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EDITOR'S NOTE: A study released in late September by researchers at UCLA's Institute of the Environment declared that the region has not invested enough in new roads and mass transit to relieve gridlock and reduce pollution levels. The "Southern California Environmental Report Card" said traffic congestion is the key source of the area's pollution and it proposed such measures as charging drivers fees for using the most congested roadways.

"As a region, we have yet to come to grips with the immense impacts our transportation system is having on the environment and public health," said Institute Director Mary D. Nichols.

In this letter to the Los Angeles Daily News, Metro Chief Planning Officer Jim de la Loza takes issues with some of the points raised in the UCLA study and points out Metro's efforts to combat traffic congestion and pollution in the region.

Letters to the Editor Los Angeles Daily News

Nov. 1, 2004



Metro Planning Chief
James de la Loza

Metro's Multi-Pronged Efforts are Combating Traffic, Pollution

UCLA's Southern California Environmental Report Card report misses the point on the state of traffic in LA County. In fact, Metro is carrying out many of the report's recommendations and our congestion trends are moving in the right direction (October 27, 2004 Daily News article "Gridlock efforts stalled").

When carpool lanes are built, ridesharing rates are up to five times higher than on freeways without them. The facts speak for themselves—almost 85 percent of our carpool lanes are nearing capacity during the rush hour.

We maximize our transit investments by promoting the right solution for the right situation. We are expanding the rail system to the very dense Eastside and to the Westside along the Exposition Corridor, where rail makes sense. We're also adding to our successful Metro Rapid bus program and over the next several years, we'll have 28 lines throughout the county. Our bus fleet is the cleanest in the nation, with over 90 percent running on clean natural gas, including the first 200 natural gas articulated buses ever.

Metro invests in our streets and freeways in innovative ways, such as funding new technology to coordinate traffic signals so that motorists can catch green lights from signal to signal along busy corridors - a strategy which greatly improves traffic flow. Making the best use of what we have is necessary in our urban environment, where air quality laws generally limit our ability to widen roads and freeways.

Our traffic is getting better in the face of big challenges, but don't take our word for it. The 2004 Texas Transportation Institute study shows our region has made the biggest traffic improvements of any major city in the nation, where we've had improvements in average delay, congestion, and overall mobility over the past decade.

Our transportation investments are making a difference in accommodating growth and maximizing mobility. Our efforts to encourage development near rail stations are also helping LA County grow smarter. If we can stabilize funding for our transportation needs, we can continue the positive traffic trends over the past decade and earn straight A's.

--James L. de la Loza , Chief Planning Officer

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