

## Working on Los Angeles

Investment in transit infrastructure would help drive local economy

By MARY LESLIE, NADINE WATT AND DEBORAH KALLICK

Significant investments in new housing and an accelerated expansion of our relatively nascent public transit system are crucial to the Los Angeles of the future. Without such investments, we can expect to encounter an increasingly unhealthy mix of escalating rents that drive residents further and further from their jobs as well as an exhausted infrastructure that cannot handle more cars and traffic.

These investments could make the difference for job-producing companies evaluating whether to locate or expand in the region. On the plus side, businesses are attracted to our talented and creative workforce, proximity to world-class international trade infrastructure, sizable consumer marketplace, and leading universities.

Businesses, however, are also grappling with increasing challenges faced by employees, more of whom are finding themselves stuck on congested highways – forced to commute farther distances due to rising housing prices near their workplaces.

Today, Los Angeles holds the dubious honor of the city with the worst traffic in the country. People on average experience 81 hours of delay on our freeways a year, or two full weeks of work. This is not only bad for residents, it's terrible for business.

Without seeing meaningful improvement in workforce housing and the region's transportation system, job-producing companies might well opt for more inviting environs that offer fewer sunny 72-degree days, but a better quality of life for employees.

There is no question that the jobs-housing imbalance near employment centers will take years to fix, which underscores the need for meaningful transportation investments now.

Measure M on the November ballot, if passed, will continue the substantial investment in transportation infrastructure that began with Measure R eight years ago. Measure R was a game-changer and we are still reaping the benefits. Because of the expansion of the regional transportation system since then, nearly a quarter of L.A. residents now live close to public transit, and 40 percent of jobs are now accessible via Metro.

But there is more work to do. Expanding the Metro system on an expedited schedule will boost mobility and connectivity among communities and job centers, which is fundamental to L.A.'s ongoing efforts to enhance quality of life for residents. This expansion is also a crucial economic development tool for retaining and recruiting job-producing businesses.

## Subway to sea

Transportation investments work. Look no further than the Expo Line extension to Santa Monica that opened earlier this year.

Ridership is far exceeding original projections because workers find it a superior alternative to traffic-choked streets and freeways.

A “Yes” vote on Measure M will provide a long-term financial tool to accelerate investments in our regional transportation system. Expanding rail routes will reap the same benefits that commuters have experienced where these transit options already exist. Supporting Measure M will also set aside \$2.4 billion in long-term funding for “first mile-last mile” connections, expanding the reach of public transit to many more commuters in Southern California.

Data provided to the Los Angeles Business Council by UCLA researchers indicate the real potential of these local connectors: 1.24 million people live within one mile of a rail stop in Los Angeles County – six times the number that live within a quarter-mile. Also, past LABC studies have concluded that transit corridors provide some of the best opportunities for the production of

desperately needed workforce housing. By bringing more housing to these underutilized corridors, transit ridership is sure to rise even more.

Ultimately, creating a fully integrated transportation system has the potential to provide meaningful relief to workers who face daunting daily commutes today. Instead of facing hours stuck in traffic in the future, the investments made by Measure M will enable workers to have a comfortable and productive commuting option. That’s great for quality of life and crucial for employers in the region.

We cannot secure our future as a world-class city without addressing our transportation and housing needs. Measure M is a crucial piece to deliver on the transportation side of the equation. But a “Yes” vote is more than a vote for rail lines and other transit programs, it is an investment in our workers, businesses, and economic development efforts.

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