
Commentary

Development Along Rail Lines

In 1980 and 1990, the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission sold local sales tax propositions to the electorate by promising that a new rail system would decongest Los Angeles roads. Ohland is just repeating this old lie. In truth, fewer than 5% of Los Angeles work trips occur on transit, and the great majority of these trips occur on buses. Rail's share of travel in Los Angeles is tiny, and neither the Gold Line nor transit-oriented development will make this drop in the bucket appreciably larger. L.A. transit ridership was close to 500 million annual boardings in 1985.

After more than 15 years of population growth and \$7.5 billion in rail expenditures, L.A. transit ridership has been reduced to a level near 400 million annual boardings. Expensive rail systems serve few, reduce bus service and make congestion worse, not better.

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LETTERS TO THE TIMES

L.A.'s Rail Systems Are on the Right Track

The Aug. 10 letter from professor James E. Moore II is very funny: "Expensive rail systems serve few, reduce bus service and make congestion worse, not better." This from a man who claimed (in the 1990s) that the Blue Line wouldn't work and wouldn't have many riders. The Blue Line is one of the busiest light-rail lines in the U.S., with about 65,000 weekday riders. The Red Line between North Hollywood and Union Station takes 30 minutes any time of day or night, rain or shine, and it carries about 145,000 riders each weekday. And the Metro Rapid bus line from Universal City station to Warner Center is heavily used and makes the trip to Warner Center in about 40 minutes. So there is expanded bus service and improved times, with higher ridership. Wrong again, Mr. Moore.

Bob Saunders
North Hollywood

Richard Shilling (letter, Aug. 10) mocks Gloria Ohland ("It's Time for L.A. to Grow Up," Opinion, Aug. 4) for saying that if development occurred along transit lines, residents wouldn't have to own cars. He writes, "She surely can't live in Los Angeles. Does anyone believe this stuff?"

When my wife and I moved to Claremont, we sold her car and I walked to the train station for my commute to downtown L.A. We did that for over two years, with no complaints, except that our gas bill was lower, we got rid of a car payment and I was in a good mood when I got home after a long day at work, because I could relax on the train on the way home. If there had been mass-density housing near the station, more people would have had access to the train.

Five years ago we moved to Fullerton, and we told our real estate agent that we would like a house

within one mile of the train station. His response was, "Fullerton has a train station?"

Others claim that the trains have had no impact on traffic. Well, from my selfish point of view, they have had a great impact—I'm not in traffic anymore. Look at a map of Southern California and note the regions served by Metrolink and the MTA. Not even 10% of the L.A. area. If the L.A. area had trains serving even 25% of it, there would be an impact on freeway traffic I'm sure. And doesn't it make sense to serve mass population centers and points of interest (apartment blocks, stadiums, malls, airports, museums)? This isn't rocket science.

Hmm, am I going to take the train to next week's Dodger game or to LACMA? Without a train, I don't think so.

Bruce Konschuh
Fullerton