

## Letters to The Times

A40 SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1992 \* \*

### Los Angeles' Transit Needs

■ Your article "County Moves to Unclog 1,000 Miles of Roads" (Nov. 16) highlights the advent of L.A.'s new Congestion Management Program (CMP). This program is an exciting new effort, built on significant local cooperation, to address our county's mobility challenges through a holistic county wide planning process.

As you indicated, the CMP was part of the Proposition 111 increase in transportation funding, approved by the voters in 1990. It is important to recognize the efforts of the CMP's architect, Assemblyman Richard Katz, who successfully forged a statewide consensus of government, business and environmental leaders in developing this innovative approach to transportation solutions.

The innovations that have resulted require California's urban areas to build their transportation systems, focusing on flexibly funding the best mix of highway, rail, and bus improvements, as well as focusing on coordination of transportation, land use, and air-quality decisions. These concepts have been widely endorsed by planners, but never before implemented, and this visionary approach is being hailed as a national model.

BRADFORD W. McALLESTER  
Administrator  
Congestion Management Program  
LACTC

■ In response to Peter H. King's column ("Metrolink to L.A.: All Aboard Please" Nov. 11):

California's population has grown 25% over the past 10 years. The number of drivers has increased by 35% and the number of vehicle miles traveled has increased by 60%.

These numbers underscore the need to develop a comprehensive regional transportation system that includes a combination of solutions. Metro Rail (subway and light rail), Metrolink (commute rail), buses, highways, car-pool lanes, bikeways and telecommuting are some of the available options that combined with land-use alternatives will help make Los Angeles a more livable place.

The Los Angeles County Transportation

#### How to Write Us

The Times welcomes expressions of all views. Letters should be brief and are subject to condensation. They must include signature, valid mailing address and telephone number. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Because of the volume of mail received, unpublished letters cannot be acknowledged. Fax letters to (213) 237-7679 or send to:

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Commission (LACTC) is in the process of building that system, which already is offering new transportation alternatives to commuters, but, most importantly, it is the transportation system that will help Los Angeles enter the new century.

Metrolink ridership has surpassed transportation planners' estimates for the first months of service. Planners forecasted 2,000 daily riders for the start-up phase of Metrolink. The average ridership in the first three weeks of revenue service was 3,300 per day. Ridership will continue to increase once new stations are added to the system and the Metro Red Line subway opens, providing easy connections to downtown destinations. By 1995 when the system will have 60 stations open and nine routes, the ridership is estimated to increase to 23,300 a day.

Those still in doubt of Metrolink's cost savings compared to solo commuting should be aware of recent estimates made by the American Automobile Assn. indicating that riding Metrolink is cheaper than driving to work. A round trip from Moorpark to Union Station in downtown Los Angeles costs \$8 to Metrolink's monthly pass users. The association's statistics show that a driver pays \$9.12 in operating costs and \$29.14 in car ownership expenses—a total of \$38.26—for the same trip.

We have listened to suggestions made by patrons regarding Metrolink prices, and have reviewed the zone structure to more accurately reflect the number of miles traveled by passengers.

NEIL PETERSON  
Executive Director  
LACTC

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## Metrolink and Public Transit

■ Staff writer Nora Zamichow did well in raising safety questions concerning the Metrolink train accident (Nov. 29). The Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) and the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) have been promoting train safety programs for schoolchildren and adults long before the opening of the Metro Blue Line and Metrolink.

Federal Railroad Administration statistics indicate that the cause of almost all train accidents in the U.S. has been due to motorists and pedestrians being too impatient to wait for trains to cross railroad intersections. As for the Metro Blue Line and Metrolink, it takes approximately 39 seconds for these trains to cross an intersection. We are actively trying to educate the public of this fact. Train commuters' safety is on track; the real challenge is for the media to join the LACTC and the SCRRA in heightening public awareness of each citizen's role in train safety!

**ART GOMEZ**  
Public Affairs Manager  
Metrolink

■ The extensive commuter rail systems in Eastern cities do not have at-grade crossings, except in remote areas. Frequent service, high-speed trains, and at-grade crossings are an unsafe combination. The Los Angeles County Transportation Commission knows this, but in the commission's zeal to justify its own existence and tax burden, the LACTC has rushed (with media endorsement) to place an under-engineered commuter rail system before the public. The public would benefit enormously if the commission's rail plan can be subjected to a little more science, a little less cheerleading, and a lot less politics.

**JAMES E. MOORE II**  
Assistant Professor of Urban and Regional Planning and Civil Engineering, USC

■ Your Perspectives on Public Transit (Commentary, Nov. 27), began with UCLA's Richard Weinstein advising that over the next 30 years Southern California will spend an average of "\$7 billion a year" on transportation initiatives that may be "shortchanging our future." To buttress Weinstein's academic rambling, Ryan Snyder and Antonio Villaraigosa offered

### Gridlock Solution

■ Bill Clinton, as President trying to get along with Congress, ain't gonna be any Frank Sinatra; he's gonna do it their way.

**PETER HORTON**  
Huntington Beach

that subsidizing the commuting habits of "upper-middle-income train riders" may be "a recipe for disaster." Jim Sims, leaving no public-funding stone unturned, detailed meaningless statistics promoting his self-interest in Commuter Transportation Services.

The four writers withheld demonstrable evidence that Southern California traffic congestion will only be solved by constructing an adequate highway system.

Traffic congestion did not suddenly appear. From 1968 to 1988, the population increased by 20% while the vehicle miles traveled increased almost 100%. Highways were expanded by just 5% and highway capital investment (adjusted for inflation) actually decreased by 18%.

The cost to build and operate enough rail capacity to overcome traffic congestion could exceed the total assessed value of all Southern California property. Certainly freeways require more real estate than rail roadbeds, but space is available at an affordable price.

Will new freeways be immediately filled to capacity? No: With the number of registered vehicles growing much faster than the population, it took 20 years for traffic congestion to get to where it is today. Now that almost everyone has an automobile, automobile growth will follow population growth (we can only drive one at a time), and most importantly, 1992 automobile engines are as much as 90% cleaner burning than 1968 models. Cleaner burning automobile engines, paid for with private dollars, are and will continue to be responsible for air quality improvement.

**WAYNE KING**  
Orange

■ The Snyder/Villaraigosa article is wildly misleading. Without trunk-line rail service, a "first-class bus system" is an oxymoron. Long bus routes (longer than five miles) cannot maintain schedules; they are inherently slower than automobile traffic, more costly per passenger-mile than equivalent rail service.

Adding to the 2,500 RTD bus fleet would not add appreciably to aggregate patronage; subsidies would go through the roof. If you like subsidies at the \$400-million level, you'll love the impact of their proposal.

The gross inadequacies of L.A.'s bus-only transportation system helped to produce the April riots. The poor of Los Angeles already have a "first-class bus system"; it does not serve them well.

The \$400 million we pay in bus subsidies is negligible compared to automobile subsidies. We pay these through increased retail prices, property and sales taxes and decreased paychecks. The subsidy for so-called "free" parking alone in Los Angeles probably exceeds \$10 billion per year. In short, the Los Angeles transportation "system" is the worst of all possible choices. The Snyder/Villaraigosa proposal would make it even worse.

**STANLEY HART**, Chairman  
Transportation Committee  
Angeles Chapter, Sierra Club

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