Road Expansion

SACRAMENTO REGION
MTP2035
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN
THE NEXT STEP IN BLUEPRINT

ISSUE BRIEF OCTOBER 2006

As travel and driving increase, the MTP2035 must consider whether, where, and how to expand roads. Policy makers must examine the land use and travel behavior implications of the Blueprint in tandem with strategic road expansion.

This brief highlights the road expansion issues being studied for the MTP2035. For the complete Road Expansion Issue Paper visit ***www.sacog.org/mtp/2035***

The Current Road System

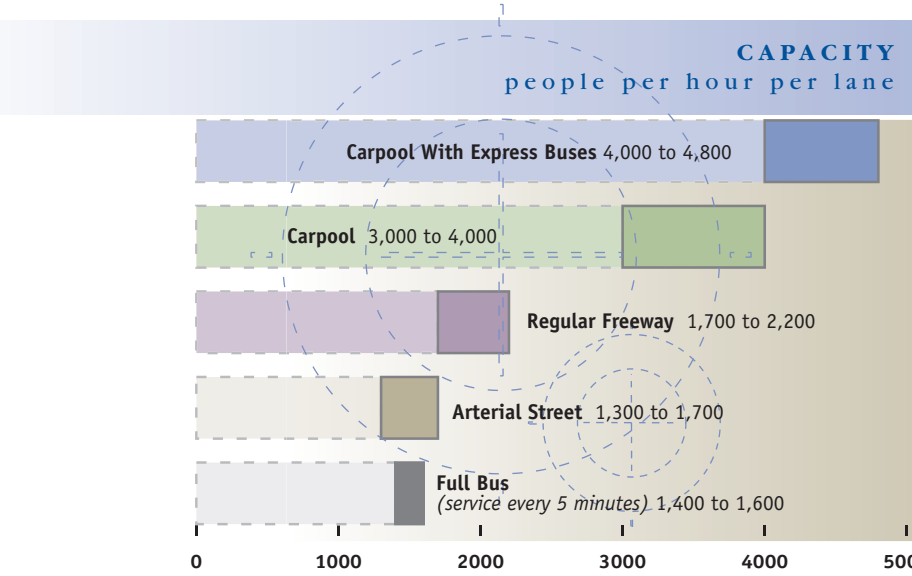
Much of the Sacramento region's current road network was built in the 1950s & 1960s when gas taxes were two and a half times higher than today and supported a robust highway construction program. Road use has reached capacity and continues to increase. Back then, roads were built and designed for 20 years of excess capacity. Since 1970, our population has increased 110 percent and our vehicle miles traveled increased 190 percent, while space on our roadway system has only increased 30 percent.

Congestion

Increasing traffic congestion is an inescapable result of strong economic activity and life in modern metropolitan areas. Realistically, large metropolitan regions lack the resources, citizen support, and ultimately the space to provide for uncongested automobile travel. Neither good transit nor extensive roadway capacity can eliminate congestion problems, although they can relieve certain corridors temporarily. About half of congestion delay occurs in areas where demand has reached or exceeded capacity, the other half is due to incidents including weather, accidents, stalled vehicles and roadside distractions. When a corridor becomes congested, all modes—transit, driving, bicycling and walking—complement each other by serving specific types of trips, instead of competing.

Road Expansion & Land Use

New road capacity may directly relieve local traffic congestion, but also indirectly affects growth in the area, forcing us to consider land use planning in roadway expansion. More compact land uses intended in the Blueprint shorten trips and change travel choices, yet the region still expects 30 percent more automobile trips by 2030. With Blueprint smart growth

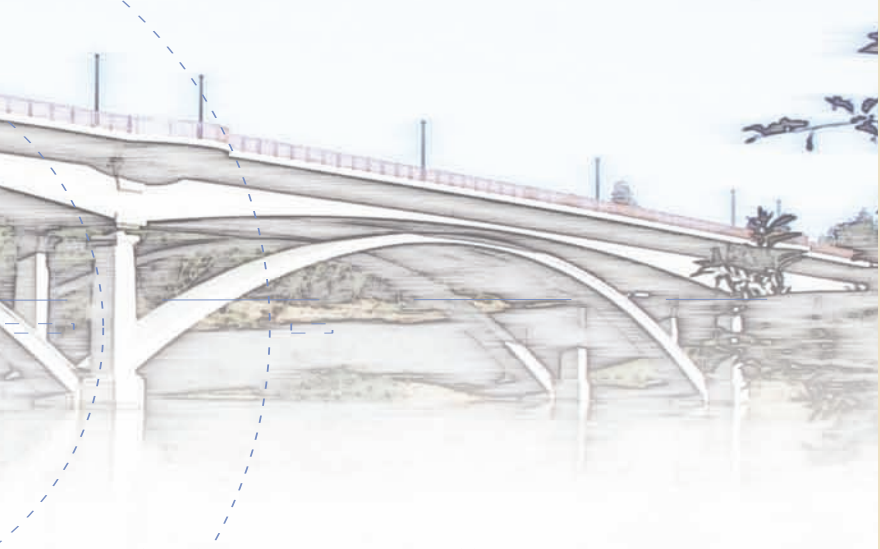


principles as a goal, road expansion policies and investments can become tools to shape optimum land uses, rather than a reaction to increasing congestion.

The Sacramento region faces a simultaneous transition in both development patterns and travel choices. Road and transit capacity investments must be designed strategically to keep infill communities accessible, as suburban employment and residential development patterns are redirected to infill areas where walking, biking and transit are more viable.

Road Expansion & Travel

Road capacity and congestion are not primary factors in travel choices, as can be seen by the extreme congestion tolerated in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. Currently, more than 93 percent of all travel in the region is by vehicles on



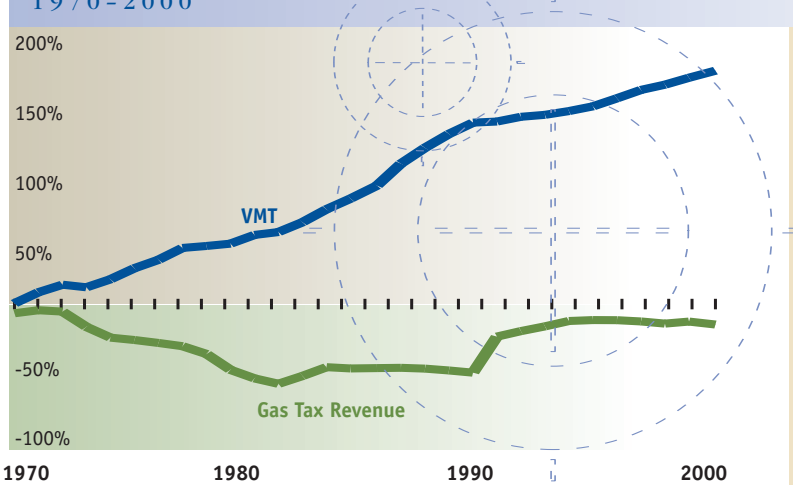
roads. Public polling nationally and locally consistently shows that about 75 percent support more investment in transit, but 75 percent of those supporters still prefer driving alone.

Road expansion and dependence on auto travel fundamentally comes from suburban development patterns and individual travel choices for personal convenience, regardless of costs. In fact, more than 90 percent of the total costs of automobile travel are private costs to motorists, averaging $8,500 per year in car payments, gas, insurance and auto maintenance.

Carpool Lanes

Carpool lanes increase capacity and yield more ridesharing. Urban freeway expansion today almost always involves carpool lanes, and carpool lanes are never created by converting existing lanes to carpool-only lanes. Caltrans reports that one carpool lane on State Route 99 in Sacramento carries twice as many people in a peak hour as any other lane. Utilizing carpool lanes for express bus service is an important factor in maximizing productivity. A typical freeway lane running at capacity carries 2,200 people per hour in automobiles, while a carpool lane carries 3,000 to 4,000 people per hour, and hundreds more if express bus service is used.

CHANGE IN VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED vs STATE GAS TAX REVENUE IN CALIFORNIA 1970-2000



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Regional Transit

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Sacramento Transportation Authority

VALLEY VISION
Connecting Citizens Shaping Solutions

Yolobus
YOLO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

Yuba-Sutter Transit

Funding for Increased Road Capacity

A spectrum of options is available to expand or generate road capacity including creating additional lanes, making operational improvements (shifting travel away from driving alone), and implementing programs to change travel patterns. Adding lanes to an existing roadway incurs the most cost, averaging $4 million or more per mile for arterials and $15 million or more per mile for freeways. Other upgrades such as operational improvements, including auxiliary lanes and signal timing, cost less—ranging from $500,000 to $3 million per mile. Blueprint's compact development principles shift longer trips to local trips and take traffic off the roads during peak travel times, by fostering demand management activities such as telecommuting and alternative work schedules.

Road programs are so underfunded today that funding for road expansion must compete with funding for road maintenance, rehabilitation and operations. With gas tax funding significantly reduced, sales taxes and development-based fees are becoming the main sources of road expansion funds. In today's funding climate, toll roads and bonds may be the only viable option for large expansion projects, as the public has not been willing to tax itself at levels seen in the 1960s.