

**“SMART GROWTH”  
&  
TRANSIT:  
  
THE DILEMMA**

*Prepared by:*

T&B PLANNING CONSULTANTS, INC.  
3242 HALLADAY, SUITE 100  
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA 92705  
(714) 662-2774

CONTACTS:

BARRY BURNELL AND BRUCE COLBERT

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**“SMART GROWTH”  
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**THE DILEMMA**

**Traffic Congestion is the Second Most Serious Problem Facing the County**

- According to the June 1999 Public Opinion Survey of Riverside County, traffic congestion is the second most serious problem that the County faces. Crime is ranked first in seriousness; protecting open space is ranked eleventh in seriousness.
- The SCAG 1998 Regional Transportation Plan forecasts a 110 percent population increase between 1994 and 2020 for the Western Riverside Subregion.
- Between 2020 and 2040, Riverside County is projected to grow by 60 percent, according to the California Department of Finance.
- The *SCAG 1998 Regional Transportation Plan* projects that the total daily trips in Western Riverside County will increase 131 percent by 2020.
- In *Nation's Cities Weekly*, July 26, 1999 Anthony Downs uses automobile per capita factors of between one and 1.28. Using these automobile per capita factors, between 2020 and 2040, the County could expect the number of vehicles on roadways to continue to increase by 60 to 77 percent.
- Staff for CETAP projects that vehicle speeds on Riverside County highways will decrease to 29 mph from 42 mph.

**Smart Growth Defined**

- Smart Growth often is defined as compact, higher-density development, concentrated around transit stops within an area that has a distinct urban boundary formed by designated open space.
- Smart Growth requires higher densities to support transit (over seven dwelling units per acre, typically 10-15 dwelling units per acre). Development must be concentrated in nodes (within 1/4-mile of a transit stop, which is roughly an area of 125 acres).

**Smart Growth Will Not Reduce Traffic Congestion**

- The CETAP Land Use Task Force analyzed the effect of a nodal growth or “Smart Growth” alternative on projected Riverside County traffic volumes and found little effect. Even assuming aggressively high 33% transit use between nodes, transit had little effect on traffic volumes.
- Riverside County could encourage compact development, implement a complete transit network, and in 20 years the County highways will be operating typically at LOS F.

### **Smart Growth Reduces the Amount of Affordable Housing**

- Growth boundaries for cities increase the housing prices within them. Demand for housing from in-migration, population increase, and reduced household size puts pressure on prices. Portland, because of its regional growth boundary adopted in 1979, has become one of the five least affordable housing markets in the United States. Housing costs in Portland are rising much faster than in rapidly growing but less regulated Western cities such as Phoenix and Las Vegas (e.g., from 1984 to 1999, 164 percent in Portland, 73 percent in Phoenix, and 72 percent in Las Vegas). The urban containment program of Salem, Oregon has driven up urban land prices near the greenbelt boundary while depressing nearby rural land prices. For many cities, some low-income urban dwellers are being priced out of the market. Renters, meanwhile, see potential living space disappear as landlords sell their rental homes and turn their apartments into condominiums. Growth boundaries, by raising the price of homes in urban areas, further disenfranchise the underclass. A future affordable housing crisis (requiring more public housing) awaits cities with growth boundaries.
- Preventing development on large areas of land reduces the supply of residential units and increases prices. Development is increasingly prohibited on large areas of land set aside as sensitive hillside, prime agricultural, fragile desert, wetlands, or sensitive species habitat.
- Government regulations increase the cost of housing. In Orange County, government regulations add \$110,000 to the cost of an 1,800 square foot home. In Carlsbad, California, government regulations add an average of \$96,301 to the cost of a new home. In Dallas, land development regulation adds 16 percent to the cost of a lot relative to unzoned Houston.
- Affordability can be improved by increasing the supply of housing, decreasing the cost of housing, or increasing incomes.
  - Density bonuses for providing affordable housing increase the supply of affordable units. Design standards can prevent an institutional appearance.
  - Reduced land costs - land assembly by a public agency, sold at below-market prices increases the supply of affordable units.
  - Increasing incomes - a tax exemption for people up to a threshold income and an overall tax reduction would increase disposable incomes.
- Growth boundaries, by raising the price of homes in urban areas, further disenfranchise the underclass.

### **Smart Growth Causes Jobs/Housing Imbalance**

The urban growth boundaries associated with Smart Growth lead to jobs/housing imbalance. As the supply of available land within the boundary shrinks, home prices soar. People then move farther from their jobs in search of more affordable housing. The increase in commuting causes an increase in traffic congestion.

### **Public Acceptability of Smart Growth**

- People in Riverside County don't want higher densities. When people in the 2<sup>nd</sup> -round County Public Opinion workshops were asked about the need for higher density to support viable transit (10-15 du/ac) people did not want higher density.
- Based on public opinion surveys, residents want "good planning," but are concerned about "higher density," and certainly do not choose to live in higher density areas.
- Over the past 20 years, whenever a partially-built master plan is amended, residents within these communities come out very strongly against multi-family housing, especially apartments (a.k.a. rental units) even if housing or multi-family are not the issue.
- The most serious issue facing Riverside County is crime, according to the June 1999 Public Survey of Riverside County. The public believes that crime is associated with higher density, especially multi-family housing.
- In a 1999 national survey conducted by the National Association of Homebuilders, 83 percent of respondents preferred a single-family detached suburban home to an urban townhouse with the attributes of Smart Growth; 77 percent of respondents opposed building single family homes at higher density in their neighborhood. A survey for *Professional Builder and Remodeler* magazine found that 78 percent of consumers prefer to live in single-family detached houses. A survey for the Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics found that, as numerous surveys have shown for other populations, 92 percent of New Jerseyans would prefer to own single-family detached homes.
- Higher densities could generate more local congestion, since the same number of vehicles would be concentrated in a smaller space.
- In transit-oriented compact development, residences are by definition close to railroad tracks, which generally is less desirable due to the higher levels of noise associated with the rail line.
- In the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> -round County Public Opinion workshops, people wanted a change between communities, not specifically open space boundaries around communities.

### **Transit Ridership**

- Annual surveys by the Southern California Association of Governments show that commuting patterns between 1988 and 1998 in the SCAG region have remained relatively constant; only five percent of commuters use transit.
- The Commerce Department reports that between 1980 and 1990, spending on transit more than doubled. The Census Bureau reports that during the same period, the percentage of Americans using public transit fell to 5.3 percent from 6.4 percent, the percentage of Americans car pooling fell to 13 percent from 20 percent, and the percentage driving alone to work increased to 74 percent from 65 percent.

- The National Transit Database reports that fewer people are using mass transit now than when the federal government began subsidizing transit in 1975.
- Downs writes that transit serves one to two percent of total trips.
- When the Northridge earthquake destroyed roadway connections to work, the MTA provided the transit infrastructure for mobility to work, and ridership increased. Yet when roadway connections were restored, and the availability was equal between transportation modes, people chose to go back to the automobile mode of transportation.
- There are more trips per household today than there were 30 years ago, going to a myriad of destinations. Transit typically takes two to five times longer for the same trip. Mobility means being able to come home from work, take the kids to soccer, drop off clothes at the dry cleaner, go to the gym, and pick up groceries, all on the same journey. The number of transfers required to do the same journey by transit makes transit too time-consuming and unworkable. Even less realistic would be the expectation that bicycles could serve the multi-purpose journeys mentioned above. In 1990, only 0.4 percent of Americans used a bicycle to commute to work, less than the 0.5 percent who used a bicycle in 1980.
- A frequent complaint about land use planning is the lack of intergovernmental cooperation and the lack of coordination between planning agencies. In Los Angeles, the light-rail Green Line travels to within two miles of the Los Angeles International Airport terminals, yet bypasses the airport.
- Two-thirds of commutes are between suburbs, in patterns that look like spider webs, as opposed to central city commutes with hub-and-spoke patterns.
- Therefore, increased availability of transit in Riverside County is not going to serve more than one to five percent of trips, current or forecast.

### **Traffic Impact of Transit**

- In the CETAP Land Use Task Force's Land Use Scenarios, even assuming 33% transit use between nodes, transit had little effect on traffic volumes.
- If a complete transit network were provided to serve projected growth in Riverside County, and the network tripled the percentage of commuters using transit, the reduction of automobiles due to transit use would be offset by the population growth. Since increased availability of transit in Riverside County is not going to serve more than 1-5% of trips, an emphasis on transit improvements would mean that traffic congestion in Riverside County would increase by approximately 126 percent instead of 131 percent by 2020. Highways would operate typically at Level of Service F.
- Transit will not significantly reduce traffic congestion.

## High Cost of Transit

- The MTA Blue Line and the proposed SR-30 Foothill Freeway are both separate right-of-way, typical above-ground facilities for Southern California. By comparison, construction cost for the Blue Line was \$877 million for 22 miles, or \$40 million per mile. Construction cost of the eight-lane SR-30 Foothill Freeway is estimated at \$970 million for 28.2 miles or \$34 million per mile.
- The MTA Green Line and the eight-lane I-105 Freeway traverse the same route. Daily boarding for the Green Line for 1998 averaged 20,232 boardings. The average daily trips (ADT) on the I-105 freeway is 204,000 ADT.
- The *SCAG State of the Commute Report 1998*, states that in the SCAG region, the travel mode of commuters includes 14.3% carpools and 1.2% vanpools. Carpools average 2.5 members, vanpools average 7.0 members. Therefore, of the 204,000 ADT on I-105, an additional 43,758 people would be traveling by carpool and an additional 14,688 people would be traveling by vanpool, so that the I-105 carries approximately 262,446 people per day.
- To summarize, the light rail line cost 18 percent more than the eight-lane freeway, yet carries only eight percent as many people.
- According to Robert T. Dunphy in *Urban Land*, July 1996, when light rail capital investments are converted to a cost per daily round-trip rider, light-rail systems cost between \$10,000 and \$64,000 per daily rider. As a basis of comparison, the transit agencies in the lowest-cost cities made an investment roughly equivalent to the cost of a Honda Civic for each regular rider, whereas, in high-cost cities, the investment equaled the cost of a BMW.
- TEA-21 provides \$42 billion in transit funding over a six-year period. The Census Bureau reports that up to 30 million people live in poverty and of those, 26 percent don't own a car. For perspective, it would be less expensive to buy a Geo Metro for every poor person in America without a car than to significantly increase current levels of federal transit funding.
- Transit funding often is spent in irrational ways. Many new subway and trolley lines are simply drawing passengers away from existing bus routes. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 1993, in Los Angeles, the \$877 million Blue Line, which was forecast to cost \$200 million, is slower than an express bus service that it replaced. Los Angeles expects to spend \$4.5 billion for the 17.4-mile light-rail Red Line.
- In Portland, recent light-rail proposals are projected to cost \$100 million per mile, enough to build several miles of four-lane freeway, yet existing light-rail lines carry fewer people than a single freeway lane.
- The capital costs to build one mile of light-rail average \$20 million, whereas Caltrans estimates that the costs to construct one lane-mile of freeway average \$2 million. For comparison, a ten-lane freeway could be built at approximately the same cost as light-rail, serving far more people.

- Buses require less capital investment than light rail and are a more economical transit option than rail.
- Thomas Pickrell in his 1990 report *Urban Rail Transit Projects: Forecast Versus Actual Ridership and Cost* found that almost without exception, decision makers had relied on ridership projections that ultimately proved far too high and cost projections that proved far too low.

### **Transportation Goals**

- To attract business and jobs, the County must provide for the movement of people and goods. The County will gain a competitive advantage in the region if it takes the lead in reducing traffic congestion. This improvement in making truly livable communities will encourage the location of jobs on Riverside County.
- Telecommuting, as it becomes more common, may contribute more toward traffic reduction than any “Smart Growth”/Transit plan.
- The CETAP process will likely enjoy public favor by solving the County’s 2<sup>nd</sup> most serious issue, traffic congestion, before proposing to spend funds on less serious issues such as the County’s 11<sup>th</sup> most serious problem, preserving open space.
- The magnitude of the projected traffic increase by 2020 requires high capacity improvements to handle the volume, meaning an investment in freeways and arterial highways is needed.
- As the County has invested in preserving wildlife corridors, it must make an equally serious investment in high capacity transportation corridors to serve the projected increase in traffic.
- CETAP needs to implement the County’s goal of Level of Service C on freeways and arterial highways.
- CETAP needs to plan for growth by protecting adequate ROW to accommodate the facilities needed to serve the projected 2040 traffic volumes at the County LOS C standard, so that the County doesn’t repeat Orange County’s mistakes of widening freeways in built-up areas (e.g., I-5 and I-55).
- Funding should be reallocated by mode on the basis of trips served, in order to solve traffic congestion. The cost solely of building sufficient highway lane-miles for LOS C to accommodate the growth in population must be presented to the public.
- Transit/Smart Growth will not reduce traffic congestion, and will not resolve the second most serious problem facing the County. Transit may become a feasible option as development densities increase over time, but only for a small percentage of the total trips. Therefore building a transit network must receive consideration only after traffic congestion has been resolved in the County.

## **Transportation Funding**

- Congestion has arisen because of a lack of investment in highways, not in spite of highway investment.
- Policies of the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's to neither plan for nor accommodate additional vehicle trips have caused the congestion and delays. Highway Trust Fund dollars were diverted to other programs or not fully spent. By the mid-1970's through the 1980's, California had fallen to 49<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in per capita spending on roads. Between 1980 and 1997, the number of state highway lane-miles per capita in the SCAG region declined by 18 percent. Presently, California is 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in car and gas taxes, but 50<sup>th</sup> in per capita highway spending. Reserving gas tax and car tax revenue for highway construction is a potential revenue source.
- According to Downs, public transit currently receives 25 percent of all transportation funding but serves only one to two percent of total trips.
- Since transportation funding is limited, funding must be reallocated on the basis of trips served, in order to solve traffic congestion.
- Existing highway funding can be supplemented as needed with impact fees by directly linking needed new improvements with the expected number of new trips to be generated by new development.

## **Studies Needed**

- CETAP must quantify the acreage of ROW that will need to be preserved within each identified corridor to protect the lane-miles needed to serve the population growth of the County at LOS C to year 2040.
- Quantify the difference in smog produced by freeways and highways operating at LOS E-F versus LOS C.
- Quantify the difference in energy use on freeways and highways operating at LOS E-F versus LOS C.
- Quantify the loss in productivity in the County due to hours spent in traffic delays.

## **Responses to Common Smart Growth Arguments**

- *Since the 1940's, cities have been planned and built around the automobile.*

Actually, suburbs first formed around the commuter rail station, then around the automobile. For a long time, people have desired lower density, single-family homes away from the squalor of the city. People enjoy the mobility and personal freedom afforded by a car. Telecommunication has allowed the decentralization of employment. Development dispersed in response to the demand for lower densities and the reduced need to centralize work activities



- *Auto-related land use planning has caused congestion, so that now it takes more time than before to carry out our daily activities.*

As stated above, policies of the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's to neither plan for nor accommodate additional vehicle trips have caused the congestion and delays. Highway Trust Fund dollars were diverted to other programs or not fully spent. As transportation planning became linked to social engineering, a deliberate effort was made to stop roadway construction, thereby creating congestion that was hoped to be so unbearable that people would stop driving. By the mid-1970's through the 1980's, California had fallen to 49<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in per capita spending on roads. Between 1980 and 1997, the number of state highway lane-miles per capita in the SCAG region declined by 18 percent. Presently, California is 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in car and gas taxes, but 50<sup>th</sup> in per capita highway spending.

It takes more time now to carry out daily activities because anti-auto planning designed the highway system to be that way. Los Angeles is the nation's densest metropolitan area, yet is the one that has the fewest highway miles per capita. Only recently has development permitting been linked to transportation planning to provide needed supporting infrastructure for new trips being generated by development.

Traveling by auto is still faster than using transit.

- *Auto-related land use planning has reduced our options.*

Public spending on transit is over eight times greater than it was 30 years ago. As stated above, when the Northridge earthquake destroyed roadway connections to work, the MTA provided the transit infrastructure for mobility to work, and ridership increased. Yet when the roadway connections were restored, and the options between modes were equal, people chose to go back to the automobile mode of transportation.

"Growth boundaries and compact development" doesn't sound like a choice of options. Restricting growth to urbanizing centers is not the same as simply removing regulatory barriers to provide for walkable, higher-density, mixed-use developments. New urbanism and livable communities, which use a higher-density, mixed-use urban design approach to create pedestrian-oriented developments should be encouraged in urbanizing centers, but must not be the only option for land development.

- *Sprawl is consuming important farmland.*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that the amount of cropland is virtually identical to 50 years ago. Farmland is not disappearing. The government still pays \$1.7 billion annually to farmers to not farm their land. Much of the land in farms that has been "lost" is now forest land.

- *Sprawl is too expensive a pattern of development to provide future public services.*

For years, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) has required incorporating cities to demonstrate that they can fiscally provide needed public services. Public services are not provided in a giant regional, hub-and-spoke; they're a decentralized mosaic.

- *Rather than designing towns so that we can walk to work or to the store, we have separated uses into homogenous single-use enclaves. We have clustered retail into malls and big-box stores. Businesses are clustered in business parks and campuses.*

Zoning has created single-use enclaves by prohibiting mixed-use development. Malls have provided highly convenient shopping that's out of the weather with free parking that's close to stores. Big box retailers have made goods more affordable to more people. Telecommunication has allowed businesses to locate in the country. Telecommuting, as it becomes more common, may contribute more toward traffic reduction than Smart Growth.

- *We need to find an alternative to the single occupancy vehicle.*

There are more trips per household today than there were 30 years ago, going to numerous destinations, making car pooling less feasible and making the use of public transit time-consuming and inconvenient. People won't give up time to take transit.

The automobile is a faster, safer, more comfortable, more flexible, more convenient, and often cheaper form of transportation. People are behaving rationally to choose that mode.

Public transit carries only one to five percent of all trips. The best form of public transit may be a dial-a-ride.

- *Sprawl causes people to be segregated by income and age.*

People choose to live near people like themselves and move accordingly (e.g., Chinatown, Monterey Park, Little Saigon, and Santa Ana). People prefer to live near neighbors of similar income rather than similar race (e.g., Beverly Hills and Brentwood). It is not likely that retirees in Hemet or in Winter Park, Florida feel segregated.

By providing only compact development, the County would fail to provide the type of housing that would attract executives and move-up buyers, and would thereby lose the capability to attract clean, higher income, high-tech businesses.

- *Main Street, the corner store, and public squares have deteriorated due to sprawl. There is a loss of place.*

Government programs and social engineering, such as urban renewal and welfare have increased crime and squalor, causing the deterioration of the public squares. Sprawl is the result of people

fleeing the cities for the suburbs. Zoning that prohibited the mixed-use development found in cities has created the loss of a sense of place. Government, after providing years of subsidized mortgages, lacks credibility in advocating Smart Growth.

- *Sprawl prevents livability.*

Livability for the vast majority of Americans means achieving the dream of owning their own homes. Fifty years ago, the homeownership rate was only 44 percent. In the past 50 years, home builders have built nearly 75 million new homes and apartments, or three of every four housing units in the country today. Today, two-thirds of American households (66.3 percent) now own their own homes, elevating the homeownership rate to an all-time high.

Smart Growth will not reduce traffic congestion to help make truly livable communities, but will protect open space and habitat areas.

It's ironic that environmentalists, trying to get people to better respect nature, are alienating people from nature by advocating higher density, urbanized environments. The real threat to livability comes from typical hyper-environmentalist objectives: (1) minimizing the amount of land used by humans; and (2) discouraging the use of automobiles and other human activities that they feel are harmful.

Smart Growth is a new form of social engineering.

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**Compact Growth Leads to More Traffic Congestion**

- According to Census Bureau data, a comparison of the share of commuter trips made by auto to the population densities of the nation’s 282 largest urban areas shows that there is no clear relationship between development density and auto usage. Most people in high-density developments still use autos for most of their travel.
- According to Census Bureau data, a comparison of vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) to the population densities of the nation’s 391 metropolitan areas shows that higher densities lead to more auto travel. Unless those higher densities are accompanied by higher road capacities, higher densities also lead to more congestion.
- A 1994 study by Cambridge Systematics for the U.S. Department of Transportation found that “land use mix does not impact drive alone mode share to a degree that is statistically significant.”
- Of all the light rail systems built in the past two decades, only two – in Washington, D.C. and San Diego – were accompanied by significant increases in overall transit ridership.

**Compact Growth Reduces Air Quality**

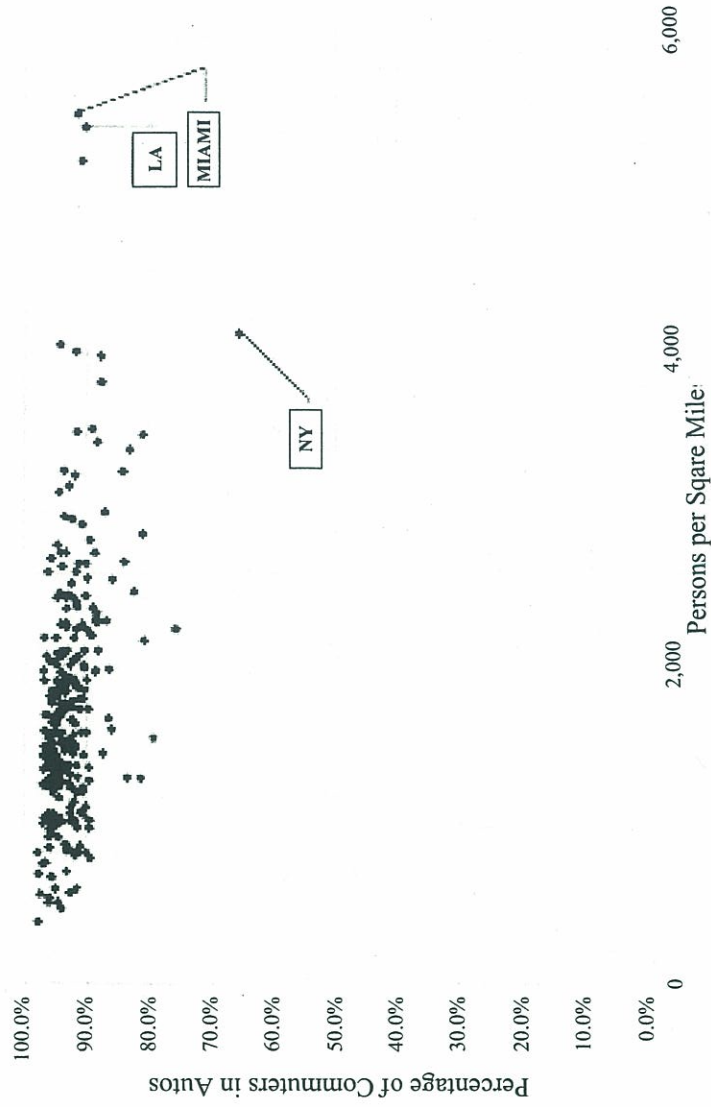
- According to Census Bureau and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data, a comparison of EPA smog rating to the 1990 population densities of the nation’s 391 metropolitan areas and the 76 central cities with more than 200,000 people shows that in every case, cleaner air correlates with lower densities.
- The report *Clean Air through Transportation*, jointly published by the Department of Transportation and the EPA, using data from San Diego and Los Angeles, indicates that huge investments in both rail and transit systems are likely to reduce CO pollution by less than one percent and HC by only one to three percent. By comparison, relatively inexpensive investments in signalization to improve the flow of traffic and reduce pollution three to six times as much.



## **Livability**

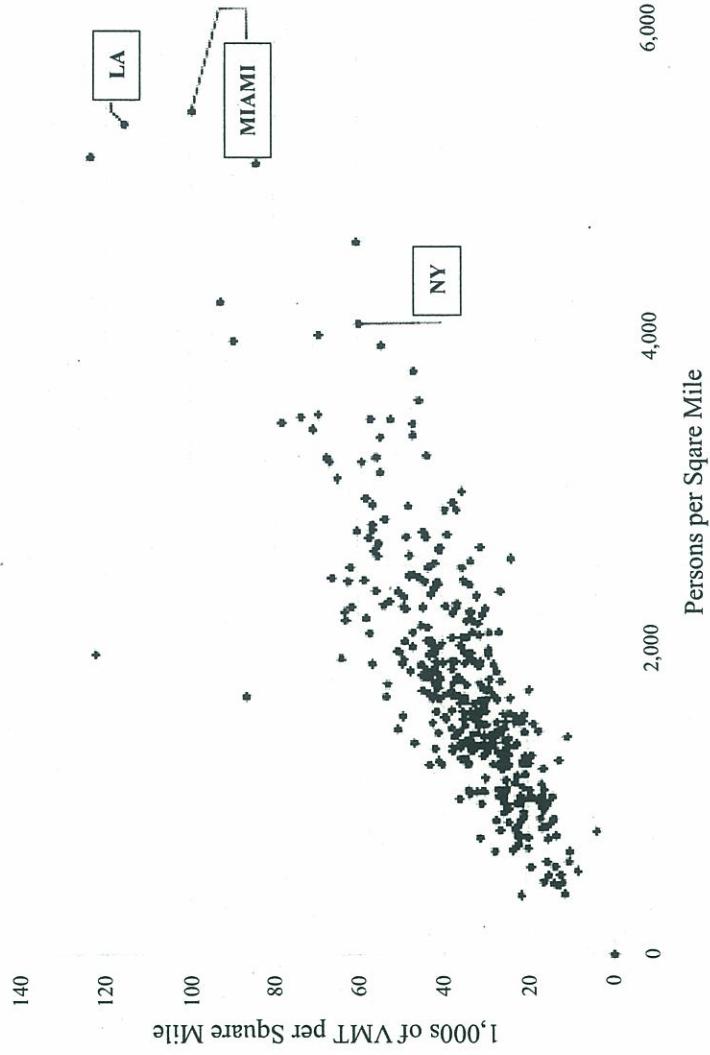
- Livability for the vast majority of Americans means achieving the dream of owning their own homes. Fifty years ago, the homeownership rate was only 44 percent. In the past 50 years, home builders have built nearly 75 million new homes and apartments, or three of every four housing units in the country today. Today, two-thirds of American households (66.3 percent) now own their own homes, elevating the homeownership rate to an all-time high.
- Gadi Kaufmann of Robert Charles Lesser & Company states that single-family homes are preferred over attached products by a ratio of nine to one. Even single-family houses on small lots will outsell attached products if prices are equal. As density goes up, the general interest from the consumer goes down.
- Joel Garreau, in *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*, points out that “we have not built a single old-style downtown from raw dirt in seventy-five years.”
- A survey by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) of individuals age 55 and over found that almost 60 percent of the respondents said that if they were to move, they would prefer moving to the country or a small town.
- A study by the American Retirement Corporation (ARC) and Sharon Brooks found that most seniors view retirement communities as a residence of last resort.

# Population Density and Share of Commuter Trips Made by Auto in 1990



Source: Bureau of the Census, Database C90STF3A at <http://venus.census.gov/cdrom/lookup/875134983 and 875128475>

# Population Density and VMT in 1995



Source: Federal Highway Administration, Highways Statistics 1995  
(Washington: FHWA, 1996), Table HM-71

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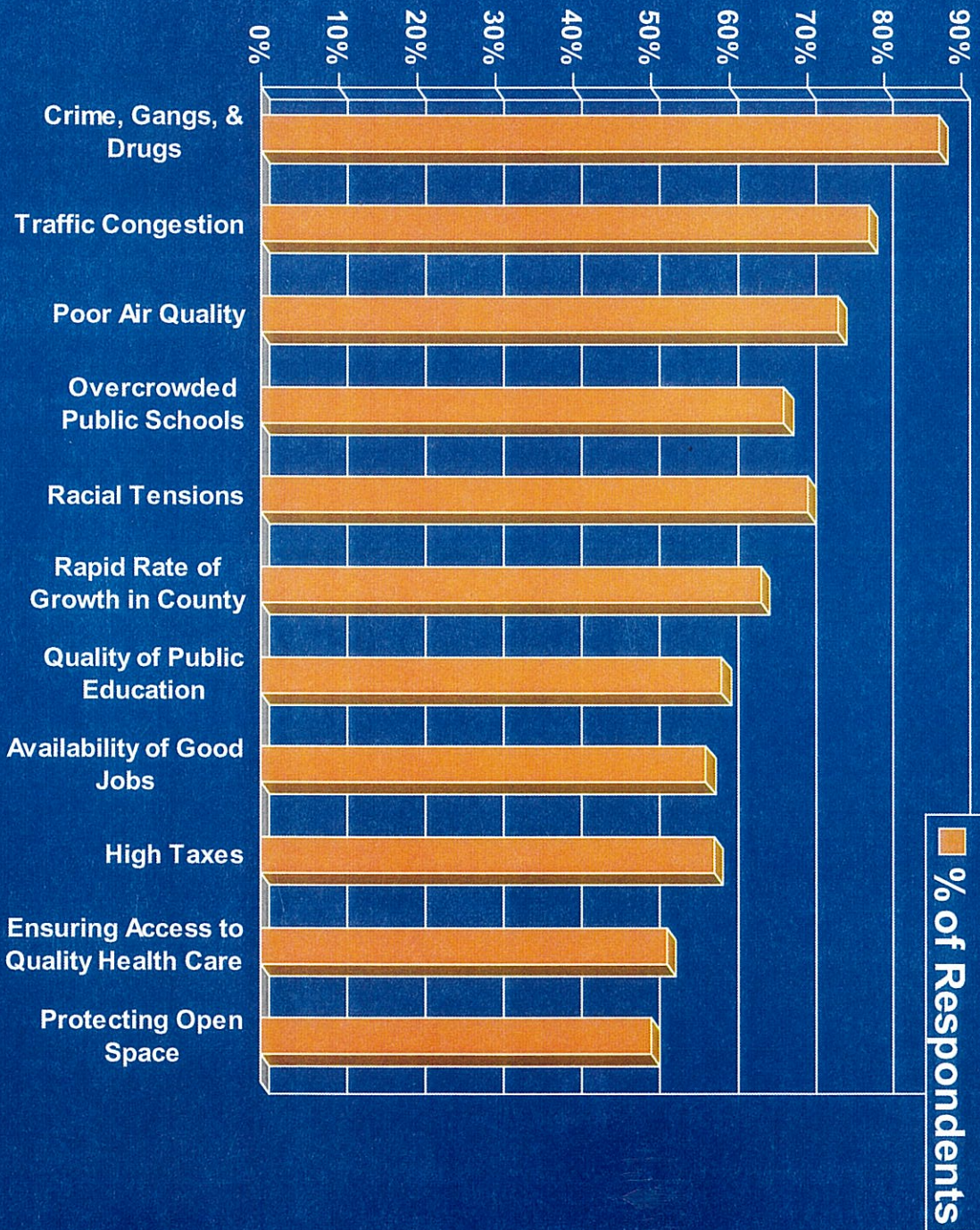
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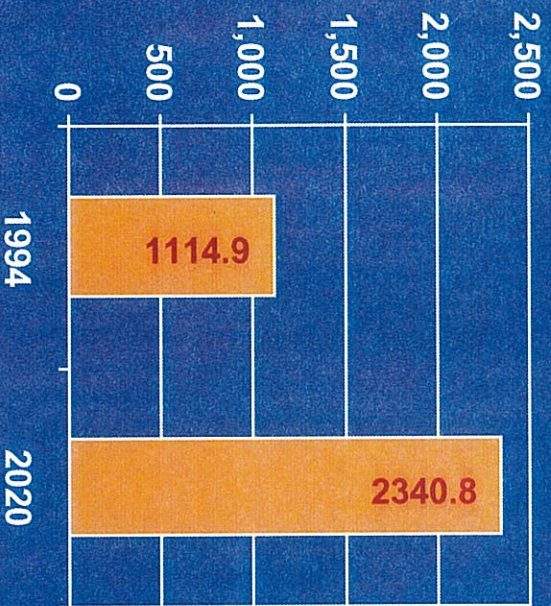
## SERIOUSNESS OF PROBLEMS IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY



Source: Riverside County Public Opinion Survey Report, July 19, 1999



# POPULATION & TRAFFIC GROWTH IN WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY



Population (in Thousands)



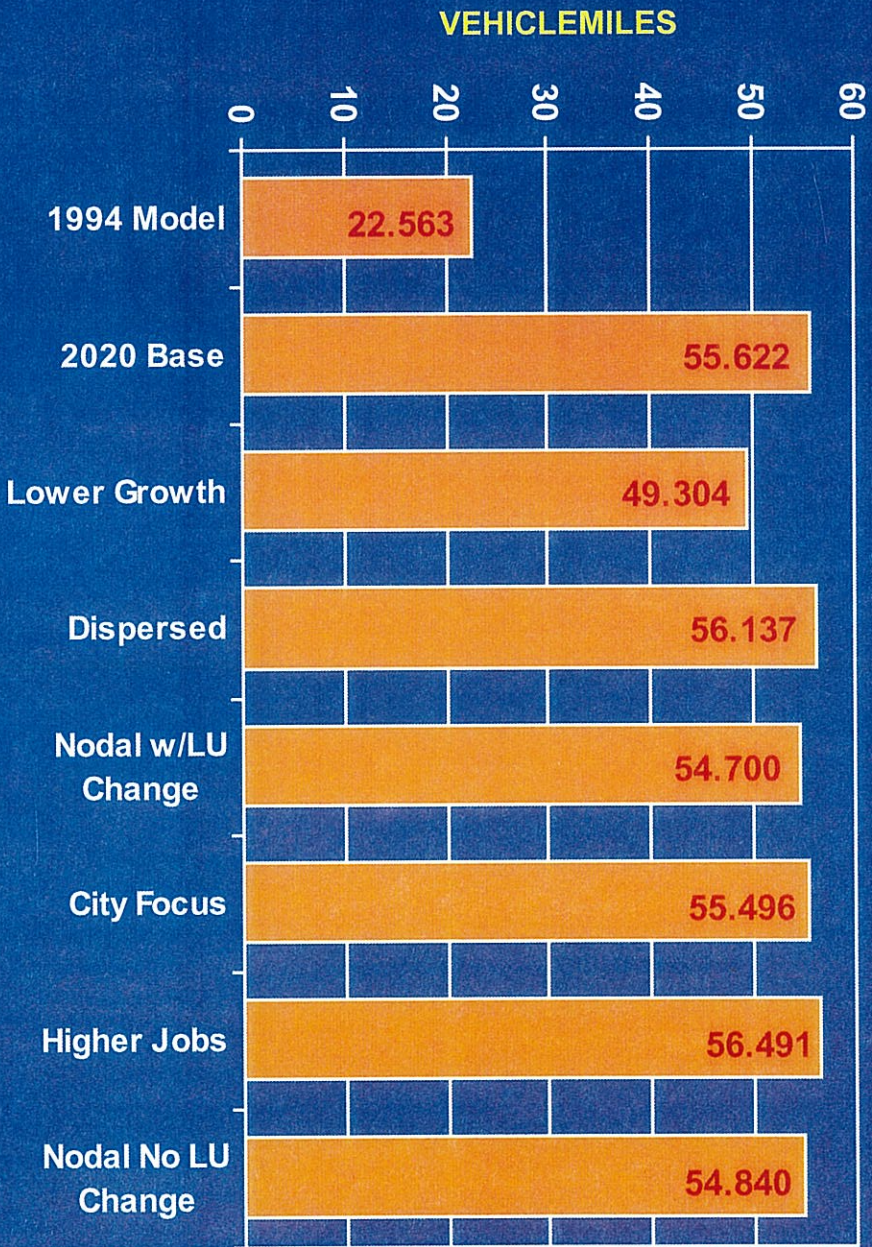
Total Daily Trips

Source: SCAG 1998 Regional Transportation Plan





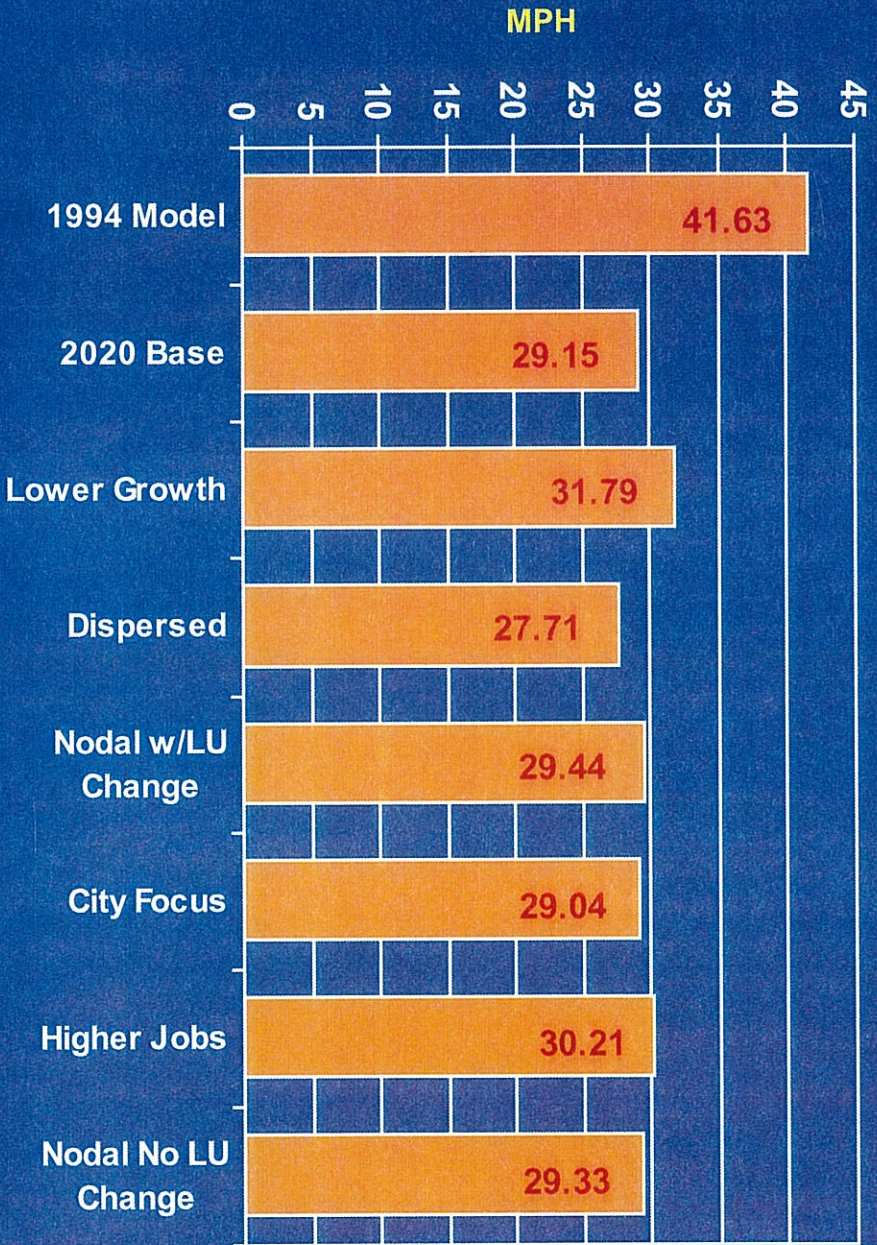
# VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED - RIVERSIDE COUNTY (in millions per day)



Source: Memorandum to Members of the CETAP Advisory Committee, October 3, 1999



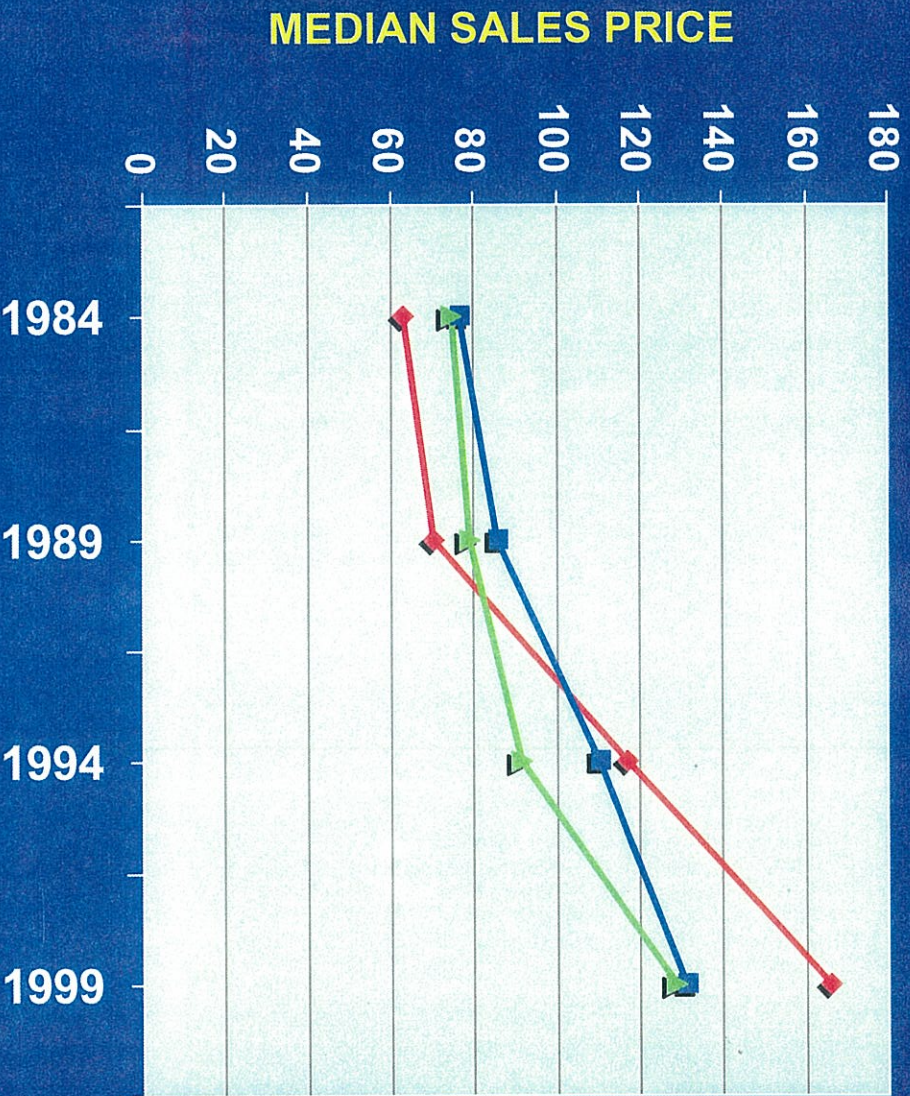
# AVERAGE SPEED - RIVERSIDE COUNTY



Source: Memorandum to Members of the CETAP Advisory Committee, October 3, 1999



# PRICE OF EXISTING SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES (In Thousands)

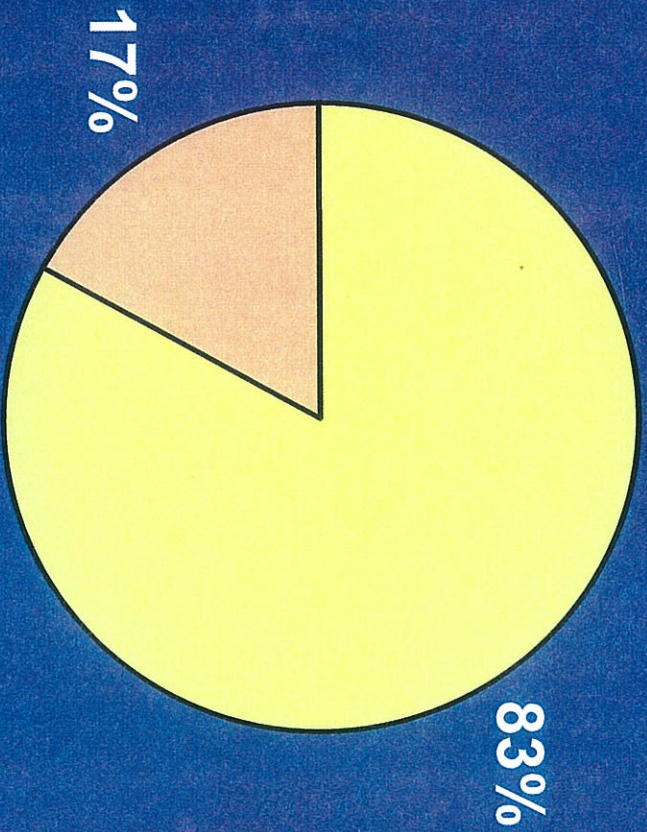


◆ Portland  
■ Las Vegas  
▲ Phoenix

Source: National Association of Realtors



## HOME PREFERENCE

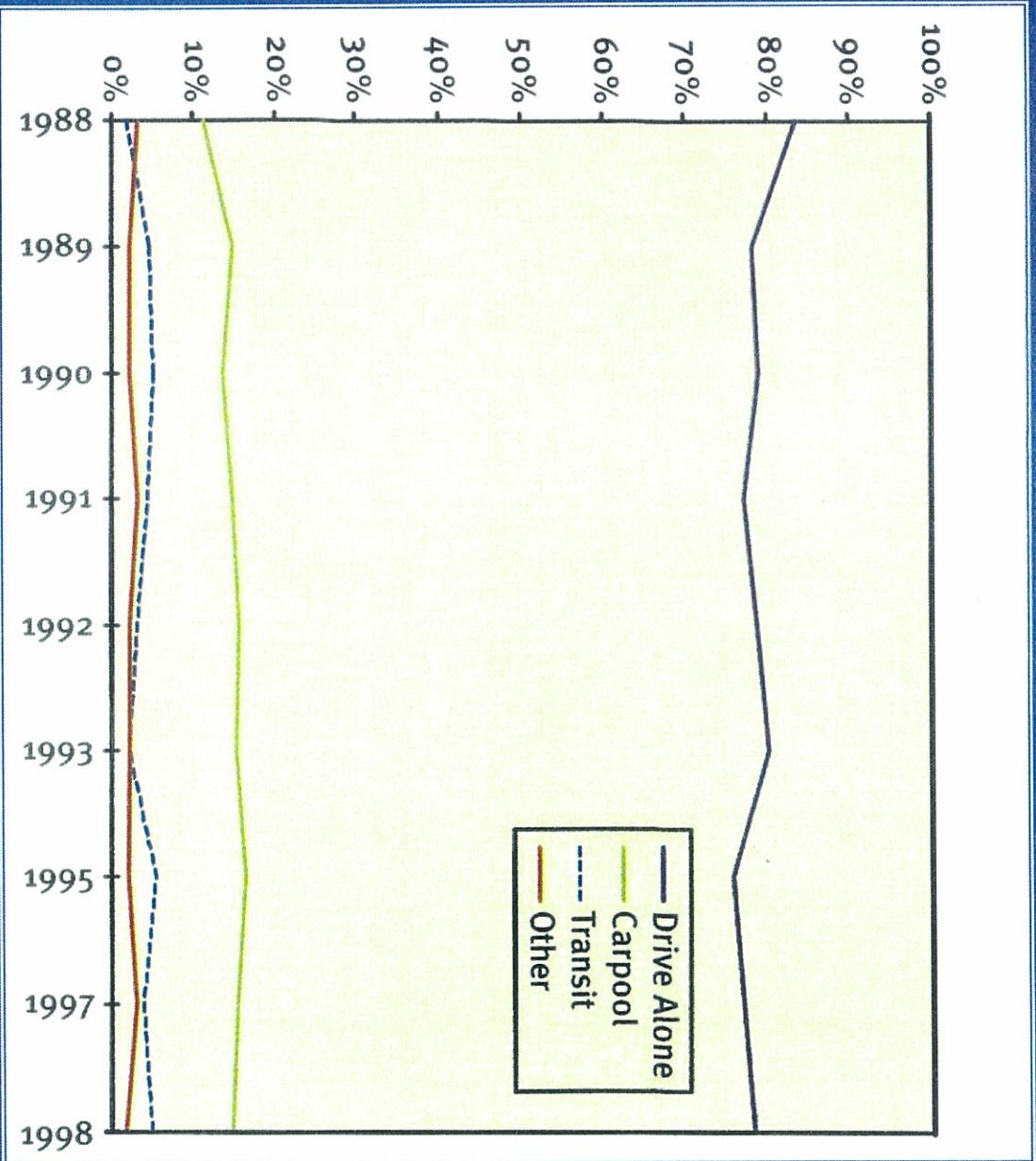


- Single Family Detached Home in the Suburbs
- Townhouse in the City with Attributes of Smart Growth

Source: National Association of Homebuilders



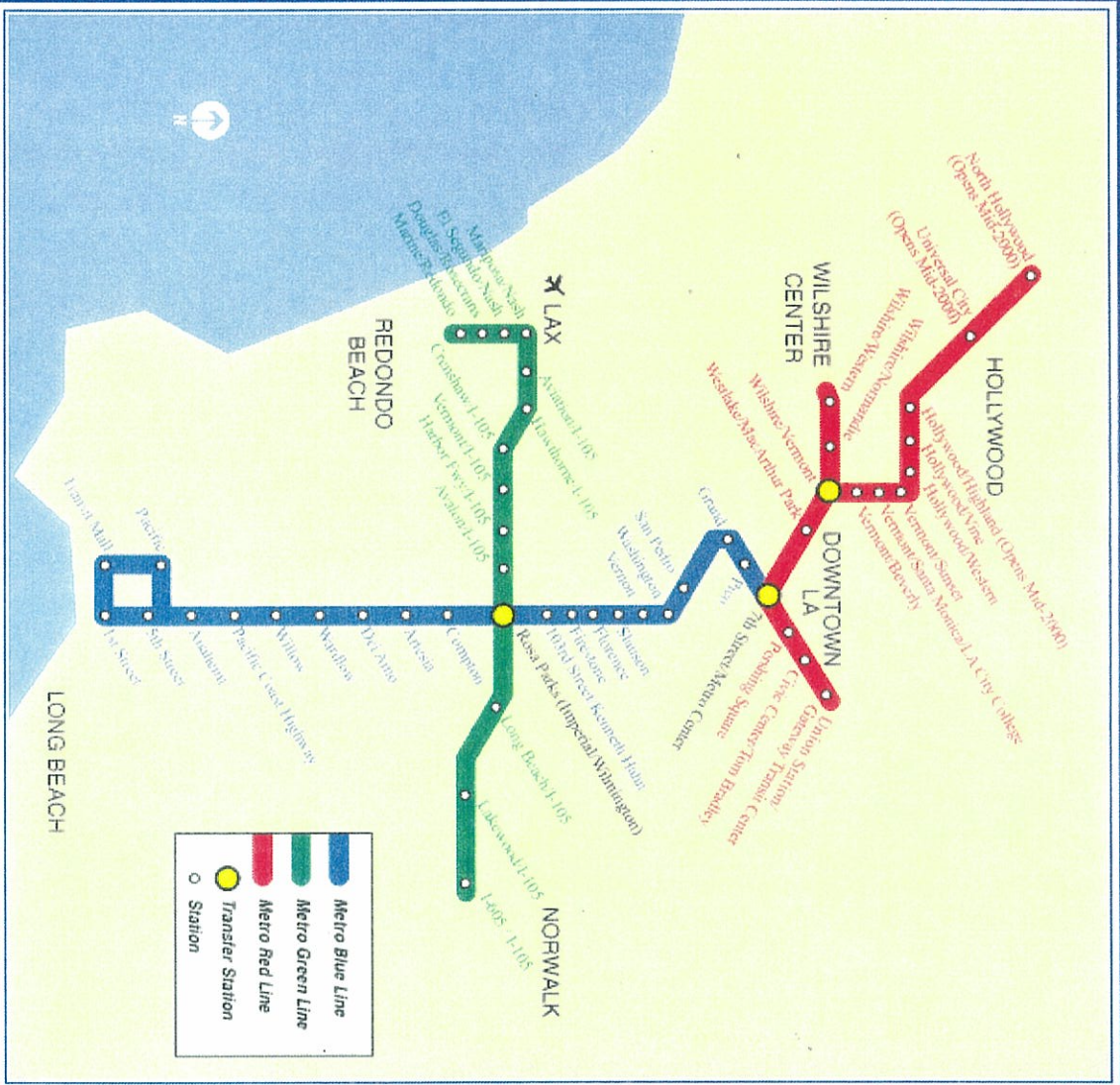
# PRIMARY TRAVEL MODE - COMMUTERS



Source: SCAG State of the Commute Survey



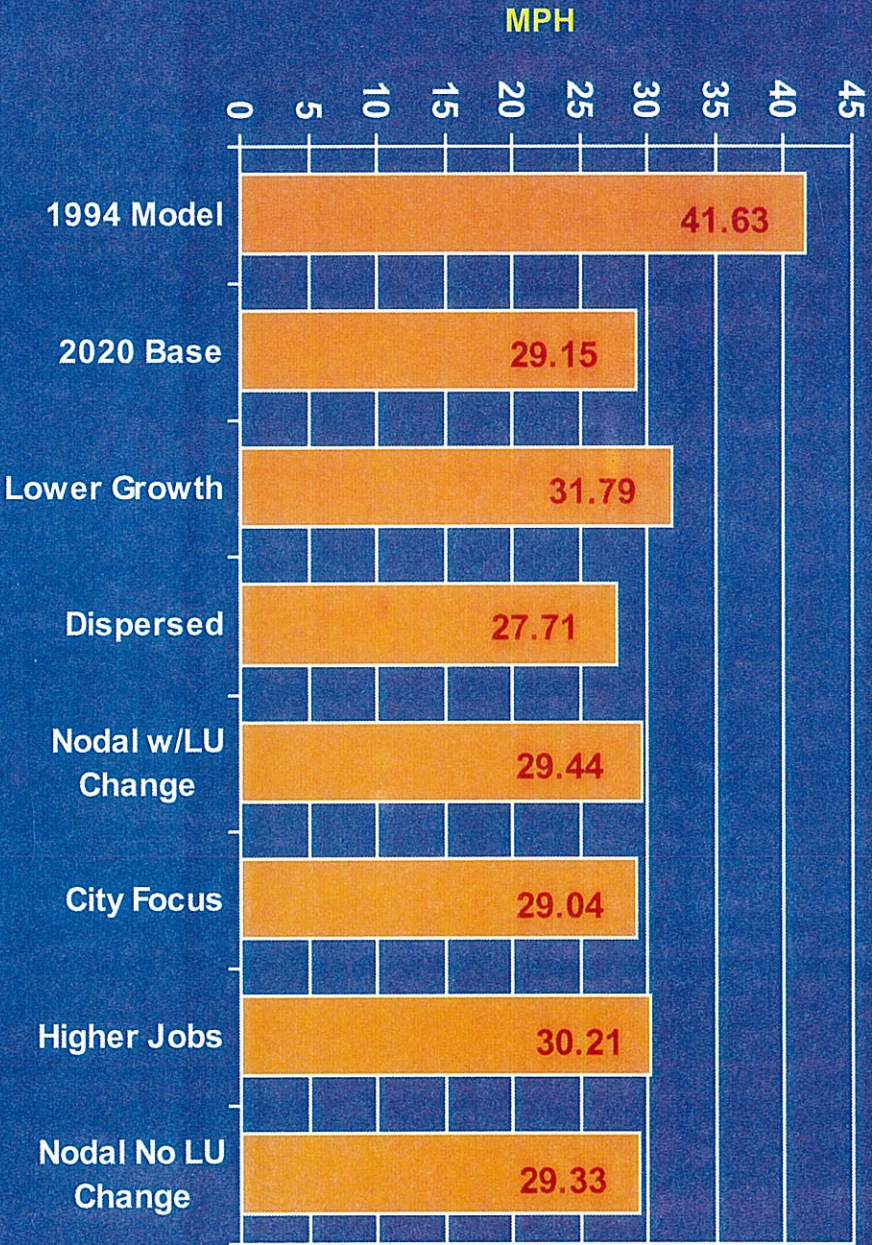
# METRO RAIL SYSTEM



Source: MTA Website ([http://www.mta.net/metro/metro\\_rail/mr\\_system\\_map.htm](http://www.mta.net/metro/metro_rail/mr_system_map.htm))



# AVERAGE SPEED - RIVERSIDE COUNTY



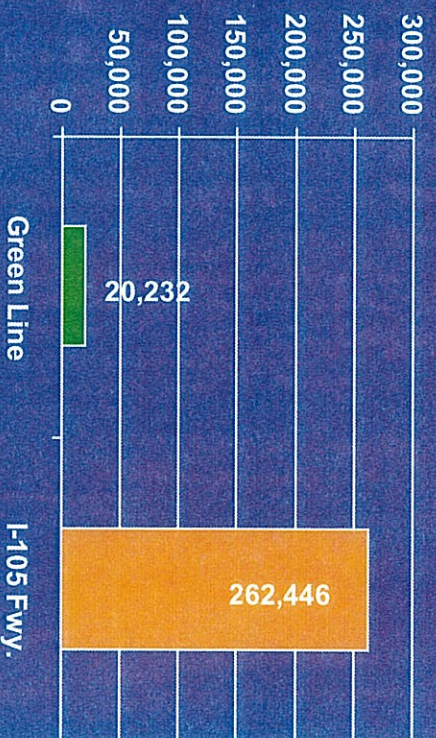
Source: Memorandum to Members of the CETAP Advisory Committee, October 3, 1999



# TRANSIT/FREEWAY COMPARISON



**COST PER MILE**  
(In Millions)



**PEOPLE CARRIED PER DAY**  
(In Thousands)

Source: MTA, Caltrans



**LEVEL OF SERVICE "C"**

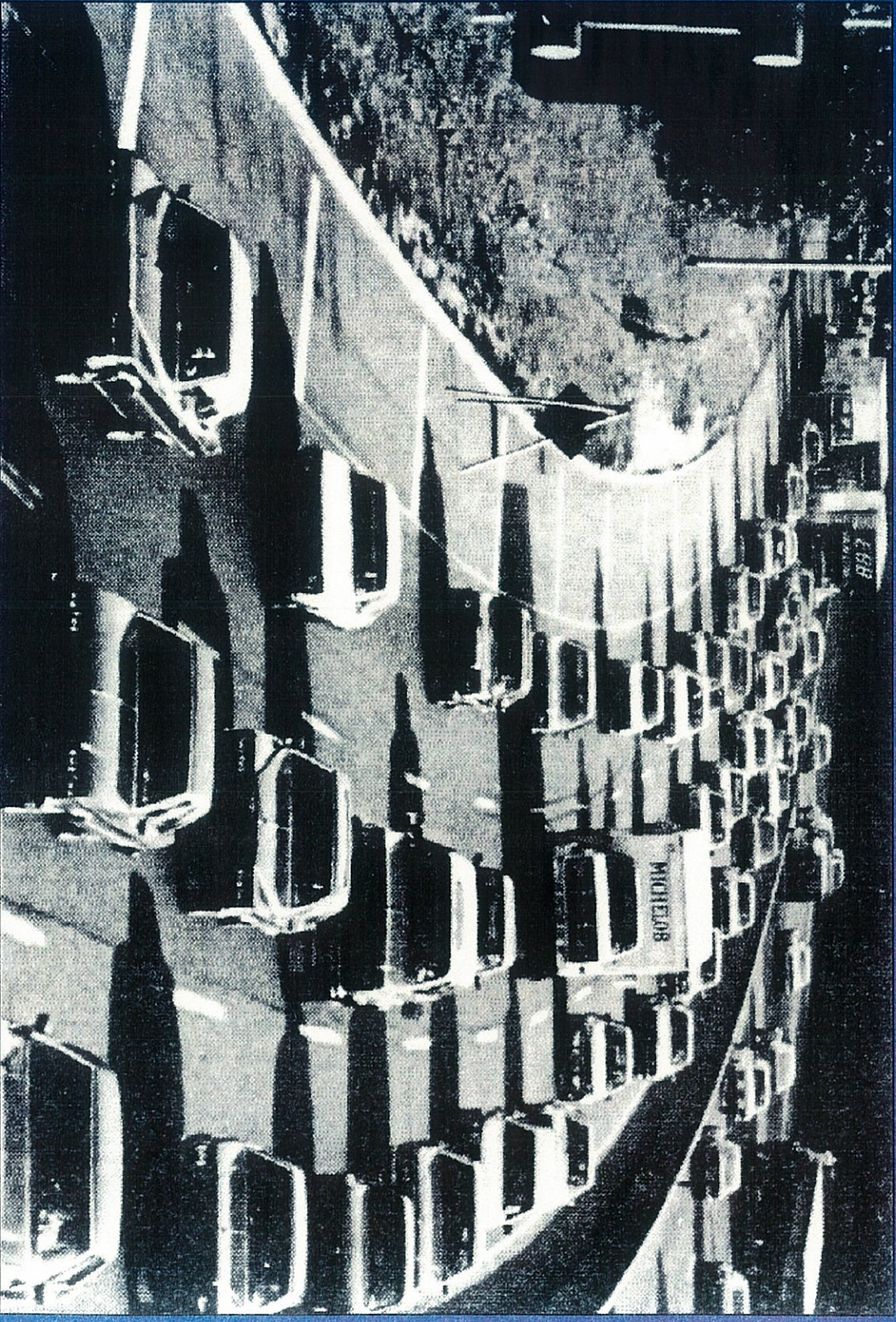


*Source: VPPA Technologies*





# LEVEL OF SERVICE "F"



Source: VPPA Technologies

