta May 2015 LRT Study Highlights the Folly of Constructing More LRT Systems in Los Angeles**

As Mineta concedes, ridership drops off dramatically after ½ mile from a LRT station. Use of Virtual Presence has no geographical limits. We are spending billions of dollars for a transportation system which is close to useless for anyone who live than ½ mile from a station.

We have to remember that stations are spaced so far apart that many people who live within 100 feet of the subway and fixed-rail tracks are still more than ½ mile away from a station. The more stops one adds, the longer it takes the train to cover its route. We've know about these problems since the 1800's.

**7. LRT Promotes Extremely High Density in the Delusion That They Can Force Enough People to Live Within ½ Radius to Use the LRT**

LRT can pay for itself only when the City greatly increases the population

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density within a ½ mile radius of the LRT station. The cost of Virtual Presence, however, does not increase one cent when it is more than ½ mile, 25 miles, or 250 miles from any place in Los Angeles. There is zero reason to increase population density anywhere in order to pay for Virtual Presence.

While the City presents statistics out of context, even the allegedly density obsessed Millennials prefer less crowded places. <http://bit.ly/1q8khRF> Thursday, August 21, 2014, *Tracking America's 'Hidden Millennials'* By Joel Kotkin and Wendell Cox, Fox&Hounds Contributor.

More Millennials move to the Inland Empire than to DTLA. It is simply false that they are a breed unlike all prior American generations.

Overall, millennial growth in the urban core, with the exception of Downtown L.A., is very slow or even negative. It is also negligible in extra-expensive areas of the Westside and coastal Orange County; high rents and housing prices make these areas increasingly off-limits to all but the most well-heeled millennials. Policymakers, often obsessed with the urban core and its hipster denizens, need to recognize this varied millennial geography. Most of the next generation are not hanging out in cool Hollywood cafes but in malls in the outer periphery or in middle- and upper-middle-class, family-friendly enclaves such as Valencia or Irvine. *Tracking America's 'Hidden Millennials'* By Joel Kotkin

Hollywood's council district 13 shows that people simply move away or are chased out by the policies behind Mobility Plan 2035. <http://bit.ly/XjXmGk> Thursday, January 3, 2013, LA Weekly, Hollywood's Urban Cleansing, by Patrick Range McDonald

The fact that Los Angeles' densification plans are backfiring has already been established. Los Angeles child population has dropped by 303,000, or 15%, since 2000. 9/11/2014 FORBES, *Baby Boomtowns: The U.S. Cities Attracting The Most Families*, by Joel Kotkin

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The reality is that poor people cannot be forced to live in the Transit Oriented Districts. The reality is that wealthy people cannot be forced to ride subways, LRT and buses. The idea that Los Angeles is a rapidly growing City and so many people are so eager to live here that they will accept what ever is available is worse than a myth. It is another falsehood.

Following is a table showing Los Angeles Population Increases since 1890.

Year	Population	Increase
1890	50,395	
1900	102,479	52,084
1910	319,198	257,475
1920	576,673	257,475
1930	1,238,048	661,375
1940	1,504,277	266,229
1950	1,970,358	466,081
1960	2,479,015	508,657
1970	2,816,061	487,835
1980	2,966,850	150,789
1990	3,485,398	518,548
2000	3,694,820	209,422
2010	3,792,621	97,801

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One will note that between 2000 and 2010, the last decade for which the US Census has data, Los Angeles' population increased by the smallest amount since the decade between 1890 and 1900. Los Angeles is no longer a Destination City and there are no factors to anticipate that its population will increase in the next few decades. *The Generational Future of Los Angeles: Projections to 2030 and Comparisons to Recent Decades*, Sol Price School of Public Policy, March 2013

One cannot ignore the correlation of the use of so-called Smart Planing, TOD's, high-density mixed-use projects and the opening of new subways and LRT with the abrupt drop off in population increase.

When one then compares where the population is shrinking, one sees that it is in those census tracks nearest to the TODs with their mixed-use projects. As Joel Kotkin has demonstrated, the most serious loss is in the most vital age range, that is, young families. The question arises: For whom are we building billions of dollars os subways and LRT and these dense mixed-use projects, when Los Angeles is most likely to loose population in the next few decades?

**Answer:** International construction companies which construct these horrendously expensive mass transit projects and mega-construction companies and real estate land speculators. It is a simple – just follow the money. In 1915, Los Angeles own civil engineers warned us about the greed of these landowners and how their avarice would harm everyone else. *1915 Study of Traffic Conditions, page 38*

#### **8. Virtual Presence Reduces Air Pollution:**

Virtual Presence gives an immediate reduction in air pollution due to the dramatic drop in car usage (although this benefit will be less important as cars transition to being electric.)

#### **9. Virtual Presence Gives Time, While LRT Takes Time:**

Virtual Presence adds time to the day. LRT transit is time consuming and time is money. The more people use Virtual Presence, the less time they have to spend traveling to another location.

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## **10. Virtual Presence Will Change Shopping.**

With the addition of Virtual Stores, which will make the present day on-line shopping look quaint, wholesalers will be able to deliver directly to people's homes. These Virtual Stores will be one of the reasons that people will need to drive less. Rather than 30 people driving to Ralphs, Ralphs will send out one electric truck to bring the items to the homes. We already have systems where refrigerators can order the food from the stores. The Virtual Stores can be located in France, Tokyo, London, etc. Try to take a subway to London.

## **11. Larger Homes**

With Virtual Presence will come the demand for larger homes. Presently, Los Angeles is destroying its residential neighborhoods, especially in the Basin, in order to add thousands of crammed apartments and condos. When VP allows people to spend more time at home, the natural American instinct for larger homes with yards will become greatly re-enforced. The TODs on which the City has squandered billions of dollars will be shunned by all except the most poor.

Silicon Beach type people do not move into decaying slums, which is the future which this present administration is bringing Angelenos. There will be no huge stock of quaint 19<sup>th</sup> Century Brownstones to rehabilitate.

## **12. Summary:**

When one looks at the factors which the Mineta May 2015 LRT Study evaluates, one sees that LRTs are the wave of past.

This latest Mineta LRT Study confirms that we need to re-direct our energies towards 21st Century technology and stop wasting hundreds of billions of dollars on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century technology.

### **13. CEQA Conclusion:**

Because Mobility Plan 2035 does not study a Virtual Presence Alternative, the DEIR and the FEIR are based on fatally flawed data, and as a result, the entire Mobility Plan 2035 is invalidated.

The DEIR and then the FEIR had a duty to study Virtual Presence. We know the City refused to consider Virtual Presence because it will deprive the billionaire real estate developers and the international construction companies who make hundreds of billions of dollars with subway, above-ground rail lines, subway cars, etc. of twenty to thirty years of grandiose profits, while tying Los Angeles to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The entire Mobility Plan 2035 needs to be re-done based on accurate data, realistic population projects, the health impacts of Bike Lanes on children, and the dramatic changes which Virtual Reality is bringing to transportation.

The significance of the error which Los Angeles is in the midst of making needs emphasis.

Also Virtual Presence provides unheard of opportunities for us to reach out and touch the world. By devoting our funds to constructing a few exorbitantly expensive rail lines, when L.A. can be the world leader in Virtual Presence will prove to be one of the world's largest myopic blunders to rival China's dismantling its naval fleet.