

Livable Places Update

March 2004

HOV lane
on Hwy 1

Emerging Trends in Community
Planning and Design

Keys To A Successful Transit System:

One of the most popular speakers at the last two Smart Growth Conferences organized by the Local Government Commission was Alan Hoffman with the Mission Group in San Diego and his outstanding presentation about "what really improves transit ridership."

Hoffman's research has led to some common sense conclusions; among them is the fact that time matters. Travelers are interested in "what will get me there the fastest" and avoiding congestion, whether it's a train, a bus, or a car. Hoffman went on to say that a transit system becomes more useful and desirable as it saves more time compared to trips in the car. However, the number of destinations that are connected by transit will influence ridership as well — the more the better, of course.

"Transit is about pedestrians," Hoffman observes. Riders need to exit at their destination rather than being forced to cross a freeway, arterial or other expansive space in order to reach their destinations.

The waiting experience also has a major influence on whether people choose transit. The wait should be pleasant, out of the weather, safe — and not too long. Riders, he says, should be treated well.

The interior designs of the vehicle influences whether or not a rider will return — sleek and modern is desirable, whether it's a bus or a train. Level boarding is a very appealing amenity.

Hoffman believes that fixed track rail is a good idea only if you are serving a high-density area. For lower densities, it's better to try a dedicated bus line that controls traffic lights — express buses can provide very rapid service.

Transfers must be made easy — riders should be able to get off one bus and climb on another at the same spot. Local, express and nonstop buses should all come together at a single station.

Hoffman sums it up, "If you haven't made transit a convenient means of travel between key regional centers and destinations, don't expect transit to shape urban growth as the auto will remain the defining transportation mode."

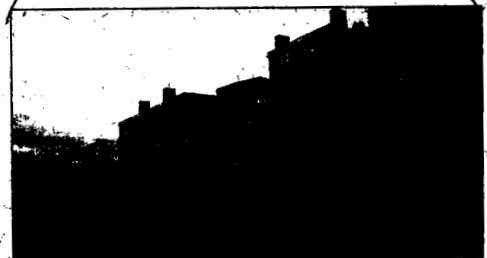
For an audio version of Hoffman's presentation, contact Dave Defanti the LGC office, (916) 448-1198, ext. 330.

Transit Oriented Development Works: The *LA Times* has quoted a study that predicts that by 2020, Southern California drivers will spend at least half their driving time making exactly as much forward progress as they would sitting on the living room sofa. What is to be done? The answer may surprise you — it's putting development around transit.

A study to determine whether transit-oriented development can reduce use of the auto was recently released by the EPA. The researchers concluded that on average, residents living in transit oriented development are five times as likely to commute on transit as workers in the surrounding city. More importantly, researchers found that the impact of TOD in California extends beyond transportation by providing much needed multifamily and affordable housing options.

The authors write, "Perhaps what local policy-makers can best do to promote transit riding among station area residents is to zone for sufficient housing supplies that match the taste preferences and earning levels of households wanting to live near stations." The greatest ridership pay-off comes from intensifying station area housing.

Demographic researcher, Dowell Myers of USC has estimated that 30% to 50% of the demand for new housing in the Southland will be for smaller residences in dense, walkable communities. Thus, the expected demand for compact development near transit is expected to increase. To obtain a copy of this report, call the EPA at 800-490-9189 and ask for publications no. EPA 213-R-04-001.



Holly Street Village, Pasadena provides housing over rail.

Builders are already beginning to produce this housing. Downtown Pasadena has 2,000 housing units either just built or under construction along and near the new Gold Line