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## Resources

[Safety](#)[Pressroom](#) (web)[Ask the CEO](#)[CEO Forum](#)[Employee Recognition](#)[Employee Activities](#)[Metro Projects](#)[Facts at a Glance](#)  
(web)[Archives](#)[Events Calendar](#)[Research Center/Library](#)[Metro Classifieds](#)[Bazaar](#)

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[30/10 Initiative](#)[Policies](#)[Training](#)[Help Desk](#)[Intranet Policy](#)

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City Planning Commissioner Michael Woo leads a panel discussion at which researchers, urban planners and private individuals hashed out ideas.

## Experts, public exchange ideas at Technology and Innovation Symposium

By LAURA KLOTH

(Feb. 24, 2009) The Technology and Innovation Symposium hosted by Metro served as the perfect setting for a "think tank" of panelists and guests to discuss the latest and most efficient methods of moving traffic and people from one place to another.

Robin Blair, director of countywide planning and development, said the event was extremely successful.

"We had more request to attend than we had space to seat people," he said.

The event was coordinated by Rufina Juarez, central area team project manager.

And the success was evident because people remained well after the discussion session ended.

The idea of TDM events is get people to call for new projects to assist in transportation improvements. Some of the ideas that began through TDM planning include HOV lanes and park and ride lots, he said.

"It means you constantly push the new ideas, and what sounds weird today may be here tomorrow."

## Alternative Means

Exhibits at the Technology and Innovation Symposium provide a wide range of resources and solutions to environmental dilemmas.



Metro transportation planner James Rojas invites people to build sustainable model cities with plastic squares and found objects such as tiny boxes, wine corks, puzzle pieces, bottle caps and anything that passes for architectural elements.

The Feb. 5 event, hosted by Metro, drew more than 300 participants and also featured exhibits showcasing a hybrid car, electric and folding bicycles and even a miniature Los Angeles constructed out of recyclable materials.

City Planning Commissioner Michael Woo led a panel discussion at which researchers, urban planners and private individuals hashed out ideas.

Todd Litman, founder of the Victoria Transport Policy, led the effort to create more choices for consumers posing questions such as whether it is better to offer a \$1,000-a-month apartment with two free parking spaces or an apartment that costs \$800 a month with a \$100-a-month fee for each parking space.

Litman argued that the second option gives people a choice and "bundled" approaches do not work.

Curt Gibbs, of the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency, said car insurance companies should consider more "pay per use" pricing. "I think we need to start pricing insurance on how it's being used, which may encourage people to go out and buy the smart cars."

That would be great news for exhibitor Pete Barsky of the Electric Car Co. in Signal Hill, who displayed brochures about his \$10,000 Zap vehicle.

Barsky said his cars have been selling well since gas prices peaked over the summer and because insurance companies price them like motorcycles. Electric cars will gain more momentum as municipalities install more general-use outlets for them, he added. More outlets exist for the RAV 4, the now-defunct EV-1 and a Honda model.

Judy Matsuda, transportation demand management planner for the city of Pasadena, thanked Metro for hosting the event before asking: "How do you convince an employer or tenant that paying for an employee's parking is a benefit to their employee?"



Here is a electric bike rent, ride and park system under consideration by municipalities.



This beachcomber bike has a baby carrier for two on the front.



A hydrogen-fueled smart car prototype from Caltrans.

Litman suggested using positive phrasing such as telling employers that paying for their employees' parking "isn't a sacrifice, it's solving their problem."

Woo, a USC professor, encouraged panelists to rise to the challenge of the transportation demand management by seeing the crisis as an opportunity.

"Whether it's traffic congestion, air quality, the types of communities we're creating, what is our part of the solution to climate change? I think we have to come back to looking at the combination of all these factors rising up as being a potential crisis that could lead to catastrophe or could lead to changes in thinking and changes in behavior," he said.

Transit users and many children enjoyed seeing and playing with a miniature exhibit of the city, created by Metro Transportation Planning Manager James Rojas. Made of bottle caps, plastic squares and other recyclables, the miniature city includes the Metro Gateway building and other city landmarks.



RideTHISbike.com model folds up to the size of a skateboard for only \$200.