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Noontime traffic  
in the San  
Fernando  
Valley. >

## Transportation Institute Cites Benefits of Public Transit

- Lack of transit would have added 1.1 billion hours of delay

By ED SCANNELL

(May 12, 2005) In recent years, there has been a marked increase in the number of discretionary riders who use the Metro System's buses and trains.

The number of Metro riders with a car or truck available increased from 22 percent in Fall 2002 to 30 percent in Fall 2004.

The Texas Transportation Institute's 2005 Urban Mobility Report acknowledges the benefits of public transportation, saying "if public transportation service was discontinued and the riders traveled in private vehicles, the 85 urban areas would have suffered an additional 1.1 billion hours of delay in 2003."

Report co-author David Schrank is encouraged by the performance of the Metro Rapid bus program, which in late June will reach the half way mark of a planned expansion to 28 lines, and says he's interested to see the impact of the Metro Orange Line, Metro's 14-mile exclusive transitway, when it opens later this year.

### Bus rapid transit 'fairly successful'

"The early information shows that bus rapid transit has fairly good ridership and is fairly successful," he said.

The report says expanding the capacity of streets and highways will be

necessary to keep pace with development. One such project in L.A. County is the 101/405 freeway project, which will remove the chronic bottleneck from this overburdened interchange.

Schrank and co-author Tim Lomax say that the efficiency of roads can be increased through the use of information technology, including educating travelers about their options.

In September 2004, Metro entered into an agreement with TrafficGauge, Inc. for a demonstration to provide real-time freeway traffic congestion information to owners of TrafficGauge's hand-held electronic traffic monitoring device.

### **Changes needed in developments**

Schrank and Lomax suggest that changes must be made in the way that commercial, office and residential developments occur to sustain the "urban quality of life" and gain economic development "without the typical increment of mobility decline."

Clearly, public transit is at the forefront of such change in Los Angeles County and it is reshaping L.A.'s urban landscape.

An informal survey conducted by Metro in 2004 showed that developers and their partners are investing more than \$4 billion in at least 30 new development projects around Metro stations throughout Los Angeles County.

Schrank and Lomax say it's a given that large urban areas will be congested and "realistic expectations are also part of the solution." But they are quick to point out that with a balanced and multi-pronged approach congestion "does not have to be an all-day event."