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Anthony Loui, a Metro transportation planning manager, interested attendees of the Global City conference in Lyon, France, with a presentation on Los Angeles transportation and land use.

Photo by Ned Racine.

## Metro Planner Surprises International Conference

- Tony Loui outlines LA's growing rail system, expanding Metro Rapid lines during meeting in France
- 'Everybody was interested in LA'

By NED RACINE

(June 7, 2007) At last month's prestigious Global City conference in Lyon, France, Anthony Loui, a Metro transportation planning manager, spoke of Los Angeles' past. But he was shocked by the questions he received when he described Los Angeles' present.

Loui was invited to serve on the "Green on the Go" panel, part of Global City's third annual conference, which brought together transportation leaders from Europe, Africa, and Asia. He offered a presentation titled "Four Eras of Los Angeles Transportation and Land Use."

"After that presentation, there was almost a fan club that started," said Loui, the only panel member from the United States. "Everybody was interested in LA"

Why the interest? "Because for them, LA was so different," Loui explained. "They always thought LA was a city of the automobile and that's it."

According to Loui, his questioners were surprised that Los Angeles has "modern-day light rail. They were even more surprised that we had a

heavy-rail system. And they were blown away with the number of Metro Rapid lines."

**'Largest BRT system in the nation'**

"Many cities in Europe only have a few lines that are bus rapid transit (BRT), but in Los Angeles we have the largest BRT system in the nation," Loui said.

Loui found his audience was also surprised that Los Angeles is a place for transportation innovation. But he told them, "We still have the worst traffic congestion in the nation; however, the air is cleaner than in 1970."

Many of his questioners did not realize efforts were being made to reduce the automobile's role in Southern California. Loui found his audience immediately understood the importance of this effort in terms of global warming. "Some of them were not only pleasantly surprised, but they were in shock, in a positive way."

Pam O'Connor, incoming Metro Board chair in July, also attended the conference, representing the City of Santa Monica. The Global City conference bills itself as "the international forum for urban decision-makers."

Loui's presentation pointed to the founding of El Pueblo de Los Angeles in 1781 as the first era of Los Angeles transportation and land use. The second era, from the 1890s through 1945, resulted in the Interurban Rail Network, the world's largest.

The third era, 1945 through 1980, saw Los Angeles County rapidly developing suburbs without a city center, outgrowing the antiquated rail system.

The fourth era began in the 1980s and continues today, marked by LA County sales tax being dedicated to expanding bus service, including the Metro Rapid system, as well as to the construction of light and heavy rail.

**Shadowed by global warming**

During a conference Loui described as shadowed by the threat of global warming, he found his audience very interested "in a potential fifth era for Los Angeles, which recognizes climate change."

He also briefed his audience on Metro's efforts to reduce vehicle miles traveled in the region. Loui mentioned that Los Angeles is categorized as a "non-attainment area" in terms of air quality, meaning no more freeways can be added to the region, although high-occupancy vehicle lanes can be added.

"They wanted to hear from Metro, because they wanted to hear, essentially, lessons learned from the U.S., particularly the Los Angeles example."

Besides being startled by hearing his presentation spontaneously translated into French, German and Spanish, Loui was affected by a presentation by Gérard Collomb, Lyon's mayor. Collomb noted that "California now emits 10 percent of all the greenhouse gases globally."

California pollutes more than many countries, Loui notes, "In terms of the ranking in production of greenhouse gasses, we're number 12."

