



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
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Abstract of Proceedings
November 1, 2007

A Regional Dialogue for North Los Angeles County



MULHOLLAND INSTITUTE

Part One – The Big Ideas

Part Two – Regional Strategies and Clusters along the I-5 Corridor

Part Three – The San Fernando Valley and North Los Angeles County Subregions

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The following is an abstract of remarks, reports and panels presented at INFO Summit 2007. This document represents consensus findings in some respects and individual opinions in others. The goal is inform the public debate, presenting innovative strategies and promoting sound public policies.

Moderator: David Fleming, Chairman, Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley;
Chairman, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce; Board Member, Los Angeles Metro

Part One – The Big Ideas

- Mike Antonovich, Supervisor, Los Angeles County, Fifth District
- Richard Katz, California State Assembly (Former), Board Member, Metro
- David Grannis, President, Planning Associates
- Larry Zarian, Commissioner, State of California, Transportation Commission
- Wendy Greuel, President Pro Tempore, Los Angeles City Council

Part Two – Regional Strategies and Clusters along the I-5 Corridor

Presentation: Bob Scott: Report: *Interstate-5 Corridor Strategy*

- Zev Yaroslavsky, Supervisor, Los Angeles County, Third District
- Marsha Ramos, Mayor, City of Burbank
- Steve MacDonald, President, Film L.A.
- Bob Scott, Director, Mulholland Institute

Part Three – The San Fernando Valley and North Los Angeles County Subregions

Presentation: Dan Blake: SFV Statistical District, CCD, SCAG Subregion and SFV COG

- Ara Najarian, Mayor, City of Glendale
- Wendy Greuel, President Pro Tempore, Los Angeles City Council
- Dan Blake, Director, San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center, CSUN
- Sylvia Patsouras, Southern California Association of Governments

A Regional Dialogue for North Los Angeles County

The Interstate-5 is a key corridor for the movement of goods and commuters. Yet, because of the multiple jurisdictions it serves as it straddles North Los Angeles County, a unified I-5 vision has never been developed. This leads to fragmented political agendas and diminished ability to access much-needed resources. From an economic perspective, there are many unrealized opportunities for collaboration—collaboration and cooperation among the cities and industry clusters in the areas of the Santa Clarita Valley, the East San Fernando Valley, and the cities of Glendale and Burbank.

Historically, peak hour traffic flowed in a single direction to downtown Los Angeles in the morning, and returned in the evening. That has now evolved into two-way traffic, with longer “rush hours,” in many cases extending throughout the day. The City of Santa Monica, for

example, continues to create jobs but lacks a balance of affordable housing, leading to reverse traffic flows as the workforce moves further out. It is critical for elected officials to look beyond their own cities, to collaborate with surrounding jurisdictions, and to think “outside the box.”

Leaders agree that we don’t think enough about the future and don’t plan adequately for future needs. There really is no long-term commitment in a political climate of opportunism and instant gratification. In addition to local officials, the members of California’s congressional delegation should also be involved in these long-term strategic planning initiatives.

There is room for improvement in the way we govern our region. The fast track reconstruction of the Santa Monica Freeway after the 1994 Northridge Earthquake is an example of what is possible. Emerging nations are showing the way. China is building a light rail line from the Beijing Airport to downtown Beijing that will virtually eliminate a 30-minute commute. Their high-speed rail line from Shanghai to Tibet was completed in 5 years, replacing a two and one-half day train ride.

The State legislature needs to encourage public/private partnerships, provide more consistency and give jurisdictions the tools to fast track transportation construction programs, to cut red tape and to encourage workflow enhancers. One proven method is the “design-build” technique, a construction project delivery system where, in contrast to traditional “design-bid-build,” the design and construction aspects of a project overlap to reduce the delivery schedule and improve economies.

Another example of inefficiency is the allocation of “superfund” dollars. Only fifty percent of superfund dollars go to the actual toxic clean-up—the other fifty percent is squandered on regulatory issues, bureaucracy and legal fees. Likewise, with state bonds for transportation, a major percentage is siphoned off into the general fund—not where they were intended to go. Ballot propositions have been introduced in an attempt to remedy this situation.

Unfortunately, in today’s political environment, instead of attending to the business at hand, elected officials tend to focus too much on term limits—looking toward the inevitable end of their term and their next office. As a result, we have lost the 20-30 year planning horizons needed to envision the future. Recently enacted legislation sponsored by Sen. Richard Alarcón and the Valley Industry & Commerce Association requires “truth in bonding” but this requirement has been largely ignored.¹

What can civic and community leaders do to help? Develop good public policies and support leaders who champion those causes. Long-term solutions require thoughtful collaboration and a consistent and continuous drum beat. Civic interveners and facilitators can be especially helpful in facilitating cross-jurisdictional and inter-agency collaboration.

Key Findings and Conclusions – Interstate-5 Report

County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky indicated, after having read the I-5 Corridor report, he is excited about the possibilities and the ideas presented. There is “a lot of action going on

¹ Government Code Sections 50075.1 et seq. Local Agency Special Tax and Bond Accountability Act, requires local special tax measures contain a statement of specific purposes, that the proceeds be applied to those purposes, and mandates the creation of an account with annual reporting—including bonds sold by a local agency.

already—in motion picture, entertainment, and biotech—with potential for much more—land costs on the I-5 are less than along the Ventura Freeway/101 Corridor—there is a potentially great labor force—it has relatively good transportation starting out—currently activities are mostly low job density—the infrastructure is good and the numbers are right to jump start industrial development.” According to Yaroslavsky “the loss of industrially-zoned land is a big issue—this land needs to be preserved and exploited, ‘in a good way’—to attract business for our region from other parts of the state and southwest.” The community of Sun Valley is seen as a real opportunity area within the I-5 Corridor strategy. The Los Angeles County-run Whiteman Airport is working on incubator projects with private sector local employment—“it’s not soot and smokestacks anymore.”

The preservation of industrially-zoned lands is critical to accommodate good jobs in wealth-producing industries. The entitlement game—where skilled developers can reliably change zones, and even amend General Plans, from industrial to more valuable commercial and residential uses—can unrealistically inflate industrial property values based on zoning “potential” rather than actual zoning established in the General Plan. Jurisdictions do need to be able grant reasonable variances to accommodate to mixed-uses and special configurations. But, they should work to restrict development to planned uses—uses that are the result of lengthy planning processes and community consensus. If people think they can routinely overbuild a zone, it results in a destructive cycle.

Corridor Issues

- Housing stock is unable to keep pace with demand and cities are running out of options for compliance with SCAG’s state-mandated Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).
- New strategies are needed for developing areas closer to the core in order to minimize impacts on transportation and infrastructure.
- Santa Clarita Valley is a combination of classic and planned communities that are rapidly consuming available industrial land.
- Glendale and Burbank are built around traditional single family neighborhoods, with strong commercial, and well-developed industrial clusters of entertainment, technology and finance. They are constrained by very limited land availability and have to rely on mixed-use strategies to fulfill housing needs.
- The Northeast Valley makes up the central portion of the I-5 Corridor. This is an area in the early stages of transition from heavy industry, quarry and landfills to recycling, and cleaner, more community-friendly commercial and industrial uses. It also represents area of opportunity for the region, with underutilized industrial lands, accessibility to the regional core, and a willing workforce.

Corridor Findings

- Between 2001 and 2005 the I-5 Corridor’s job growth expanded by 4.9 percent, compared to 1.8 percent for the state, and essentially zero net growth for Los Angeles County.

- The corridor has exceptional capacity for economic development when compared to other regions across the United States.
- The corridor is supported by the fifth-largest harbor complex in the world
- The corridor is supported by half a dozen regional and international commercial airports
- The corridor is adjacent to an internationally renowned cluster of institutions of higher education and technical facilities, including Caltech, JPL, UCLA, USC, Claremont Colleges, and Cal Arts. One of the world’s largest networks of occupational centers and community colleges provides opportunities for workforce training and educational bridges to make college degrees accessible to all.
- Mining and landfill activities are rapidly phasing out.
- Opportunities are abundant for redevelopment of underdeveloped greyfield and brownfield properties.

Strategies and Solutions

Several critical approaches are necessary:

- Eliminate impediments to economic growth—burdens that drive business away—and replace them with incentives.
- Implement creative planning, zoning and permitting policies.
- Offer tax incentives and other tools to encourage the acquisition and redevelopment of distressed and underutilized properties.
- Develop improved strategies, communication and coordination among I-5 Corridor cities.
- Expand investment in transit infrastructure, such as new freeway capacity, rail and dedicated busways.
- Continue to expand public transit to serve the Corridor.
- Make certain that utilities and telecommunications structures are sufficient to support the region’s growth.
- Continue with a careful expansion of housing—particularly workforce housing.
- Create a parallel economic development strategy to expand employment options near new housing, allowing at least some of the new residents to live closer to work, or adjacent to transit corridors.
- Make better use of existing space resources.

Countywide Public Transportation

With a transportation system, the further it extends and more integrated it becomes, the more useful it will be to discretionary riders as well as the transit dependent. We should aspire for the majority of the population to never be more than 10 minutes from an integrated transit system. A graduated bus system should be laid out to service major facilities and conform to major activities. The rubber-tire portion of the transit system could include jitney shuttles in

neighborhoods, with increasing bus sizes and capacities on collectors and major thoroughfares. A crisscross master grid system provides consistency and predictability for passengers—ultimately linking up with high-capacity interurban busways, fixed rail and subway lines.

Strategies and Solutions

If the San Fernando Valley's 1.8 million population is added to the political clout of North Los Angeles County, it will strengthen the arguments for needed improvements in the I-5 and CA-14 corridors. In the end it is all about politics—with major opportunities and a need for strong representation in the headwaters of Washington DC and Sacramento.

Right now Larry Zarian is the only commissioner representing Los Angeles County on the nine-member California Transportation Commission. For a populace county with one-third of the state's population—and more than its fair share of congestion—this representation needs to be increased. Zarian contends that the \$20 billion from Proposition 1B is only a down payment on what is needed to bring our transportation system up to speed. "\$150 billion would still not be enough . . . we are way behind and should have started twenty to thirty years ago" according to Zarian. "And, we have to deliver . . . the people will only support additional funding if they see results." For public trust, it is also important that bond money be used as intended.

A handful of local residents have managed to stall major infrastructure improvements such as the Interstate-710 freeway gap through South Pasadena, and improvements to Los Angeles International Airport. If the 710 were completed, it would take 20% of the traffic out of downtown Los Angeles, off the 405, 5, 101 and 10 freeways. That message needs to get out to the public—about all the hours of productivity and quality of life that are being lost. David Fleming maintains that "under current laws, 10 people can stop what is good for 10 million."

The 710 obstruction puts the agenda of a handful of individuals over the needs of the entire region. In an era of term limits there is no sense of context for elected officials, and no reason for them to take on controversial issues, according to Zev Yaroslavsky. "We need to listen to them all, respect them all, and incorporate concerns where possible . . . but leaders have to stick their neck out and spend political capital when needed." He also emphasized the importance of getting the product out the door so people can see something happening. "There is a lot of talk, but not enough product."

Currently most public transportation riders are transit dependent—people who have no other options. Discretionary riders are not being attracted off the highways or out of their cars in meaningful numbers. Maximizing public transit requires changes in behavior. Everybody wants it to work better, but most are unwilling to change their habits—they think "it's for the other guy, not for me." They will change habits if they have economic incentives like "congestion pricing" where they pay to use congested freeways, and pay even more during peak periods.

Systems like the Orange Line need to cultivate white collar, transit-discretionary passengers if they are to alleviate freeway congestion. "It doesn't have to be daily" according to L.A. City Councilmember Wendy Greuel. "It's not for everybody . . . businesses and individuals can do their part . . . but it requires an education effort and incentives—it's not necessarily quicker, but ridership does increase during major incidents and with increases in gas prices."

In the last decade we have developed a lot of product momentum: Gold Line, Orange Line, East LA Light rail (in progress), and the Exposition light rail line broke ground last year, according to Yaroslavsky. But, most has now come to a grinding halt owing to the political and economic climate.

The I-405 Corridor is a good example of a route that heavily impacts the region. The strategic plan needs to look beyond current leaders' time in office. Greuel believes a rail line could be constructed down the middle of the freeway. The "monorail" concept has been controversial, but perhaps an elevated rail line of some sort could run down the middle where the carpool lanes are. These are the kinds of connections necessary to "make us a real city."

Freeways

The State of California is lacking sufficient east-west capacity and also needs alternatives to the Interstate-5. This is particularly important in times of disruption and disaster, such as earthquakes and the recent I-5 tunnel fire. Trucks add a great deal to the congestion problem, but they are also essential to the economy. Strategies should be considered to divert truck traffic during peak hours and also to implement "congestion pricing" where appropriate.

There are a number of "pinch points" in the system that could be resolved, giving an efficient return on dollars invested. Each truck is the traffic equivalent of 2.7 passenger vehicles, and trucks have difficulty with speeds on grades, slowing and congesting traffic. Areas along the I-5 where grades exist could be enhanced with the addition of truck "climbing lanes."

Highway Capacity

The Interstate-5 is an important north-south corridor. Driving from Los Angeles County into Orange County, commuters can detect a palpable difference in the configuration and condition of the freeway. The newly-improved Orange County sections have more and wider lanes, modern engineering, and attractive finishes—this in stunning contrast to the narrow, dangerous and unattractive Los Angeles County section. To the north, the main routes: CA-14, CA-126 and CA-138 need to be widened and their capacity increased. Commissioner Zarian was instrumental in obtaining state bond money for the Santa Clarita cross-valley connector to the CA-126.

Ports

There is some concern that with the "greening" and heightened regulation of the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, that they may be open to unfair competition from unregulated mega-ports in Baja. Some believe that may not present a problem inasmuch as port traffic is expected to triple in the next 15-20 years. In addition to cleaning up the ports, emphasis needs to be placed on the practices and roadworthiness of trucks that service them. The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are taking two different approaches to resolving this problem and cleaning up their truck fleets. This is an even more serious issue with future "NAFTA superhighways" running from Mexico through the U.S. to Canada. It would be useful to look at what the European Union is doing with electronic tracking standards for clean vehicles. This could be a model for North and Central America as relates to Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Inland Ports

Seventy percent of the cargo from the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach is destined for locales outside Los Angeles County. The ports are serviced by 20 to 30 thousand trucks per day most of which traverse the entire Los Angeles basin and freeway system on their journey to distant destinations. Originating this traffic out to the north and east, beyond the metropolitan area, involves grade-separation strategies that circumvent the traffic grid, moving freight and containers through dedicated channels and rights-of-way, decreasing truck traffic, increasing mobility and reducing air pollution.

The Alameda Corridor is a 20-mile grade-separated rail right-of-way built to connect the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach with the national rail system. Unfortunately, the Corridor stops short of traversing the San Gabriel Valley, leaving 1.8 million residents and 30 cities and communities with 55 at-grade railroad crossings. These crossings accommodate two and one-half mile long trains seven days per week. The Alameda Corridor East (ACE) group is working to grade separate the crossings, but the politics of funding is an ongoing problem.

Leaders are evaluating the idea of creating inland ports, where freight would be rail hauled from the seaports, on grade-separated rights-of-way to, staging areas from which freight would then be transshipped by truck. These inland ports would be established in the rural areas of Antelope Valley in Los Angeles County and Victorville in San Bernardino County. These are areas where space is plentiful and inexpensive, beyond the metropolitan areas of high traffic congestion.

Attempts are being made in the state legislature to secure funding for this proposal. SB 974 (Lowenthal), the Port Container Tax bill, would require the Ports of Oakland, Long Beach and Los Angeles to impose a \$30 per 20-foot equivalent unit (TEU) "user fee" on the owner of container cargo moving through each port. The fee would be allocated to projects to grade separate crossings to reduce conflicts between trains and motor vehicles, and to improving rail capacity by adding additional tracks to existing rail lines.

We need to access federal and state resources to begin planning and design. The railroads have been obstinate on capital improvements, but should see the value in these investments. They have to take the initiative, upgrading tracks to take the increased loads, thus allowing trains to operate faster and more efficiently. Unfortunately, the container revenues cannot be used for improvement of private property. Revenue bonds and other tools might need to be used to raise the necessary capital as part of a revenue-based public/private partnership for infrastructure enhancement.

Los Angeles World Airports

Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) is a proprietary department of the City of Los Angeles. It owns and oversees Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), LA/Ontario International Airport (ONT), LA/Palmdale Regional Airport (PMD), and Van Nuys Airport (VNY).

Los Angeles International Airport

Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), at 3,500 acres, is the smallest commercial airport in its class in the United States. The City of Los Angeles wants to reconfigure LAX, primarily for safety

reasons. Debate is heated and ongoing where it involves anything that might remotely involve increasing the capacity of the facility. In 2006 LAX served more than 61 million passengers, handled more than 2.1 million tons of freight, and according to a 2005 study, had an annual economic impact of \$60 billion. The airport accounts for 59,000 direct jobs and an estimated 158,000 other jobs in the City of Los Angeles. Unfortunately, the airport, the airspace above it, and the 405 freeway that services it, cannot be “stretched” to provide more capacity. The solution may have to be better utilization of the regional airport system.

Councilmember Greuel urges that the elected officials stand up and demonstrate “how we can make it work . . . regionalization is critical . . . we need to look at a variety of options.”

Community leaders and residents in the City of Los Angeles area need to understand the airport’s impacts, its necessity, and the important part goods movement plays in jobs and economic development. Up until now, much of the dialogue has been driven by a small group of individuals and not by those representing the welfare and prosperity of the broader region.

Palmdale Regional Airport

Palmdale Regional Airport is part of the LAWA system. In the 1960s the city acquired 17,000 acres in the Antelope Valley, and signed a contract with the federal government to use the U.S. Air Force Plant 42 facility, which has an operational terminal and runways in place. LAWA currently has a subsidized contract in place with United Airlines for minimal service out of Palmdale. The airport has potential for future service emanating from North Los Angeles County and the San Fernando Valley.

LAWA is working to expand the base, attempting to put more resources and divert activity into the Palmdale and Ontario facilities. Palmdale can provide supplemental service to passengers in San Bernardino, Ventura and Kern counties—to the Antelope Valley, Santa Clarita Valley and parts of the San Fernando Valley. Likewise, Ontario Airport can expand its service providing alternatives to passengers in Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange County along with the 1.9 million-population of the San Gabriel Valley.

The biggest hurdle for Palmdale Airport is the drive time from major markets in the Santa Clarita and San Fernando valleys. If a service similar to the extremely successful Flyaway bus to LAX could be perfected—but, with a high-speed component, such as enhanced rail service—it would make Palmdale a more viable alternative.

Bob Hope Airport

Bob Hope/Burbank Airport is operated under a joint powers agreement between the cities of Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena. It is a critical link in the regional airport system. It is centrally located to serve the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys, as well as eastern portions of the Los Angeles Basin. Space is an issue, and expansion is prohibited under an existing 10-year 2004 development agreement. The political landscape does not support expanding capacity but as an important economic hub, qualitative enhancement is generally supported.

Little improvements need to be made. There is a shuttle from the Red Line to Bob Hope Airport. It is currently not permitted inside the airport, with passengers being dropped off on Hollywood Way. This is a disincentive for people to use public transportation.

Rail Lines and Busway

Enhancement of ground transportation is critical to the Los Angeles region. We can get more miles per dollar building transportation above ground than underground.

The Metro Gold Line could be expanded to Ontario for \$1.5 billion, and the rights-of-way already exist. A line to Burbank would be another “jewel.” The Gold line could be brought west along the 134. The Red Line subway and Orange Line busway could be extended to meet up with it, as well as connecting to Bob Hope Airport. An eastern extension of the Orange Line along Chandler Boulevard, connecting to Burbank and Glendale, would serve more people than any other alternative. Such a connection makes sense, but would require adequate space. The City of Burbank is looking for alternatives.

Although originally intended to service LAX, the Metro Green Line falls short. Developmental uncertainty, homeowner opposition, and concern by local parking concessions resulted in a compromise where airport commuters must use a shuttle to get from the rail line to the airport. It also falls short of accessing the Metrolink Norwalk/Santa Fe Springs hub. The intervening bus service is not coordinated with Green Line arrivals. The line should be extended to eliminate these gaps.

The San Fernando Valley’s Orange Line

The Orange Line busway—inspired by the Rede Integrada de Transporte, in Curitiba, Brazil—runs east to west 14 miles along the southern edge of the San Fernando Valley, from the North Hollywood Metro Red Line subway station to Warner Center. Built at a total cost of \$300 million—which compares favorably to \$300 million *per mile* for subway construction—the line’s 28,000 per day ridership has vastly exceeded projections.

Dollars and cents-wise it is “the best transit line in America” according to Supervisor Yaroslavsky. “It is a Blessing and a curse . . . it probably should have been a rail line and not a bus line . . . but it would have cost five or six times more . . . and it’s possible it wouldn’t have been built until 2020.” The Metro board has approved a \$135 million expansion, north 4.5 miles from Warner Center to the Chatsworth Metrolink Station where they already own the right of way.

A high capacity feeder line is also being planned north and south on either a Sepulveda Boulevard or Van Nuys Boulevard alignment. Van Nuys is probably the best alternative since it is the busiest north-south arterial, with job and retail magnets, a government center, and connection to the Pacoima/Sylmar Metrolink station. Lankershim also extends to the northeast Valley. The Orange Line should also be extended easterly to serve the Burbank Media District.

Other Innovations

If there were “easy” solutions, somebody would have already implemented them. But, one missed opportunity is the creation of a public transit culture. Since the 1940s, the region’s urban form has generally grown up around the automobile, with its virtually unlimited flexibility and convenience. It is difficult to efficiently retrofit public transit to accommodate this form. Urban sprawl results in a wide distribution and shallow concentration of population making it

difficult to deploy resources in an efficient way. The impacts of this are easily seen at pinch points such as peak-period US-101 and I-405 freeways.

Reduced Bureaucracy—Regional leaders fought for funding for the I-405 and were partially successful, but more needs to be done. In 2007, with \$20 billion already allocated, Caltrans District 7 Director Doug Failing was asked if the job could be done. Failing responded that with all the hoops, the CEQA process, eminent domain proceedings, discussions and other processes, by the time they are finished, it will be 2012, at the earliest.

There is too much bureaucracy and there are too many unnecessary roadblocks. What's needed is a system to speed the process, similar to what was implemented for the reconstruction of the Santa Monica Freeway after the Northridge Earthquake. The freeway was rebuilt in 66 days, less than half the time stipulated by the State of California. Why? Caltrans streamlined procurement requirements and offered substantial performance incentives and penalties to the contractor. The performance bonuses ultimately paid were more than offset by savings to the local economy and savings in contract administration.

One-Way Streets/Signalization—One-way streets are far more efficient at moving traffic than traditional two-way, yet there is community opposition even to such a simple change as this. An estimated three to five percent reduction in traffic can be the difference between congestion and free flow. With that in mind, a one-way couplet system on Pico and Olympic Boulevards would increase the capacity by 20.6 percent, with banning of left turns in peak hours. Even without left-turn banning, it would still be more than ten percent. Such proposals need to be looked at from a regional perspective by regional leaders, and coordinated across jurisdictions. Politicians with smaller constituencies could be in great peril for recommending such local changes.

Congestion Pricing—How congestion pricing should be implemented is a matter of some debate, but the practice could deliver much-needed revenues to enhance the transportation system—revenues that might otherwise be a long time coming. Polling indicates that currently only ten percent of people support congestion pricing. Some suggest that they will “believe when they see it rolled out . . . they will support it.”

Tunneling—Historically, tunneling has been a cost-prohibitive alternative to surface and above-ground rights of way. Because the Los Angeles region is a patchwork of mountains and valleys, the options for interurban transit have been limited. The City of Palmdale and County of Los Angeles did an engineering study for a tunnel route through the San Gabriel Mountains on the Angeles Crest alignment. At an estimated cost of \$4 billion they didn't feel they had the resources necessary to succeed. However, with new efficiencies and public/private partnerships, such projects may yet become reality.

New technologies are emerging to allow for very efficient tunneling, making subsurface rail and roadway alternatives more realistic. Such projects would most likely be financed through tolls on usage. Possible projects could include enhanced passenger and freight rail lines between the San Fernando, Santa Clarita and Antelope valleys—including efficient service to the proposed inland ports and Palmdale Airport.

Tunnels might also provide for priority, rail-only routes from mid-valley alignments such as Tampa Avenue and Reseda Boulevard under the Santa Monica Mountains directly to Westside cities and communities. Such innovations could cut commutes by 75% or more, making them extremely appealing, even to transit-discretionary commuters.

High Speed Rail—High-speed rail alternatives, such as maglev, remain as long-term goals for interurban, intercity and inter-regional transportation. It is estimated that the cost of high-speed rail between southern and northern California would be in the range of \$20 billion.

Telecommuting—While telecommuting is widely accepted as a means to mitigate traffic congestion, it still is not a practical alternative for most. Only certain occupations are adaptable to any kind of off-site participation, and not all workers are able to work in unsupervised or conflicted environments. Nonetheless, much more can be done to take advantage of new communications technologies as a means of shifting the time and space in which work is accomplished, thereby reducing peak-hour transportation burdens.

Burbank is developing the “best technologies” in their traffic signal system, and is anxious to coordinate its system with neighboring jurisdictions. They are also looking to increase public transit ridership locally, and boost the Burbank Bus shuttle. It is now a connector system, but unfortunately not a local loop due to insufficient funding, according to Burbank Mayor Marsha Ramos.

Mayor Ramos is seeking more collaboration on a regional basis, such as on the Interstate-5 Corridor. Burbank policymakers are in communication with Metro and Los Angeles Department of Transportation, which have lines that run in Burbank in addition to the Burbank Bus. They are seeking to eliminate duplication of services, and bring all local cities to the table to utilize transit resources more efficiently. Ramos is interested in “how we communicate—and how lines interconnect.”

Council of Governments – SCAG Subregion – SFV Statistical District

In 2006, after many years of effort, working with the Economic Alliance and VICA, Councilmember Greuel authored a successful motion to have the City of Los Angeles request that the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) form the San Fernando Valley SCAG Planning Subregion. The SCAG Regional Council unanimously approved the initiative. The work took an important step forward in October 2007 with Councilmember Greuel’s successful motion to have the City of Los Angeles formally join the process to form a San Fernando Valley Council of Governments (COG) to serve as the entity to oversee the subregion and take leadership in regional planning for the Valley. Since Los Angeles makes up 80% of the Valley’s total population, the City’s commitment to the process is extremely important.

Greuel calls this a “big step forward” after her earlier work with the Economic Alliance to establish a statistical district and a Census County Division (CCD). These entities have already begun to provide specific data on the San Fernando Valley. There was some concern that the Census Bureau might discontinue the CCD GIS layer in the 2010 Census. But with unprecedented opposition, the matter has been resolved favorably.

Over the last decade, the Economic Alliance has coordinated many efforts among Valley cities, and is optimistic about future regional collaboration. “A council of governments will oversee and operate the subregion helping us to attack issues like transportation planning” according to Councilwoman Greuel. “We could do it to some extent today, but the COG is a structure that allows you to move forward in a better organized and more meaningful way, especially with critically important issues.” Greuel believes that the San Fernando Valley region will be a “force to be reckoned with” on the state and federal levels as we discuss transportation, infrastructure and other important planning issues. “We now have the necessary statistics that didn’t exist before—we need to share that information.”

How does a planning subregion and statistical district affect public policy in the region? According to Dan Blake of the San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center at Cal State Northridge: “We don’t have to guess at what is on the ground anymore—now we can coordinate the different levels of government, making us more effective addressing issues and coordinating our planning among cities—issues such as transportation and education—in ways that transcend the boundaries. It helps us to use our dollars and manage our regional assets more efficiently.”

Subregions were begun in 1992, to look at issues pertinent to selected subareas on a more detailed level. They can hire consultants, establish specific mandates for transportation, and in particular look at the areas that transportation impacts. SCAG has an annual budget that allocates resources to help fund studies undertaken by the subregions.

The Valley’s subregional work will feed into SCAG’s Regional Transportation Plans—a broader plan that stretches across six Southern California counties. Approx 80 elected officials sit on SCAG’s governing board, the Regional Council. Board members look at issues on a regional basis. The area has billions of dollars for transportation, but there are small pockets of communities that can be overlooked or negatively impacted. A San Fernando Valley subregion can prevent this from happening and be very beneficial to address local issues on a regional basis.

On issues like the Bob Hope Airport and the Orange Line busway, Glendale, Burbank and Pasadena have been putting their heads together,” according to Glendale Mayor Ara Najarian. “. . . but we are missing that other partner [the City of Los Angeles] once we cross Burbank to connect to the Orange Line Busway. If we did have the COG, the entire San Fernando Valley could give its support to the connectivity between the Orange Line and the Gold Line. With a huge group of people like the entire San Fernando Valley behind it, the chances of success for the connector would be much greater.”

Mayor Najarian is concerned that the existing Arroyo-Verdugo Subregion, with “one foot in the San Fernando Valley and one in the San Gabriel Valley, is not fully focused on either.” The San Gabriel Valley has its own “very well run COG involving 33 cities, all united and carrying a very big stick, compared to the San Fernando Valley, walking in with a pea shooter.” Najarian believes that issues are often lost. “With its own COG, the San Fernando Valley will finally obtain its own identity, its own seat at the table, and its own influence over issues that are important to us—once it is formed the San Fernando Valley will have a great presence—we can unite, bring our cities together, focus on the issues, decide amongst ourselves the agendas that

we'd like to put forward—as Mayor of the City of Glendale, I would fully welcome membership in such a COG.”

An ongoing challenge in regional planning is the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) that is generated by SCAG. Cities are hit with the RHNA numbers—the number of housing units the cities are required to plan for under state law—and leaders feel that we can best decide what we need locally.

With a population of 1.8 million the San Fernando Valley has more residents than a number of states. From 1970 to present there was a 50% increase in population according to SFVERC's Dan Blake. “We need to plan smart to protect the livability of our communities.”

Economic Development

Commercial real estate markets are driven by economics. Glendale and Burbank work to be business friendly cities, primarily because commercial projects bring in tax dollars and jobs. But they also try to strike a balance between the two. In Glendale, the neighbors don't want any more hillside development, and that leaves few options. The focus for most new development is housing in the downtown corridor with mixed-use projects and high-rise condos.

Steve MacDonald, President of Film L.A. recommends development and promotion of an “Entertainment Zone.” The region has lost feature film activity to other states. Thirty-five states have filming incentives focused on luring feature films. For the last five years “television production has kept the town humming.” There are 42 existing Enterprise Zone programs in California. The City of Los Angeles has a newly designated area spanning Hollywood proper, North Hollywood, Sun Valley, Pacoima and Sylmar, reaching down through Universal Studios. It is poorly marketed at the city level. We need to focus existing incentives and establish new incentives to keep jobs and revenues in the region.

Burbank, Glendale and the Santa Clarita Valley are luring production, but have limited availability of space with low vacancy rates. Even though Santa Clarita continues to bring large blocks of space on line, the opportunities are somewhat limited. Burbank and Glendale are mostly built out and have to resort to repurposing existing commercial and industrial space. Space could be built or renovated in the east valley to accommodate complementary support for the entertainment and technology industries. Middle size companies could find space in the more modern office parks—older buildings can be renovated along with new construction to accommodate ad agencies, entertainment companies and other nodes of entertainment related businesses.

NBC Studios is anticipating a move to the Universal Studios site in Universal/Studio City. If the Burbank site remains a media hub, it will be a win-win for the region and for the enterprise zone. San Fernando Valley cities need to work more with the Santa Clarita Valley to combine and market the Enterprise Zone as an “Entertainment Zone.”

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