

Transportation Planning in the City of Los Angeles Findings and Recommendations

prepared for
THE NORTHWEST SAN PEDRO NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

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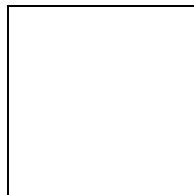


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traffic and other transportation challenges are on the minds of many San Pedrans right now, as they are on many Angelenos throughout the city. The Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council engaged the services of a CORO Fellow to prepare a report to assist them and other entities in dealing with this challenge.

The findings and recommendations made herein are a result of research into best practices of other cities, current policies and procedures used by various Los Angeles departments, traffic studies conducted on other projects, traditional research into non-traditional models of planning/emerging new models, and conversations with city transportation engineers, planners, councilmember offices staff, and neighborhood council members throughout the city of Los Angeles.

For many, the over arching question is: “How did we get to this point”. The answer is threefold:

1. Lack of citywide, concerted, long-term planning
2. Lack of a citywide, central agency responsible for transportation planning
3. Disconnect between government’s old and new models of urban planning: Planning around the personal vehicle (car culture) and Transit Oriented Districts/the New Urbanism

Transportation Planning in Los Angeles is fragmented and primarily reactive rather than proactive. In addition to the Department of Transportation and the Department of Planning, this report identifies 9 entities which play a role in transportation planning in Los Angeles; yet there is no overall transportation plan. The policies, as manifested in official documents like the city charter, general plans, development guidelines, traffic procedures and others, are out of date and/or out of touch with reality. Furthermore they lack a built-in mechanism for accommodating new ways of thinking and therefore infrequently change

In addition to examining the current state of transportation planning and the roles of the various entities, the report makes the following recommendations:

1. Create Planning Teams

For large/significant developments, a Planning Team should be involved in all phases, from the initial assessment study to the final sign off on the project for construction. The Planning Team should include one individual representing each of the following agencies/groups: Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), Department of City Planning, staff member from the councilmember’s office within which the project lies, and a representative from the Neighborhood Council in the project area

2. Draft Traffic Studies should be sent to Neighborhood Councils for Comment

Currently, the traffic study conducted by each developer is only sent to DOT for revision and approval. There is no opportunity for the public to weigh in on the findings of the traffic study before they are approved by the DOT. The first version should be treated as a draft and not as final copy of the document, much like the process of the Environmental Impact Review (EIR).

3. Conduct Education Series for Neighborhood Councils from City Departments

Many individuals working in departments relevant to development (i.e., DOT, Planning, Building and Safety, Public Works) view the neighborhood councils as generally uninformed and therefore only concerned with their neighborhood needs. An educational forum series should be put on by the various departments of Los Angeles to increase the knowledge of Neighborhood Council members about the layers of complexity in development.

4. Conduct a Thorough Review and Revamping of the Traffic Study Manual's Policies and Procedures

The current policies and procedures for conducting traffic studies are inconsistent and vague. They should be revamped and made specific to Los Angeles.

5. Create A Clearinghouse for all Development Projects in the City

The current trend whereby developers convert dilapidated buildings to bypass DOT and Planning and go strictly to regulatory agencies like the Dept. of Building & Safety points out the need for inter-agency collaboration. A clearinghouse should be created to house the documentation of *all* development projects in the city.

6. Mass Transit and Urban Planning Collaborative Project: Where Multi-Modal, Mass Transit Systems (MMMTS) Meets Urban (Un)Planning

Many major metropolitan cities around the world are steps ahead of Los Angeles in urban transportation and city planning. It is time that serious attention is placed on multi-modal transportation and urban city planning globally to determine which models are the most appropriate for Los Angeles. A real Mass Transit Plan should be created.

Introduction

Traffic and other transportation challenges are on the minds of many San Pedrans right now, as they are on many Angelenos throughout the city. There is a rapid learning curve taking place in San Pedro, whose impetus, though not sole focus, is the Ponte Vista Project, a proposed new development of 2300 condominiums on Western Ave. As a result this proposal, an entire community became aware of how quickly, and almost haphazardly, the landscape of their community can change. As a result of the contention the development created in the community, Councilwoman Janice Hahn appointed a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) to advise her on how the land in question should be utilized. The proposed development sparked community interest in learning more about transportation planning.

The premise of many individuals in the San Pedro community is that something is amiss in Los Angeles with respect to transportation planning. There is much truth to this speculation. Transportation planning, the combination of planning for growth and transportation for cities, has become increasingly difficult for citizens to clearly identify and understand. The city is quickly trying to catch-up to the level of development taking place in already heavily populated areas with more proactive planning. The key in this catch-up game lies in efforts to plan more comprehensively.

The findings and recommendations made herein are a result of research into best practices of other cities, current policies and procedures used by various Los Angeles departments, traffic studies conducted on other projects, traditional research into non-traditional models of planning/emerging new models and many conversations with city transportation engineers, planners, councilmember offices staff, and neighborhood council members throughout the city of Los Angeles.

The purpose of the findings and recommendations is threefold: to inform the citizenry of the ways in which transportation planning occurs, to recommend changes to address the current challenges, and to discuss possible roles for the neighborhood councils in this process.

The Overarching City Challenges

Traffic gets worse in Los Angeles everyday while development continues to increase. This leaves many Angelenos wondering what is going on. Articles on traffic by Steve Lopez (LA Times) and numerous traffic blogs document the uproar traffic creates. For many, the overarching question is: “How did we get to this point”. The answer is threefold:

1. Lack of citywide, concerted, long-term planning
2. Lack of a citywide, central agency responsible for transportation planning
3. Disconnect between government’s old and new models of urban planning: Planning around the personal vehicle (car culture) and Transit Oriented Districts/the New Urbanism

Lack of citywide, concerted, long-term planning

The idea that Los Angeles has been properly planning its development does not ring true to many citizens in San Pedro and some of the recent findings, or lack thereof, support this claim. The city has been largely reacting to development more than planning proactively for it. This is in large part due to the ambiguity of planning roles and responsibilities of the two key departments: The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Planning Department. This is not to say that the two departments have not adhered to their respective policies, rather those policies do not adequately address the need for proactive development. The policies, as manifested in official documents like the city charter, general plans, development guidelines, traffic procedures and others, are out of date and/or out of touch with reality. Furthermore they lack a built-in mechanism for accommodating new ways of thinking and therefore infrequently change.

Lack of a citywide, central agency responsible for transportation planning

The lack of a single agency that simultaneously establishes the greater transportation agenda for the city, along with a blueprint for its accomplishment, and acts as the central coordinator, is detrimental to a city the size of Los Angeles. The agencies today meet when one of them calls for a meeting. There is not a separate and distinct institution that conducts this kind of collaborative process in an ongoing manner. The current model of functioning, which is ultimately somewhat haphazard, is not conducive to good proactive planning.

Disconnect between government’s old and new models of urban planning

Urban sprawl, a phrase used to characterize Los Angeles, is more than a cliché. Urban sprawl is the result of a city growing around the automobile. In the post World War II era, suburban neighborhoods emerged on the outskirts of major metropolitan areas. As a result of the distance between suburban neighborhoods and downtown city areas, the automobile reached new heights of importance. The car culture of Los Angeles was born. The suburban model and subsequent importance of the vehicle reflects older models of planning. The newer models of today, including the New Urbanism, which is conceptually synonymous with Transit Oriented Districts (TOD), attempt to replace older (suburban) models of planning.

Contrary to many residents' belief, this newer model is not invariably in conflict with the older model. There is a perceived notion that TOD or the New Urbanism threatens good old suburban neighborhoods, but in fact, if planned correctly and ethically, TOD protects suburbia. The higher density, mixed-used development characterizing TOD are intentionally planned for major streets where multi-modal transit is also available; they are not intended for single-family home neighborhoods. The underlying premise of increased population propelling TOD conjures real fears for residents of long established neighborhoods. The real fear underpinning arguments is a battle for space with a general increase in population, even if the newcomers are not physically settling in established neighborhoods and instead reside in TODs; the newcomers nevertheless require full integration into society and consequently basic services like water and power. The idea of sharing already scarce resources due to an increase in population makes many residents of single-family neighborhoods nervous. The missing piece here, however, lies in the lack of knowledge by the residents that the city is mandated by the state to adequately prepare for future populations, future growth.¹ The city cannot simply stop development because its residents feel cramped: the city is legally bound to adopt plans in preparation for a greater upsurge in population and demand for housing. Although the idea that development should come to a halt is nice to many, it is simply infeasible and therefore unrealistic. If the city builds it they will come, but if the city doesn't build it, they will come anyway. The question becomes: has the city appropriately prepared for the new generation.

Who Sets the Agenda for Transportation Planning?

For the city of Los Angeles, the agenda is primarily set by two agencies: the Department of City Planning and the Department of Transportation. Both are to officially plan for the city's transportation development.

The Dept. of City Planning has the responsibility of planning for the entire city, one community plan at a time. A total of 35 community plans together cover the entire city of Los Angeles. Each community plan is a mini-general plan specifically for the area, but which must also adhere to the policies in the citywide general plan. Planning decides how the city divides into areas designated for different land uses and to do so it divvies up the city into various zones. These zones, e.g. industrial, commercial and residential, dictate how the city will grow and develop. To aid the city in this process the Dept. of City Planning maintains a general plan for the city with multiple elements, one of which is the mobility (transportation) element. The mobility section of the general plan addresses the transportation issues of development proactively. The transportation element of the general plan was last updated in 1997; it is now again being updated.

The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) is also responsible for the transportation planning of the city. As such, one of their offices, the Office of Transportation Development, is charged with this task. Of this office's three bureaus, two are tasked with planning, the Bureau of Planning and Land Use and the Bureau of Capital Programming (the third, is the Bureau of Transit Services).

¹ California State Law (Government Code Section 65300)

Who Else Plays a Role in Transportation Planning?

Although the Department of Transportation is the lead agency and sets the agenda, many other agencies have a role and influence. A number of these other players legally act as the final authority on development projects in specific circumstances. Therefore, it should *not* be assumed that the agenda setters are the ultimate authority, which is why it is critical to understand the role of the many other players. At a glance, these agencies are as follow:

- Councilmember Offices
 - Involved with specific projects within their districts
- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
 - Produce urban planning analyses including demographic shifts, population increase projections, traffic congestion projections
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)
 - They arguably are also one of the agenda setters for the city of Los Angeles in terms of initiating projects that benefit the city of LA as well as providing funds for projects
- Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
 - Does transportation planning specific to areas of economic revitalization; their goal, however, is not transportation or traffic congestion mitigation
- Port of Los Angeles
 - They are currently undertaking efforts to create a plan for the harbor communities of San Pedro and Wilmington
- Department of Building & Safety
 - They are the final authority to “by right” projects, which are projects that are within existing zoning codes and therefore do not need to go through the Planning Department,
 - Because they are the final authority, the traffic created by the developments they approve is within their responsibility; it’s contestable if the traffic generated by projects they approve is enough to cause concern, as they are by right, but it is nevertheless important to be knowledgeable of their role
- Department of Public Works (DPW)/Bureau of Engineers
 - The Bureau of Engineering is a player in terms of creating alternate modes of transportation, not by approving projects in the manner done by the Dept. of Bldg. & Safety
 - Many of the street widening projects and bike lanes/bikeways projects are initiated by the Bureau of Engineering and Street Services in Public Works
- The California Department of Transportation (CalTrans)
 - CalTrans is the state agency charged with creating mobility across the state
 - The freeways and portions of Western Avenue and Gaffey Street are under the jurisdiction of CalTrans
- The Mayor’s Office of Transportation
 - The Mayor has staff who advise him about transportation initiatives he should/should not support and/or carry out
 - The Mayor sits on the MTA Board and pushes projects through the MTA as a

member

What is the Transportation Agenda or Does It Exist?

Currently there is no citywide, long range and comprehensive “Los Angeles Plan” or “Master Agenda” to which either the agenda setters or the additional players adhere or work from. There is indeed a general plan that some can argue plays the role of “Master Agenda”, but the general plan does not equate to a vision for the city:. Here in Los Angeles, where the elements (i.e. air quality element, housing element, transportation element, etc.) that comprise the general plan are not consistently updated, the vision is not only questionable in practical terms, but the greater philosophical question about what a “vision” for a city like Los Angeles should look like appears to be unanswered. A real “vision” means having a clear direction as to whether Los Angeles will continue to be a car-culture city or a multi-modal, perhaps even a more green and conscious city. In this sense, vision is lacking. Instead, many of the agencies and/or entities have their own mini-transportation planning agendas in mind resulting in a piecemeal approach.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is charged by the government to do long range regional planning on a continuous basis. SCAG’s uniqueness lies in its independence from any other LA based agency. This independence, however, results in a disconnect with various LA city departments and other agencies, which then results in a lack of overall influence. On the other hand, CalTrans will only fund projects listed by SCAG.

The closest there is to a comprehensive plan for the harbor area, is the one being developed by the Port of LA. Different from SCAG’s more research-oriented role, the Port of LA has a need for a long range harbor plan with a vision. In the past, the Port shied away from spearheading any long range planning efforts for fear of encountering a community backlash. This is unfortunate, as their vision and resources can and should be harnessed to enhance mobility especially in the harbor, and they could become a real community partner in the process.

In 2006, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa asked DOT to develop a comprehensive 25+ year transportation plan. The need for a long range transportation plan was discussed in Controller Laura Chick’s organizational audit of the DOT (released May 13, 2007). The new General Manager of DOT, Gloria Jeff, is using Controller Chick’s audit as a blueprint from which to begin drafting the “Long Range Plan”. Its relationship to the Port’s plan is unclear. The mayor’s vision is that of increased density with multi-level housing and multi-modal transportation options on major city corridors that can adequately support the two elements. This idea is known as Transit Oriented Districts (TOD).

The “Big Picture” Challenge Unpacked: DOT and the Planning Department

Los Angeles Department of Transportation

➤ **DOT’s Planning Role**

DOT is the agency in the City that is primarily responsible for transportation planning. In the past, they have primarily *reacted* to development projects rather than proactively *planning* for the future. This is reflected in many statements by DOT personnel as well

as by the absence of a document outlining their goals for the city's long range planning. The Transportation Planning Bureau's two primary roles are: 1) working with the Planning Department to create/update the transportation element of the general plan and, 2) when a project is proposed, to decide whether that project will require a traffic study. If the developer is required to prepare a traffic study, DOT reviews and certifies the final traffic study.

When developers request a zone change and/or propose a project greater in size and scope than that already determined for an area, the Planning Dept requests DOT to conduct an Initial Assessment to determine if a full traffic study is needed.

DOT plays a more proactive role in developing and revising the transportation element of the City's general plan², Other than the transportation element of the General Plan DOT does not have a long-term transportation plan.

➤ **Policy Thresholds to Minimize Volume of Work**

LADOT has established criteria which they use in the Initial Assessment Review to determine which projects will require a full traffic study.. This process minimizes the volume of their work. It should be noted, however, that virtually all departments establish thresholds for efficiency, and while not all thresholds are irrelevant, they should be viewed with healthy skepticism. Specific thresholds contained in the Traffic Study Policies and Procedures Handbook include requiring a traffic study if a project generates more than 43 p.m. peak hour trip ends, 500 or more daily trips and/or if the Level Of Service (LOS) at nearby intersections is already at a grade of C, D or F.³

- According to personal accounts by individuals from the LADOT, other than the 43 trip ends, there is little consistency when actually determining which criteria is called upon to conclude if a thorough traffic study is called for. The criteria are listed on page two of the policies and procedures manual, but it is questionable whether they are strictly followed.
- Hearsay also has it that individuals reviewing projects follow customs that are not contained in the policies and procedures handbook: one example is that if the project is over 10 units, it is considered "significant" and therefore requires a traffic study. However, this criterion is not outlined in the policies and procedures manual. The criteria for determining what criteria are used and why is unclear.

➤ **Procedures Lacking Consistency**

Overall there is a lack of general consistency with many procedures including the following:

- *When to use an average rate and when to use a formula to determine the trip*

² The transportation element is available at <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/INDEX.HTM>.

³ Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) Traffic Study Policies and Procedures 03/2002

generation numbers. This is only relevant once the need for a traffic study is established, since the formula and average rate are only applied once it is determined that a full traffic study is indeed required.

- *What* is considered a “high rise” development across the board and when there are exceptions needs to be clarified
- *When* to use rates for a high rise vs. a condo or townhome development

➤ **Problematic Formulas and Numbers**

- Trip Generation Formulas. The formulas used to determine the “trip generation numbers” are questionable due to the “one size fits all” application to all topographic areas. Although DOT can reasonably argue that topography is accounted for in other ways, when DOT is inconsistent with its usage in other areas like formulas vs. average rates there is reason to become suspect.
- No Change in Volume to Capacity V/C of Level of Service (LOS) A – F grading. The data provided by the LOS system grading A through F is unrepresentative because an intersection already at level of service “F” is not officially recognized to worsen with the addition of a project; an intersection can potentially already be at LOS F and worsen without the project accounting for the additional diminishing level of service. The worsening effect is not addressed in the DOT’s Policies and Procedures guideline manual.

➤ **Other Structural and Leadership Concerns**

Equally alarming is lack of information about the studies that were used to arrive at the formulas that are used so religiously. The numbers from the Institute of Transportation Engineers used as the blueprint for all projects are no longer accessible to DOT staff. When the sources, were requested, DOT staff were unable to locate them to verify their relevance. In fact, DOT staff has commented in public meetings in San Pedro that they are unable to find the projects upon which the numbers they use are based. Now this is both disturbing and telling of the greater structural problem areas within DOT. It is also admirable to witness such honesty, as it is unusual to hear such an admission from governmental officials being pressed by upset community members in public forums: This reveals the following:

- Government officials lack fact checking of their own
- Community members become weary of the methodologies and this contributes to lack of trust

The question remains: Is honesty enough when the numbers cannot be verified? Although it is refreshing to hear such honesty, the issue continues unresolved.

➤ **Strict Adherence to the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Policies and Formulas**

Other cities draft their own trip generation rates with the assistance of other institutions like their Association of Governments agency; they do not solely rely on ITE. The city of San Diego, for example, drafted its own trip generation rates with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). LADOT’s handbook, the Traffic Study Policies and Procedures, relies solely on ITE’s policies for engineers, including tables,

formulas and general procedures. The result of sole reliance on ITE is a more uniform way of determining the traffic impact of an area, whereas specifically developed generation rates for a city within an agency like the association of governments can more accurately represent the nuances of the topography. Unfortunately, the possibility of working closely with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has not been considered seriously as of yet. However, even within the DOT there are individuals who have begun to consider the idea. Perhaps a more appropriate place to begin working with SCAG is by approaching the South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG), which is a subregional organization of SCAG. The SBCCOG's mission is to maximize the power of its 16 member cities⁴ for better regional results in infrastructure, transportation and other critical services like housing.

The idea of the SBCCOG leveraging power derives from the unique landmarks that only the South Bay communities have in their backyard: the Los Angeles International Airport, the Port of Los Angeles and the Port of Long Beach. Creating numbers with the assistance of SCAG, specifically through the SBCCOG, can empower the LADOT resulting in more specific and therefore more representative guidelines.

➤ **Community Mistrust of LADOT**

Many in the San Pedro community mistrust the LADOT for a number of reasons including the following:

- Verbal Inconsistency among the Representatives of DOT. San Pedrans were told that the ATSAC/ATCS system to be implemented in San Pedro was to be completed in two years and that the funding for the project was secured; some time later they were told the city still needs \$9 million in funding
- Technical Inconsistency. The technical inconsistencies in methodology mentioned above have led to the mistrust of DOT by many community members
- Lack of Transparency. There is little transparency on the part of the LADOT in the criteria used for requiring traffic studies and in how it plans funding for its projects
- Disconnect. There is a disconnect between the ways in which the community understands transportation engineering and the way practitioners know and understand it
- Disregard. In the past, there has been little regard on the part of certain LADOT engineers to help community members understand information from an average citizen's perspective. Consequently, a few negative experiences with one or two individuals have left a sour taste in the community's mouth for the entire department
- Lack of Fact Checking. Having a supervisory figure publicly state the inability to

⁴ The cities included in the SBCCOG are Carson, El Segundo, Gardena, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lomita, Manhattan Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes, Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, Torrance, and Harbor City/San Pedro communities of Los Angeles

find the documents used to support claims

Department of City Planning

The Planning Department is to maintain the city's General Plan and update it every 10 years. Likewise, the Department is to maintain and update the 35 community plans every five years. The Department is now updating the general plan and several community plans including that for San Pedro. The General Plan Framework was last updated in 1997, which is within the ten years timeframe. The General Plan of LA contains a General Plan Framework, which guides the other 10 elements of the General Plan⁵, some of which, such as the Air Quality Element and the Housing Element are state mandated. Some of the elements in the general plan are not available online. Hearsay has it that the reason for this is that some of them have not been updated since the 70s.

Although the Department is just now updating plans that should have been updated long ago, the culture of the Department with regard to working *in, for* and *with* communities is more apparent than in other city departments with a transportation planning agenda. The culture, ability and willingness to work *with* communities is reflected in the Open House process now being used in developing the community plan updates. Part of the reinvigorated effort to update the plans is due to a new General Manager, Gail Goldberg.

➤ **Mobility/Transportation Element**

Mobility/Transportation is one of the elements of the General Plan. This element is currently being updated using the policy framework of Transit Oriented Districts (TOD), which is the concept whereby housing and transportation meet on major corridors and otherwise key areas for a city's movement. In addition to the general plan, each community plan is to have its own mobility element within the TOD framework.

- These efforts are oftentimes coordinated with MTA, the Los Angeles Housing Department and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).
- Proper mobility elements can relieve traffic issues for areas with multi-modal transportation options (e.g. MTA, bus lines, bike lanes, etc.). For areas where multi-modal options are unrealistic, TOD offers little to no relief.
- One of the most powerful tools in determining what a neighborhood will look like is to include a specific plan within the community plan.

➤ **A New Trend on the Horizon to Change Transportation Culture**

Many people from various departments of the city, including Planning, have mentioned that a culture change needs to take place so that individuals rely less on their personal vehicles and opt for public transportation. New ideas to push through a more pedestrian and multi-modal framework are in the works, but because the culture has yet to evolve

⁵ The elements of the General Plan are as follows: Air Quality, Conservation, Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources, Housing, Infrastructure Systems, Noise, Open Space, Public Facilities and Services, Safety, and Transportation.

there is a “chicken or egg” where in order to encourage the shift, city departments are considering having developers provide less parking spaces. However, if the culture change does not happen alongside the growth of development, the result can be even more frustrating: reduced parking with an increase in development all in the name and hope of reducing personal vehicle usage.

- Another potential policy would “predict” households and other residential units having fewer personal vehicles, when in fact that may not be true. The “prediction” then is a way for policy to encourage a culture shift. This is very much still only an idea floating within the departments, however.

Currently, the Planning Department is attempting to work more collaboratively with other departments, such as DOT, CRA and the Port of Los Angeles. With the exception of the updating of the general plan and community plans, collaboration with these agencies is often focused on an existing project in an area, rather than more comprehensive planning prior to any development or redevelopment.

➤ **Coordination with DOT**

The day-to-day direct relationship between Planning and DOT focuses on specific development projects that spring up individually throughout the city. Planning sends project proposals to DOT for an initial assessment review to determine whether a project requires a full traffic study, as mentioned above.

- In the past these proposals sometimes got lost going from one department to another. New procedures use Planning Case Numbers which allows individuals from either department to track a specific development project. This makes it easier for individuals from DOT to speak to the right people at Planning regarding a specific project..

➤ **Coordination with CRA**

When Planning is working on a community plan in an area that is designated for redevelopment by the CRA (such as downtown San Pedro), the Planning Department will work with the CRA in its efforts. The CRA’s vision is usually for a shorter term, however.

➤ **Coordination with Councilmember Offices**

If prompted to do so by the council office, Planning will work collaboratively with those offices for specific planning and land use initiatives that the council member supports.

Additional Trends within the Scope of the Planning Department

There is a growing trend for developers seek to redevelop a property by adding units to a dilapidated building, or converting the building, so as to avoid some of the bureaucracy and cost of conducting full traffic studies and environmental reviews. Since the developer is simply adding units, she/he is not seeking a zoning change and can therefore bypass Planning and DOT. The developer’s project is authorized by the Department of Building and Safety because it is a

“by right” project, meaning it adheres to policy. Although this is legal, it may not be the best of practices because measures to address the increase in traffic are not considered. The consequences for traffic vary, but more often than not, an increase in traffic occurs for which there is no mitigation, since the project bypassed the two key departments. Additionally, the by-right developments only go through the Dept. of Building and Safety and are not documented with Planning, which makes it difficult to track any problems that result from these projects.

Everyone Has Their Own Transportation Planning Agenda

The urban sprawl terminology that is so often used to describe Los Angeles is better understood when one realizes that virtually every agency and/or entity with a role in transportation planning, even if small, has its own agenda and carries it out in isolation. “Carrying it out in isolation” does not necessarily mean that individuals do not involve the appropriate departments, but rather that the proposed individual project and/or district’s project may not align with the greater needs of the city or region. It is understandable that each entity will have its own interests in mind that it must protect, but simply acting locally without thinking regionally will not solve the greater structural and long term problems. The key, as many in the Planning Department acknowledge, is to think regionally and act locally. This applies to stopping development projects also. To act, or prohibit from acting, as is this the case in San Pedro with Ponte Vista, calls for an assessment that is based on regional analyses, but considered in terms of local impact/benefit as well.⁶

Everyone has their Own Transportation Agenda

➤ **MTA**

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is charged with setting the mass transit agenda for the entire region surrounding Los Angeles as well as the city itself. MTA, or Metro, as it is often called, provides the funding for projects like the Metro light and heavy rails. This responsibility endows them with much authority both in final decision making and in setting the overall direction.

➤ **SCAG**

Like the MTA, the Southern California Association of Governments also has responsibilities related to the entire region surrounding and including Los Angeles; however, because SCAG only conducts long term policy analyses without actually providing the funding for projects, its authority to set a direction for the region is minimal. Although SCAG’s long term policy analysis provides the information needed for setting the direction of the region, MTA’s attitude toward SCAG is reticent, as they are viewed as somewhat removed from the immediate transportation work needed:

- Some who work with SCAG acknowledge a sense of disregard on the part of MTA; likewise, many at MTA recognize their relationship with SCAG is a bit strained.

⁶ At the time of this report, the Ponte Vista CAC had not yet made its recommendations to Councilmember Hahn on the Ponte Vista project. This example is used here not to imply Ponte Vista is either a negative impact or a benefit, but only that both should be considered in terms of the regional, greater plans and the local costs/benefits.

- This lack of a strong working relationship inhibits collaborative work, which is badly needed given that SCAG is specifically tasked with doing long range policy work.
- Many councilmember offices and neighborhood councils with an eye on transportation use SCAG’s 10-25 year projections.
- SCAG, if included, can become an important and useful force for better planning.

➤ **Councilmembers Set Own Transportation Agendas**

It is fair to say that every councilmember confronts constituent issues of traffic and most attempt to address the issue by creating a district focused solution in the form of a transportation agenda. The councilmembers then seek ways to accomplish their agenda through DOT and/or MTA to accomplish their task, if not directly with Caltrans and even the Federal Department of Transportation. When the projects align with the short range or long range transportation plans of the area, it makes sense to pursue them, but when they do not, the result is piecemeal transportation planning.

Councilmember offices, albeit not all of them, are the only other entity that follows the Planning Department’s footsteps with regard to working with communities. At least three Council Offices tend to have a particular inclination to including community members in the process of transportation planning by providing ad-hoc community groups and/or other similar forums:

- Bill Rosendahl, District 11 “Empowerment Congress for Dist. 11”
- Eric Garcetti, District 14 “Design Review Committee”
- Janice Hahn, District 15 “Citizen’s Advisory Committee on Ponte Vista” & “Western Ave. Task Force”

Some council offices, like that of Councilmember Rosendahl, view their offices as providing an extra layer of review, whereas transportation departments and/or other agencies may view them as “interfering” with the greater process.

- In the best case scenario a councilmember will pursue a transportation agenda that aligns with an already existing plan within the area, as is reflected in Rosendahl’s district with the extension of the Green Metro Rail.
- In a worst case scenario, a councilmember thinks up an idea and hands it off to a deputy to research its feasibility irrespective of its relationship with what is already present or in process. This is of concern because it is more likely to result in a piecemeal rather than comprehensive approach to planning.

➤ **The City’s Transportation Committee**

Within the City Council, transportation related issues usually fall within the purview of its Transportation Committee. Committee Chair, Councilwoman Wendy Greuel, attempts to address transportation issues comprehensively by coordinating efforts with

DOT and Planning. Beyond these two departments, Councilwoman Greuel is currently seeking an urban partnership with the United States Department of Transportation.

Councilwoman Greuel has identified three issues as critical in addressing a broken system:

1. Modifying/changing the behavior, of personal vehicle dependency, caused by the city's growth around the automobile.
2. Addressing the NIMBY attitude that poses challenges to reworking infrastructure for the benefit of the region.
3. Addressing the reality that what might be *equal* is not necessarily *equitable*, or best for the city. This means that when, for political reasons, funds are distributed equally throughout the city, it may be at the expense of comprehensive transportation planning. Certain areas may need to be more fully developed to create a culture change and/or simply because they may have been neglected in the past. .

She proposes to address these issues at *policy level* by: 1) communication and outreach campaigns and 2) compensating people for loss of their property rights

➤ **The Mayor's Office of Transportation**

The Mayor's Office of Transportation serves two primary functions: 1) To conduct policy research and then advise the Mayor on which transportation polices to support or oppose and 2) To carry out transportation projects in the region that benefit the citizens of Los Angeles. With this in mind, the office has three basic areas of focus:

- Maintain Competitiveness at the Los Angeles Airports
- Encourage Use of Public Transit
- Alleviate Traffic Congestion

Mayor Villaraigosa's office supports the extension of the Exposition rail line, the construction of the "Subway to the Sea" heavy rail, and the Orange Line. The "Subway to the Sea", is especially contentious in the city, as its total projected cost is currently estimated at \$4.8 billion. Opponents cite its high cost compared to what is perceived as a relatively small benefit (approximately 8 miles of rail). Supporters say it is necessity to alleviate traffic on the 405 freeway, which many refer to as a parking lot.

The Mayor, along with his Office of Transportation, also called upon DOT to assess its planning role and to become a major planning force in the city. According to Controller Chick's audit, the "Department is in enormous need of reinvention and reorganization".⁷

⁷ Office of the Controller, Laura N. Chick. Management Audit of the Department of Transportation's Office of Transportation Development & Transit Services. Released March 12, 2007.

Mayor Villaraigosa can play an important role in setting the direction for departments such as DOT.

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's Dual Role

Neighborhood Councils come under the auspices of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE). As Carol Baker Tharp, the new DONE General Manager, takes the first few months to understand the ins-and-outs of the role the department plays, she is finding that DONE's task is twofold: to encourage more civic participation in government affairs and, conversely, to help government be more responsive to its citizens. The twofold purpose is outlined in the city charter but also taken quite seriously by the new head of the department.⁸ What she found, however, is disproportionate attention focused on the former task and less on the latter. Ms. Baker-Tharp's awareness of the trends leads her toward prioritizing Los Angeles city government's responsiveness to the communities' needs. As such, the department is now more than ever at an ideal place to aid the neighborhood councils in collaborating more closely with other city departments with the goal of making government more attuned to the communities it serves.

Learning from Past Civic Engagement Project Experiences

In 2003 the University of Southern California's School of Policy, Planning and Development undertook the Collaborative Learning Project as part of their Civic Engagement Initiative. The goal of the project was to assess how well and how best for the neighborhood councils to work collaboratively with city agencies. Over the course of three years, from 2003-2006, the project researchers conducted what they termed Learning and Design Forum sessions. These sessions brought together officials from various city departments and representatives from four neighborhood councils (sometimes contiguous and sometimes not) to address the nature of their relationship(s), or lack thereof. In the third year of the project, Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council, along with the Hollywood United, Mar Vista and Silver Lake Neighborhood Councils worked with the Department of Transportation. As part of the process, a memorandum of understanding between the department and the four neighborhood councils was drafted. Ultimately, however, DOT decided against signing it. That proposed memorandum could be revived again as the groundwork has been laid already.

Findings and recommendations of the entire three year project are outlined in Collaboration Between Los Angeles City Departments and Neighborhood Councils: Findings and Recommendations from the USC Collaborative Learning Project⁹. One of the findings and subsequent recommendations was the importance an unbiased facilitator played in moving the process forward. A third-party facilitator should always be sought out in instances where neighborhood councils and city agencies are collaborating.

⁸ Los Angeles City Charter, Article IX, 1999.

⁹ Terry L. Cooper and Thomas A. Bryer, Collaboration Between Los Angeles City Departments and Neighborhood Councils: Findings and Recommendations from the USC Collaborative Learning Project (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2007), 3.

Another recommendation that particularly stands out as an important first step, is for the need for both the neighborhood councils and the city agencies to become educated about the ways in which the other functions in their respective areas: neighborhood councils in their communities and city agencies in city government/politics. Comments by many city officials in my research support the need for city departments to educate neighborhood councils about their roles and the challenges they face, whether political and/or technical. Likewise, after attending numerous events where I interacted with members of neighborhood councils, including stakeholder meetings and broad-based events like the Alliance of Neighborhood Councils and the Congress of Neighborhood Councils, I also see the need for city officials to learn more about the many and complex issues at the heart of members. The need is mutual as is the responsibility to follow through with becoming more educated about the other's needs. I encourage both neighborhood councils and city officials to read the policy brief as it is informative, timely and relevant. The policy brief is available at: www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/cei.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create Planning Teams

For large/significant developments¹⁰, a four member Planning Team should be formed. This team would be involved in all phases, from the initial assessment study to the final sign off of the project for construction. The Planning Team of four will include one individual representing each of the four following agencies/groups:

- Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT)
- Department of City Planning
- Planning Deputy or appropriate deputy from the councilmember's office within which the project lies
- A Neighborhood Council representative of the project area

Background: To an extent, models for a planning team already exist. For example Councilmember Hahn created an ad-hoc group, the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) to deal with a contentious matter in the community. She charged the group with investigating and identifying the best possible option(s) for developing the land on which Ponte Vista is proposed. Previously she appointed an ad hoc committee, the Western Avenue Task Force, to make recommendations with regards to alleviating traffic congestion on Western Avenue. This Task Force included representatives from both San Pedro and Rancho Palos Verdes as well as staff from Cal Trans and DOT. Within San Pedro other models exist as well, like the Port Community Advisory Committee (PCAC). Other council members have formed similar teams like Eric Garcetti's "Design Review Committee".

Purpose: The Planning Team has two functions: 1) to ensure proactive communication and adequate dialogue among the four entities and 2) to create buy-in from the community in which

¹⁰ A significant development currently consists of any project that generates more than 43 trip ends at peak hour. However, the criteria for "significant" project will most likely change upon a comprehensive study of the appropriateness of the numbers and overall policies and procedures used for conducting a traffic studies.

the development project is proposed.

How: The Planning Team can either be an ad-hoc committee or task-force or it can become a more official body that routinely follows significant development projects. It should meet during every major phase of the project, including, but not limited to:

- Initial submission of the proposed project to any city agency (e.g. LADOT, Dept. City Planning)
- Initial Assessment Study
- Environmental Review
- Draft Traffic Study Review
- Final Traffic Study Submission
- Draft Environment Impact Review
- Final Environment Impact Review

Who: The Council Office, DOT, Planning, Neighborhood Councils, and DONE can all play a role in the implementation of this recommendation.

Council Office: The councilmember of the district in which the project lies will be critical in creating the Planning Team. Councilwoman Janice Hahn is seen as a champion of Neighborhood Councils by many (though not all), and might immediately favor a Planning Team idea. If she does not, the neighborhood councils of the district will have to collaboratively place pressure on her. The councilmember's full support is especially needed in case DOT or Planning demonstrate an aversion to the idea.

Within Councilwoman Hahn's Office the two key individuals are Gordon Teuber, the Economic Development Director, and Frank Hong, the Labor and Planning Director. Both of them demonstrate a willingness to work with neighborhood councils. Because Teuber has been handling the Ponte Vista development, he should probably be approached first regarding the Planning Team. Hong can just as easily be approached first, however. Summary of Persons to Contact in this Sequence:

- **Gordon Teuber**, Economic Development Director
- **Frank Hong**, Labor and Planning Director
- Representatives of all NCs meet with Councilwoman **Hahn**

Department of Transportation The city is divided into three transportation planning areas: West Los Angeles, Metro and the Valley. San Pedro is in the Metro area, which includes the downtown region and the Harbor communities. The Metro area currently has three transportation planners: Jay Kim, Mike Bagheri and Wes Pringle. Jay Kim is the supervisor for the Metro area and he must agree to the Planning Team proposal, but he need not be the first approached with the proposal. Wes Pringle is forward thinking about the roles of neighborhood councils and might act as the initial liaison and proponent for the Planning Team. The official neighborhood council liaison for the DOT is Carolyn Jackson, the Senior Management Analyst who works closely with the General Manger of the department, Gloria Jeff. Ms. Jackson might become involved in this process along the way, but her designated role with the NC's remains a bit of a misnomer

because she is not responsible for the transportation planning for the Metro region and is less involved with the NC's concerns generally.

Yadi Hashemi, the operations engineer for the Harbor Area, unlike Kim, Bagheri and Pringle, does not have an official role with regards to transportation planning, but he is both supportive of the neighborhood councils' participation in the process and has a strong working relationship with Pringle and therefore should be amongst the first contacted in proposing the Planning Team. Additionally, he works closely with the General Manager Gloria Jeff on the development of "big picture" ideas for the Harbor Community. He is both knowledgeable and respected. Summary of persons to contact in this sequence:

- **Yadi Hashemi**, Operations Engineer in San Pedro
- **Wes Pringle**, Transportation Planner for Metro Area
- **Jay Kim** (in concert with Pringle), Supervisor of Transportation Planners for Metro Area
- **Mike Bagheri** (in concert with Jay Kim), Transportation Planner for Metro Area
- **Carolyn Jackson**, Senior Management Analyst and Neighborhood Council Liaison for DOT

Planning Department - The City planners for the Harbor communities are: Conni Pallini-Tipton, Betsy Wiseman and David Olivo. All three planners for the Harbor area are supportive of working with the harbor communities, including neighborhood councils. Mr. Olivo particularly has experience with putting on community forums in previous positions and working collaboratively with the community. Summary of persons to contact in this sequence:

- **David Olivo**, Planner
- **Conni Pallini-Tipton**, Planner
- **Betsy Wiseman**, Principal City Planner

Neighborhood Councils

The greatest challenge for the neighborhood councils of San Pedro lies in deciding from which of the various neighborhood councils the representative for the Planning Team will come, as all three will claim that the development project affects them equally in terms of cumulative impact. Although this might be true, in order for the Planning Team idea to remain palatable to the other three team representatives, there must be an equal number from each group. Therefore having a representative from each of the three San Pedro neighborhood councils or any other impacted area is *not* advisable. The neighborhood councils must therefore flush out their concerns and deliberate collectively with the selected representative. That representative must understand the cumulative effects of the project and fairly represent the independent as well as interdependent concerns of the entire area.

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE)

DONE can help neighborhood councils to involve DOT, Planning, and the Councilmembers' offices with the initiation of the planning teams..

The department can also help the neighborhood councils decide who will represent the neighborhood councils, and hopefully the community as well, on the team. Someone from DONE can act as facilitator or the department can assist in finding a facilitator for the collective meetings of the neighborhood councils to choose a representative.

DONE will not have the authority to choose a representative for the neighborhood councils, unless the neighborhood councils collectively transfer the responsibility to DONE as a third party to decide. Additionally, DONE should only play the role of a third party decision maker after being part of the process and hearing the concerns and claims from each party.

2. Send Draft Traffic Studies to Neighborhood Councils for Comment

A copy of the draft traffic study should be sent to the relevant neighborhood for review and comment. The neighborhood council should have 20 days to submit their comments to the DOT for consideration. In order for the DOT to have sufficient time to review the traffic study and the comments by the neighborhood council, they should have 40 days to officially respond to the traffic study. Allowing neighborhood councils to comment on draft traffic studies may be viewed as submitting a type of Community Impact Statement (CIS

Background: Currently, the traffic study conducted by each developer is only sent to DOT for revision and approval. No system exists for the public to weigh in on the findings of the traffic study before they are approved by the DOT. This would create a process somewhat like that the Draft Environmental Impact Review (DEIR) process that includes a period of 30 days for public comment.

Purpose: The comments period would allow the community to raise any gross misrepresentations or shortfalls with any aspect of a traffic study. This may include, but is not limited to, the projects used as comparable to the development at hand, the trip generation rates and/or the overall relevance of any and all information used. The comments may also serve as the foundation for any action that neighborhood councils take thereafter.

Who: The key players are the Department of Transportation and the Neighborhood Councils. DONE may also be of assistance.

Department of Transportation

The three planners for the Metro region should be contacted beginning with Yadi Hashemi, the DOT engineer in San Pedro. With his assistance, a meeting can be set up with Jay Kim and the idea can be explored. Ultimately it would need to be adopted as a practice by the department.

Neighborhood Councils

The neighborhood council within which the development project lies will hold the meetings to draft the TSC, but should do so in collaboration with other neighborhood councils that will be impacted by the project.

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

DONE could coordinate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the neighborhood councils and the DOT that outlines an agreed upon process.

Additional Considerations:

Should the Planning Team be established, the Traffic Study Comments process should still take place. The communication amongst the four groups will only enhance the process.

3: Educate Neighborhood Councils about City Departments

An educational forum series should be conducted by the relevant city departments to increase neighborhood council members knowledge of the layers of complexity in development.

Background: Many city staff view the neighborhood councils as generally uninformed and therefore only concerned with their neighborhood needs. They may refer to neighborhood councils as NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) groups that are myopic in vision.

Purpose: To have more productive and comprehensive planning conversations stakeholders need to be informed about citywide issues in order to address a particular aspect within their own “backyard.” Each department should share the process they use to carry out their work (i.e., process of accepting development projects, process of addressing concerns as they arise, process of including others of the community before the decision is made). The goal is to improve community of the approval process for developments and the role of the specific department in this process.

How: A series of educational presentations should be given by the relevant city departments for all interested neighborhood council members. This would not be modeled on the Congress of Neighborhood Councils where they hold specific workshops. The series could take anywhere from 4 to 10 months, depending on the departments participating and whether a single or multiple departments present in any given month.

Who: DONE should coordinate with the relevant departments to plan the education series. At a minimum the following departments should be involved:

- Los Angeles DOT
- Department of City Planning
- Department of Building & Safety
- Department of Public Works
- City Ethics Commission

4. Review and Revamp the Traffic Study Manual’s Policies and Procedures

The traffic study policies should be revamped using the following four step process involving multiple agencies:

1. **City Wide Meeting for Practitioners Only.** Hold one *high level* citywide meeting specifically for addressing the larger and more critical concerns regarding inaccurate representations of current policies with the following agencies present:
 - DOT transportation planners from all three planning regions (Metro, Westside and the Valley)
 - SCAG transportation and/or traffic engineers and/or those from the South Bay Cities Council of Governments
 - Dept. of City Planning staff responsible for the Mobility Element of the General Plan
 - Los Angeles area traffic consultants
2. **First Draft.** The DOT transportation planners and traffic engineers, together with SCAG/SBCCOG, will use the results of the meeting to draft of a thoroughly revamped manual for conducting traffic studies.
3. **Community Open House.** Together with the planners of the Mobility Element, make the draft revised manual available to the public via the Open House model of the Community Plan Updates¹¹ for review and buy-in.
4. **DOT and SCAG Finalize Manual.** DOT and SCAG should review the comments and surveys collected from community members during the Open House and take them into account when to jointly produce trip generation numbers and other policies specifically designed for the city of Los Angeles.

Background: The community's experience with the proposed Ponte Vista Development has shown that current policies and procedures for conducting traffic studies are inconsistent and vague. Review of the manual itself and comments by DOT personnel support these concerns. Changing legislation, piecemeal updated analysis techniques, and staff turnover have also led to inconsistent analyses. For example, when should a traffic engineer use a formula versus an average rate, how the trip generation manual defines density, and why are there no changes in LOS (Level of Service) after a specific threshold? These aspects, which guide traffic studies, fail to adequately represent the effects a development can have on a specific community. It is time for the city of Los Angeles to conduct its own studies. The city of San Diego did just that. After recognizing that the 1987 procedures they used were obsolete, San Diego created a task force of all transportation development section staff and all area traffic consultants to review its procedures and create a new manual, the Traffic Impact Study Manual, which is in use

¹¹ The Open House model of the Community Plan Updates, which comes from the Department of City Planning, creates a space for members of the public to learn of the proposed updates and get their questions answered by knowledgeable personnel from the department and weigh in on the proposals at hand. The model includes visibly displaying maps of the proposals at various stations and having individuals from the department, in this case, from all agencies (LADOT, SCAG and Dept. of City Planning) stand by each display to provide more detailed information that the visual may lack and answer questions of the community members walking by each station. In this manner, the multiple agencies holding the Open House can become aware of additional areas of concern from community members that through their conversations and the survey completed that may not already be addressed by the draft thus far.

today.¹²

Purpose: Enhanced efficiency and accountability. This model provides the professionals an opportunity to freely discuss problems with the policies and procedures while still being held accountable to the public. Additionally, this model expedites the process but still offers the community a space for constructive input after the first version of the revised traffic policies and procedures is drafted by the two critical agencies in this process (DOT and SCAG). For consistency, the new manual would be finalized by the same two agencies after having considered the community's input.

Who: The following agencies must agree to participate in the review and updating of the traffic policies and procedures.

- DOT must agree to lead the process primarily with SCAG/SBCCOG and also agree to develop its own trip generation numbers and other policies and procedures with assistance.
 - Gloria Jeff: she has already verbally agreed to undergo a thorough analysis of the policies and procedures, although she has not disclosed “how”
 - Jay Kim: has been approached by Wes Pringle with the idea of developing their own (DOT) traffic study numbers, although the “how” has not been discussed
 - Wes Pringle: recognizes the benefit in having policies and procedures specifically for Los Angeles and not general guidelines produced by the International Traffic Engineers Association (ITE).
- SCAG/SBCCOG must agree to co-facilitate the process with LADOT, since the agencies will be the primary players in drafting the first version and then finalizing it after the Open House.
- Dept. of City Planning's role will be especially important, given that this process will be utilizing the community update process model of an Open House.
 - **Conni Pallini-Tipton** is the first person to contact, as she was the person whom originally pushed the idea of having an Open House using the model in San Pedro in early April.
 - **David Olivo** is also highly likely to support the idea
 - **Jane Blumenfeld**, Manager of the City Wide Planning Division, will also be of assistance

5: Develop Clearinghouse for all Development Projects in the City

A central clearinghouse should be created for documentation of *all* development projects that take place in the city, including those that may not have a particular transportation element.

Background: The current trend whereby developers convert dilapidated buildings to bypass DOT and Planning and go strictly to regulatory agencies like the Dept. of Building & Safety,

¹² Traffic Impact Study Manual for the City of San Diego. July 1998.

reflects the real need for inter-agency documentation. This is not to say that in a case like this, Building & Safety does not document their work; rather, the documentation is kept within their office, which is understandable, given that it is within their jurisdiction to do so. The end result, however, is that the documentation is not circulated to other departments, such as Planning and DOT, which need this information. Likewise, the Department of Public Works, specifically its Bureau of Engineering, also initiates transportation planning projects, but knowledge of these projects is primarily made available to other departments when there is an inter-agency “call for projects” process whereby all agencies and entities document their projects on an intranet website for the city of Los Angeles.

Purpose: Facilitate Inter-Agency Collaboration and a One-Stop-Shop Resource Center. This is a win-win situation for government and for the communities it serves. A clearinghouse of all projects in the city can help to immediately alleviate some of the inter-agency frustration and later aid in creating a forum for continuous collaboration, as all the agencies can learn about and have access to the documents pertaining to *all* development projects, including EIRs and Traffic Studies. The clearinghouse can also act as a “one-stop-shop” providing all the resources community members may seek when tracking a project that may have gone through Building and Safety or Public Works, as opposed to Planning, which is the “usual suspect,” but not always the proper agency.

How: Creating a clearinghouse will require resources, as there needs to be staff to input the information into a database that can be accessed by both government agencies and the community. In fact, a clearinghouse may need to be considered yet another government agency, but one which will require less staff. Ultimately, the city council must approve its implementation and subsequently provide for its budgetary needs. To curb staffing costs, while further empowering neighborhood councils to learn more about land use designation and the processes development projects can take, one part-time position should be specifically allocated for an individual from one of the neighborhood councils. Implementing this idea will require grassroots work by neighborhood councils through a coalition of all neighborhood councils who have a land use, planning and/or transportation committees to pressure their council members to carry out the idea through policy.

Who: The more local but critical agencies that either initiate projects and or authorize projects should view the idea of a clearinghouse as necessary in order for the project to be launched, so that they, together with neighborhood councils, can make the case to city council for its implementation. The central City Departments are Planning, Transportation, Public Works, Building & Safety, and the Port.

The Port of LA. The inclusion of the Port of LA, will add weight to the idea, particularly given its official role in the efficient movement of goods through Los Angeles. The Port should be required to contribute funds for the clearinghouse. So long as they are not asked to contribute a disproportionate amount as compared to the city, the Port may be inclined to participate in such an idea. The port indeed is seeking ways to work with the city, especially the harbor area and its nearby communities of San Pedro and Wilmington.

Neighborhood Councils. A coalition of neighborhood councils would be appropriate to lobbying

for a clearinghouse. The first steps to building a coalition will be relatively easy: identifying all the neighborhood councils with a committee on land use, planning and/or transportation. The following neighborhood councils have been identified as particularly active in these areas: Hollywood Hills West (HHWNC), Downtown Los Angeles, Silver Lake, and Venice. Neighborhood councils should notify their councilmember of their interest in a clearinghouse and encourage her/him to push the idea through the City Council.

DONE. It is wise to be cautious of the time and energy spent on having DONE buy into the idea, when direct pressure on council members can be just as efficient or even more efficient.

6: Initiate a Mass Transit and Urban Planning Collaborative Project: Where Multi-Modal, Mass Transit Systems (MMMTS) Meets Urban (Un)Planning

Los Angeles lacks a good long range transportation plan. There needs to be a serious examination of the Multi-Modal, Mass Transit Systems (MMMTS) in use in other places throughout the world. Below is a list of some options that might be appropriate for Los Angeles. These are not exhaustive. The many international models available are worthy of excitement and more so when considering the multiple hybrid possibilities resulting in the merging or combining of any two or more models. The following act as starters for thinking of new or hybrid models:

- **Congestion Area Pricing:** Designating heavily congested areas of a city as congestion areas whereby use of the street by a personal vehicle requires a fee payment ahead of time. This is policed much like the metro heavy and light rails in that it follows an honor system where if stopped by a highway officer and the fee has not been paid, the driver incurs a penalty (fine). A congestion area in Los Angeles could be designated, for example, downtown or along Wilshire from downtown to the west side.

or

Restricting Day Vehicle Usage on the Road: At least once a week every individual will be restricted from being on the road for the entire day. The way this is tracked is through license plates numbers. This will force everyone to carpool, use public transportation or work from home at least once a week. This is in use in many major metropolitan cities in Latin America often called non-circulation days for certain vehicles per day.

- **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT):** The Orange Line from that runs from the San Fernando Valley to downtown is a perfect example of this. A BRT is simply a large bus that acts, however, like a light rail with exclusive right-of-way lanes, like a High Occupation Vehicle (HOV) lane on the freeway, to improve speed and efficiency. Additionally, the bus stops only at strategic ground level stations instead of multiple bus stops to reduce time in transit. Countries like Colombia and Brazil have employed BRT bus routes that act as light and heavy rail transportation and have seen results. The model in Bogotá, Colombia is especially well designed with “complete streets” in addition to bus lines.
- **Complete Streets and Bicycle Lanes:** The concept of “complete streets” includes shifting equal focus and planning efforts to the transportation of people and not just motor vehicles. This means widening or building sidewalks and creating safe, wide and perhaps even exclusive bike lanes. There is some debate as to whether there needs to be separate lanes for

bike users, or if cyclists should simply be allowed to travel on main streets for motor vehicles. Both two options should be explored for safety and political viability in LA. One argument for having separate bike lanes, wider than those that currently exist, is to encourage riders of all ages with varying levels of speed and ability. Many current bike lanes next to the motor vehicle lanes are only 18 inches wide. They are potentially unsafe for sustained use. Another option, used in Copenhagen, Denmark, places the bike lanes between parked vehicles and pedestrian sidewalks, thereby reducing danger from faster moving vehicles while simultaneously allowing speedy mobility by separating riders from pedestrians.

Background: Many major metropolitan cities around the world are steps ahead of Los Angeles in urban transportation and city planning. It is time that serious attention is placed on multi-modal transportation and urban city planning globally to decipher which models of the many already in use are the most appropriate for Los Angeles. For a car culture like that of Los Angeles, no one single method of mass transit will suffice; the city will need to use its creative forces of human capital to create a real multi-modal mass transit system that will realistically work for the diverse community that is LA. It is also time that citizens of Los Angeles, businesses and the city officials that regulate so much of the zoning for human activity, begin to have real and informed conversations about the ways in which urban cities should be created; or rather, how to guide the growth of cities, since there exist groups that believe great cities cannot be “created”. Jean Jacobs, an author and urban planning activist, led an entire movement of lay people and planners alike in the 80s and 90s around the notion that it is a dangerously false idea that cities can be “humanly made” and that they are no different than nature: they grow organically from the surrounding natural opportunities and limitations. One school of thought advocates that Los Angeles should undergo a paradigm shift with respect to (un)planning. While this is not necessarily the answer, this idea should be examined seriously for its viability. Only in pushing boundaries will the creativity for newer/hybrid models surface. The urban (un)planning conversations, however, must occur alongside and with the those individuals exploring the MMTS options worldwide because the two are invariably connected. All groundbreaking methods used worldwide that have increased mobility for an urban region should be reviewed.

Purpose: A Real Mass Transit Plan will be the result of such an endeavor. Los Angeles lags behind major metropolitan cities nationwide, even behind those found in what are commonly considered “underdeveloped” countries. A strategic and concerted countywide effort to create an effective multi-modal, mass transit system that includes the transportation of goods can result in exciting, feasible and highly effective ideas. Additionally, creating this kind of collaborative process to address a real need can set the tone for a new day, one in which the surrounding cities and even counties realistically assess their interdependent needs within the context of their specific topography and together create a long-term plan that adheres to the viability of their respective areas. The benefits will continue to surprise the public and public officials and set the bar higher for future processes.

How: The idea behind this MMTS and Urban (Un)Planning effort is a long-term 25+ year plan with an equally compatible strategy and coalition building effort that can last anywhere from 1-5 years, including the launching period. The plan included here is for the first five years and includes Phase I, preparation for this kind of collaborative project, and Phase II, launching of the strategic conversations. After Phases I and II, the remaining ongoing work should be assessed

and a new game plan should be created. Aside from the necessary first two phases of groundwork preparation and launching of the project, many of the phases to come are unforeseeable, as they depend of the work of the strategic conversations. The conversations should include:

- Viability of International model(s)
- Research into new modes
- Possible hybrid models
- Honest conversations about public transportation needs and desires as well as openness to change habits
- Strategic urban planning models
- Strategic transportation planning

This effort should ideally be overseen by one logistic-type working group that exhibits some or all of the following:

- Function much like a logistics team that works behind-the-scenes, planning the encounters between the different groups, but understanding and supporting the greater goal of the process
- Provide consistency throughout Phase I and Phase II
- Conduct initial research into the viability of different systems in Los Angeles
- Serve as a strategy group to begin laying the groundwork for the coalition building among city and county agencies, practitioners across the urban planning and transportation fields and professional schools in universities, as well as community members
- Plan, facilitate, and disseminate the information generated at the sessions and be responsible for accurate documentation of the process

Who: The effort will require work from many of the agencies mentioned above. But the leading agency in coordinating the beginning of the effort should be SCAG, as they are in a position, regionally, to do long-range planning. These other agencies should be included:

- LADOT
- City of Los Angeles Planning Department
- MTA
- Department of Public Works
 - Bureau of Engineering
 - Street Services
- DONE

The logistics group should be an ongoing group either specially hired for phase I and II, or comprised of individuals from the above mentioned agencies that are required to put in a considerable amount of their work day into this effort.

Of all the recommendations, this one will encounter the most opposition due to its call for agencies to shift paradigms in the way they usually conduct transportation planning and urban planning processes. However, this might also be the most fruitful and most worthwhile idea because it can set a new tone for the way collaboration takes place in addition to generating innovative solutions to decade long problems.

Methodology

Interviews:

1. With heads and point persons of prominent transportation planning efforts and agencies throughout Los Angeles to identify:
 - The process of transportation planning, (i.e. traffic studies used and completed for planning of projects)
 - Coordination between/amongst related and/or impacted agencies/communities (e.g. MTA, Caltrans, Port of LA, Community Redevelopment Agency, Rancho Palos Verdes, general community residents impacted, council member offices, LADOT, Department of City Planning, SCAG (Southern California Association of Governments))
2. With members of the San Pedro Neighborhood Councils who are impacted in the Harbor communities including San Pedro:
 - Individuals from other NCs (e.g. Silverlake) who have begun to work on transportation planning within their own neighborhoods
3. With members of the greater community who have extensive knowledge about traffic and transportation

More Traditional Document and Policy Oriented Research:

1. Multiple City Guidelines for Conducting Traffic Studies and/or policies on transportation planning:
 - San Diego
 - Rancho Palos Verdes
 - Long Beach
 - Los Angeles County
 - Santa Monica
2. Research into multiple cities' structure of departments and their role within government for comparison and for identifying best practices:
 - Los Angeles
 - San Diego
 - Rancho Palos Verdes
 - Long Beach
 - Pasadena
3. Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) Traffic Study Policies and Procedures manual
 - Guidelines set forth by LADOT for conducting traffic studies
 - Compare these to other major metropolitan areas like San Diego and others that act as modeling cities for transportation planning
4. San Diego's Traffic Impact Study Manual
5. Institute of Transportation Engineers in the following area(s) (ITE)
 - Guidelines and procedures for conducting traffic studies
6. Management Audit of the Department of Transportation's Office of Transportation Development & Transit Services conducted by Controller Chick's Office

7. Los Angeles' General Plan
8. Los Angeles' City Charter

Meetings, Special Events, Gatherings

1. Alliance of Neighborhood Councils Meeting
2. Congress of Neighborhood Councils
3. Monthly stakeholder meetings with Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council
4. Numerous meetings with the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Ponte Vista (Ponte Vista CAC)
5. Department of City Planning's Open House for the San Pedro downtown community plan update