

Solutions to Gridlock Depend on Which Mistress You Want to Serve

LA Traffic
By Bill Pope

(Back story: The LA Business Journal reported recently on the launching of a non-profit group called Building LA's Future to put an end to the City's traffic gridlock. Click [here](#) for the LABJ story, "Group Gears Up For Road Battles". Bill Pope responds to that report and offers some thoughts of his own on the gridlock issue.)

It appears that developers and their attorneys (e.g., Lowe Enterprises, and Latham and Watkins) are forming another lobbying group and political action committee ("Building L.A.'s Future") to "rally the business community" to "neutralize the impact homeowners associations and environmental advocates have on road and rail projects", which really means, to force existing L.A. residents, homeowners associations and environmentalist to:

1. accept more road and rail lines running through their residential neighborhoods,
2. accept the use of their residential streets as commuter arterials, and
3. accept the use of their residential streets as parking lots for business usage

and to force small business owner, who are L.A.'s largest employers, to:

1. accept loss of street-front parking for their customers, and
2. accept the associated loss of revenue and possible loss of their small businesses

so developers can continue building for Big Business owners.

Although the article, "[Group Gears Up For Road Battles](#)"; ALEXA HYLAND - 6/9/2008 does not use those exact words, that, in my opinion, is exactly what is happening.

Developers want to continue "business as usual" in L.A. in spite of our already-overtaxed transportation, water, sewage and power infrastructure, in spite of dwindling oil supply and oil-company-gauging gasoline prices, and in spite of the adverse impact increased population growth and energy use has on climate changes, which is now causing droughts and wildfires in the West and floods in the Central U.S., which in turn will increase food and insurance costs.

My guess is that Building L.A.'s Future is interested in "Ending Gridlock in Los Angeles" only because gridlock limits their ability to keep building in Los Angeles.

If they really wanted to find sustainable solutions, they would be encouraging the business community to switch from a Centralized Business Model, where employees must commute, often for hours, to a company's centralized location, to the Distributed Business Model, where work is tele-commuted to workers via secure, high-speed, data-audio-video Virtual Private Networks. These have been used by the more progressive companies for years.

Imagine sitting in front of a large screen monitor in your home-office, through which you instantly communicate, via live-video, with your manager and co-workers. Think of the productivity increase of not having to track down a co-worker or manager to ask an opinion or give a report. Think of the extra hours employees would spend working toward company objectives, rather than just working through traffic toward the company's building. Think of the reduction in employee burn-out and its subsequent turnover and replacement costs.

Yes, an organization to rally the business community is needed today, but it needs to rally information-based companies to become serious about TeleCommunting. A central county-wide or region-wide organization is needed to assist companies, who don't trust their employees to work at home, to find office space in the buildings owned by other companies who are also willing to move to the Distributed Business Model.

So instead of have an IBM building in downtown L.A., an MGM building in Santa Monica, and a Bank of American building in Glendale, which forces cross-town commutes on employees, employees could simply commute to an office building nearest their homes which would host a fix of each company's employees, each on their company's private TeleCommunting network. My guess is that this could reduce traffic, congestion, air pollution, oil consumption, gasoline prices (well, maybe), and L.A.'s carbon footprint from such by at least 25%.

This would be a much larger return than would be achieved by Metro's proposed \$152.5 Billion Long Range Plan, which pronoses to build 160 more miles of carpool lanes and add 32 more miles of light rail. but would only reduce

projected 2030 vehicle trips and Greenhouse Gas Emissions by less than 1%. \$152.5 Billion equates to \$14,000 in taxes over the next 25 years from each of the projected 2030 12.5 million L.A. County residents, or \$28,000 per commuter (assuming 50% of residents commute) or \$56,000 per Telecommuter (assuming 50% of commuters could do so). That's enough to build, furnish and cover expenses of new telecommuting offices near where workers live. But new offices are not needed, they already exist. All that is needed is a county or regional agency to help companies find and coordinate the relocation of employees to office space near their homes. The migration from vehicle commuting to telecommuting will reduce gridlock and free up transportation infrastructure for future growth and construction far more than continuing "business as usual".

It is said that only a fool continues doing the same thing expecting different results. Let the wise take heed. (*Bill Pope is a community activist and serves on Councilman Rosendahl's Transportation Empowerment Committee. He lives on the Westside.*) ■

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