



Los Angeles: Highest Density, Best Transport System

BASIC INFORMATION ¹		World Rank ²	Similar to
Urban Area Population: 2000	13,829,000	13	Moscow, Shanghai, Kolkata, Delhi
Urban Land Area: Square Miles: 2005	2,244	4	Chicago, Boston
Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers: 2005	5,812		
Population per Square Mile	6,200	592	Toronto, Copenhagen, Lisbon, Helsinki, Goiania
Population per Square Kilometer	2,400		
Urban Area Projection: 2007 ³	15,350,000	12	---
Urban Area Projection: 2020	18,630,000	13	---
Metropolitan Area Population: 2003 ⁴	15,250,000	13	---
Census Consolidated Area Population: 2005 ⁵	17,630,000	---	---

15 March 2007

INTRODUCTION

This is a unique *Rental Car Tour*, in two respects.

- The first is that Los Angeles is last of the 21 *Rental Car Tours* for the world's 21 megacities (urban areas over 10,000,000 population).⁶
- The second is that Los Angeles is the first megacity I visited. I was born there, though it was not yet a megacity. Los Angeles became a megacity in the 1980s, when I also lived there.

Moreover, I was appointed to three terms on the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC)⁷ and served from 1977 to 1985, a period during which I was involved in a number of significant transportation policy decisions (see Transport, below).

My Beginnings in Los Angeles: My father, my daughter and two sons, their mother and I were all born within two miles (three kilometers) of City Hall, they in downtown area hospitals, me in a house at 1918½ West Temple Street in the Echo Park District. My family had moved to Los Angeles (South Pasadena) from Iowa in 1900, my great grandfather, a Methodist minister, having received the call to go into insurance. At that time, Los Angeles County had a population of less than 200,000, a number that has since risen to approximately 10 million, with another 5,000,000 living in adjacent counties.

The family business is religion. My father became a clergyman in the church established by Aimee Semple McPherson, which was headquartered at Angelus Temple (Picture Page 69 or PP 69),⁸ not that far from where I was born. I have been surrounded by relatives in the business, on both sides of the family. But, like

my grandfather, I rejected the religion of my upbringing and have been drawn to the Anglo-Catholic strain of Anglicanism, which I find not only personally pleasing, but also consistent with my English-French heritage.

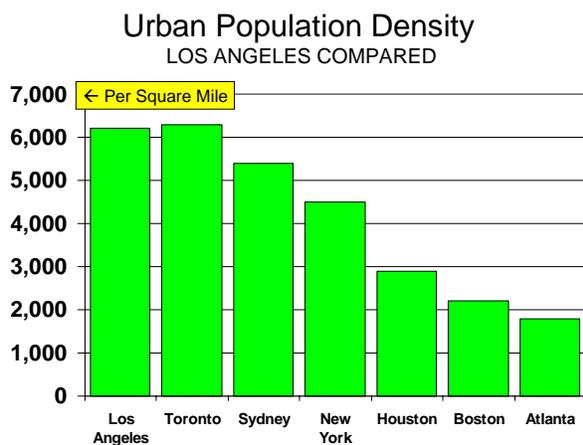
Like millions of people, I have since left, for good, while other millions have moved in. Of the 15 in my generation of the family and later, 10 live at least two hours flying time from Los Angeles. After decades of net in-migration, the tables have been turned and there is substantial net out-migration from Los Angeles (below). The Bureau of the Census estimates that more than 300,000 people have left the Los Angeles metropolitan area for other parts of the country, in just five years. The likely reason is that, over the last decade, Los Angeles has become the most unaffordable housing market in the Anglosphere (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and Canada --- with apologies to Quebec).⁹

I have lived in all three of the western world's megacities (New York, Los Angeles and Paris) but know much more about the Los Angeles area than any other. Part of the challenge of this *Rental Car Tour* is to find a balance between enough and too much information.

MISUNDERSTANDING URBAN FORM & TRANSPORT

Los Angeles is generally reviled in the urban planning community and often in popular culture. It is perceived as being the ultimate in urban sprawl (suburbanization) and having a poor transportation system. Both of these perceptions are dead wrong.

America's Most Dense Urban Area: Among the large urban areas of the United States, Los Angeles is the *least sprawling* --- that is, it has the *highest* population density, according to the United States Bureau of the Census.¹⁰ Los Angeles is 30 percent more dense than New York, which has higher core densities, but where low suburban densities weigh the urban area density down. Los Angeles is more than three times as dense as Boston, which *Smart Growth America* honored for having little sprawl. In fact, the suburbs built since 1950 in the Boston area are virtually the same density as Atlanta,¹¹ which is the world's most sprawling (lowest density) urban area of more than 3,000,000. Indeed, Houston, the bane of some urban planners around the world, is 30 percent *more dense* than Boston (Figure: Urban Population Density). None of this is to indict or endorse suburbanization as an urban form. Suburbanization and the automobile have been associated with the greatest increase and expansion (sharing) of wealth in world history and with it comes an unprecedented high standard of living. The purpose here is to show that anti-suburban interests (anti-sprawl interests) are singing off a discordant song sheet.



Best Transportation System among World Megacities:

However, the greatest condemnation of some urban planners is usually on the issue of transportation. Los Angeles is perceived as having one of the worst transportation systems in the world. In fact, however, among the megacities (urban areas over 10,000,000), none perform better. It all has to do with the evaluation criteria. The urban elite generally evaluate transportation systems based upon what is there, on inputs. More trains means better transportation. Fewer cars mean better transportation (seriously, they believe it!). For the urban elite it is better to spend 62 minutes commuting each way to work on trains, as in

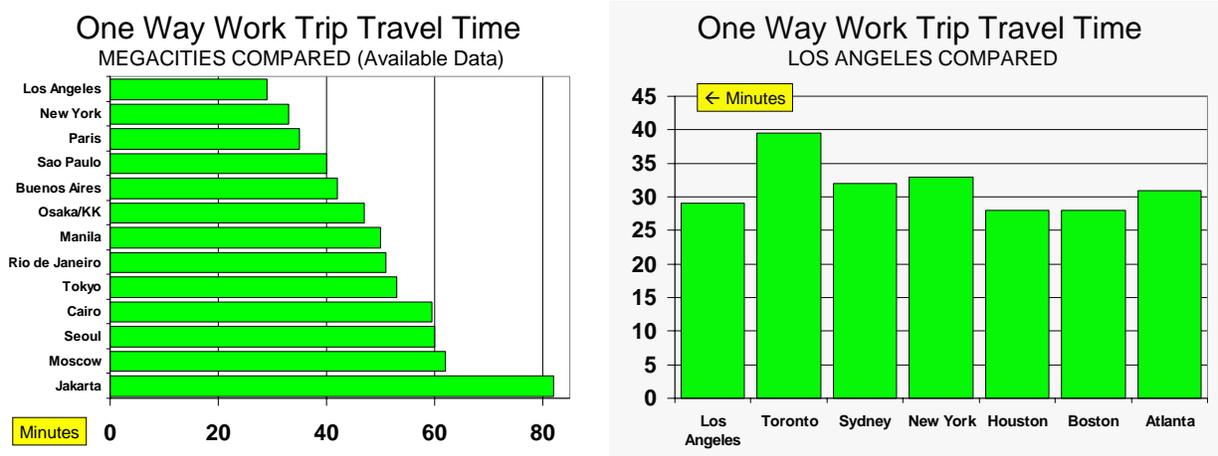
Moscow than to spend 29 minutes commuting to work by car as in Los Angeles.

Trains and transit are slower than cars for nearly all trips. As a result, trains and transit retard the productivity of an urban area by requiring people to spend too much of their time traveling.

An urban transport system must rather be judged on outputs --- on results. The best urban transport system is the one that serves its people best, the one that requires its people to spend the least time traveling around the area. In that regard, no megacity can compete with Los Angeles.

Los Angeles is blessed with a well coordinated and effective transportation system, at least if the criteria is performance. Its principal elements are the famous freeways, but just as importantly, the wide arterial streets that provide a network throughout the area. Generally, arterial streets of from four to eight lanes are located at one-half mile intervals.

The superior performance of the Los Angeles transportation system is illustrated by the average work trip travel time, which appears to be less in Los Angeles than in any other megacity. The average work trip travel time in the Los Angeles metropolitan area is 29 minutes, less than New York's 33, Seoul's 60, Tokyo's 52 and the Paris time of 35 minutes (Figure: One Way Work Trip Travel Time: Megacities). Of course, in some smaller urban areas (especially American, suburbanized, automobile oriented urban areas), travel times are better. It is far more difficult to provide quick travel megacities.



Nonetheless, despite its far higher density, the average work trip travel time in Los Angeles is only one minute longer than Boston and shorter than public transport favorites Toronto and Sydney, none of which is a megacity (Figure: One Way Work Trip Travel Time: Los Angeles Compared). Los Angeles daily travel by car per person is less than Boston's, as also is Houston's (Figure: Car Travel per Capita).¹²

Thus, for all of its difficulties, transport works far better in Los Angeles than it would if its system replicated those of the other megacities, or Boston, Sydney or Toronto, where inferior travel times are the rule because of their relatively poor roadway systems.

THE SETTING

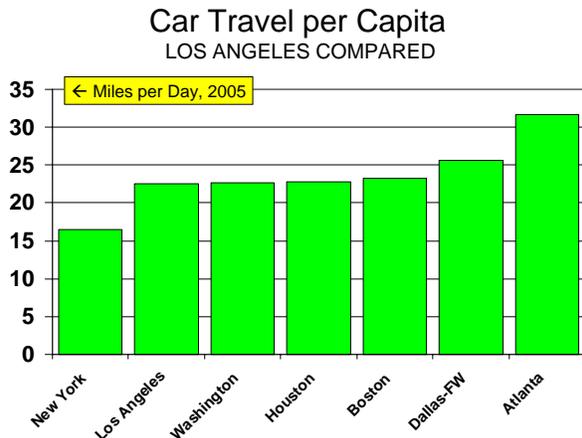
The city (municipality)¹³ of Los Angeles¹⁴ was established inland near the Los Angeles River, which flows intermittently, depending upon the volume and frequency of rain. It was founded by the Spanish in 1781 and is thus one of the oldest cities west of the Appalachian Mountains.

There was a time that Los Angeles was characterized as “80 suburbs in search of a city.” In fact, in 2002, Los Angeles had 183 suburbs. That’s really not so many. Tokyo has more than 300 and Paris nearly 1,300. In addition, other US metropolitan areas have more suburbs, including New York and Chicago with more than 700 and 600 respectively.¹⁵ Thirteen of the 25 metropolitan areas with a population of more than 2,000,000 had more suburbs than Los Angeles, including Cincinnati and Minneapolis-St. Paul. The Los Angeles

reputation for urban sprawl in part can be traced to the fact that automobile oriented suburbanization happened here earlier. But since the 1950s, other urban areas have become considerably less dense and have created far more new suburban municipalities.

Geography

The early suburbanization of Los Angeles was facilitated by a large urban rail system, the Pacific Electric. Development occurred in places like Glendale, Burbank, Pasadena, Long Beach and Santa Monica. But the automobile was to quickly render the rail system obsolete. The automobile made it possible for people to travel quickly anywhere in the area and, as people became more affluent, they purchased cars.



One of the most romantic and enduring stories about Los Angeles is of the nefarious automobile and tire interests who purchased the rail systems of Los Angeles and set about to sell them, forcing people to use automobiles. But romantic and enduring does not mean truthful. Despite the characterizations by Hollywood in *Who Killed Roger Rabbit*, and frequent citations by rail cheerleaders, the story has serious problems, which are detailed skillfully in a *Transportation Quarterly* article by Cliff Slater.¹⁶ Anyone who believes the urban form of Los Angeles would be different if it had kept the Red Car rail system probably still believes in Santa Claus.

Early in the 20th century, the city of Los Angeles built an aqueduct to supply water from the Owens Valley, 150 miles north of the city. The city used its water supply to force areas to be annexed into the city and by World War II, Los Angeles had emerged as the largest city --- in geography --- in the world. Another aqueduct was built from the Colorado River in the 1930s, though this was under the control of a regional board, so that areas were not longer obliged to be incorporated into the city of Los Angeles.

Most of the city of Los Angeles is located to the south of the Santa Monica Mountains and extends from the Pacific Ocean to east of the central business district (PP 34-36, 69-74). A “shoestring” annexation connected Wilmington and San Pedro to the city, which provided the opportunity to develop the Port of Los Angeles, which combined with the Port of Long Beach comprise one of the world’s largest harbor facilities.

One of the largest annexations to the city was the San Fernando Valley (PP 19-26, 77-78), which is north of the Santa Monica Mountains. A recent attempt by the San Fernando Valley to secede from the city of Los Angeles failed. By 1950, less than one-half of the people in the Los Angeles metropolitan area lived in the city. In 2005, the city had a population of 3.8 million (3,800,000), representing a quarter of the metropolitan population.

By 1960, the suburban expansion consumed most of the land in the South Bay region (Torrance and adjacent cities) and the area between Long Beach and Los Angeles. At the same time, suburban expansion occurred to the east and southeast. Orange County, which had 215,000 people in 1950, increased to more than 700,000 by 1960 and is now approaching a population of 3,000,000. At the same time, new municipalities were being created and populated in the San Gabriel Valley to the east, and beyond to Pomona and Ontario. The growth continued to Riverside and San Bernardino. In the 1970s, growth has accelerated over mountain ranges from Los Angeles, to Simi Valley and the Santa Clarita Valley (PP 13-19, 27-29, 44-45).

Since 1990, there has been considerable growth in even more distant locations, such as Moreno Valley, 60 air miles (100 kilometers) from the Los Angeles central business district, Temecula, 80 miles (130 kilometers) away, both in Riverside County (PP 15, 31) and to the Antelope Valley, across the San Gabriel Mountains. This emerging urban area, which includes Lancaster and Palmdale is located in Los Angeles County at the south end of the Mojave Desert and is approaching a population of 275,000.

The Metropolitan Area

According to the Bureau of the Census, the Los Angeles metropolitan area¹⁷ ranks as the second largest in the United States, following New York. With a 17.6 million (17,600,000) residents, it is approaching double the population of third ranked Chicago.

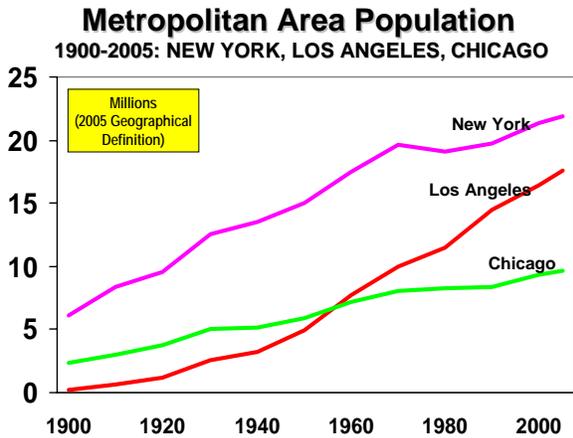
As is typical of metropolitan areas in the United States, the land area is far larger than could be considered metropolitan or a labor market by any stretch of the imagination. In the United States, metropolitan areas in 44 states (the six New England states excluded) are defined by county boundaries. In the West, many counties are very large. The five counties that comprise the Los Angeles metropolitan area (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Riverside) cover nearly 34,000 square miles (90,000 square kilometers), making a mockery of the concept of a metropolitan area as a labor market. This geographical absurdity is more than 10 times the area of the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area, an area nearly as large as the state of Indiana and larger than Austria (PP 29, 30, 33). The officially designated metropolitan area covers all but the last 40 miles to Las Vegas, running to the Nevada and Arizona borders, from 200 to 250 miles away (320 to 400 kilometers). It also includes Santa Catalina Island, more than 25 miles offshore.

In fact, only 10 percent of the metropolitan area's land is urban development (Table 1). Most of the Los Angeles metropolitan area is made up of desert and mountains that are far from the urban area, as well as the Salton Sea, which is beyond Mount San Jacinto and Palm Springs (PP 29).

The Salton Sea was created by the Colorado River in 1905, which overflowed a dyke and filled the Salton Sink, a lowland as much as 278 feet below sea level. This nearly equaled Death Valley's minus 282 feet, the lowest point in the United States.

Urban expert Richard Forstall and his colleagues have estimated that land area of the genuine Los Angeles metropolitan area at approximately 4,200 square miles (10,300 square kilometers).¹⁸ If metropolitan areas were defined in the United States based upon a more local census geography (such as census tracts), the metropolitan land area would generally be far less. This anomaly makes metropolitan area population densities nonsensical in the United States. This has not prevented naïve anti-suburban advocates from inappropriately using the metropolitan area as a measure of urbanization. The distribution of population in the Los Angeles metropolitan and urban areas is shown in Table 1.

Population Growth: Few metropolitan areas in the world have grown as fast as Los Angeles. In 1900, the counties of the present metropolitan area were home to 250,000 residents. By 2005, the population of metropolitan Los Angeles had expanded 70 times. In the high-income world, only Tokyo-Yokohama has added more people over the same period of time. The Los Angeles area exceeded Chicago in population by 1960, and is gaining on New York, which is the nation's largest metropolitan area and urban area (Figure: Metropolitan Area Population). If the especially high 1960 to 1990 growth rates had continued, Los Angeles would now be as large as New York. In fact, however, Los Angeles has approximately 4,000,000 fewer people than New York. At present growth rates, Los Angeles is likely to overtake New York as the nation's largest metropolitan area in the early 2030s.



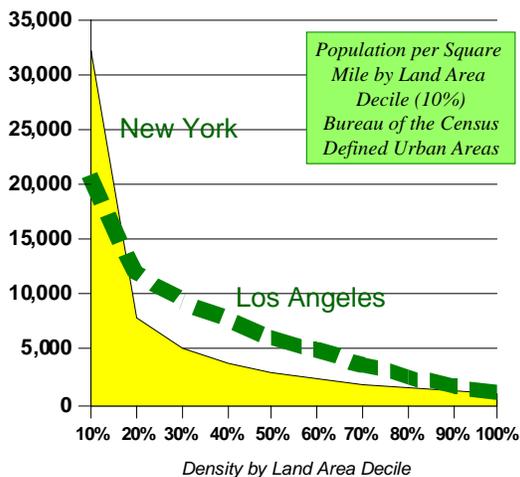
However, population growth rates have changed substantially in the first half of the decade, with significant out-migration occurring from metropolitan areas with particularly unaffordable housing.¹⁹ More than 2.5 million people have moved from the east and west coast metropolitan markets that have become unaffordable, in just five years.

The Urban Area

The Bureau of the Census uses a conservative definition of the Los Angeles urban area. It is clear to anyone examining maps, satellite photographs or the actual environment that the continuous

urbanization of Los Angeles extends across to the Riverside San Bernardino area and Mission Viejo in Orange County, which the Bureau of the Census considers separate urban areas. Moreover, the economic integration of these areas is indisputable, with strong employment market and transportation links. Thus, *Demographia* defines the Los Angeles urban area to encompass all three Census urban areas.

Density Profiles: 2000 LOS ANGELES & NEW YORK URBAN AREAS



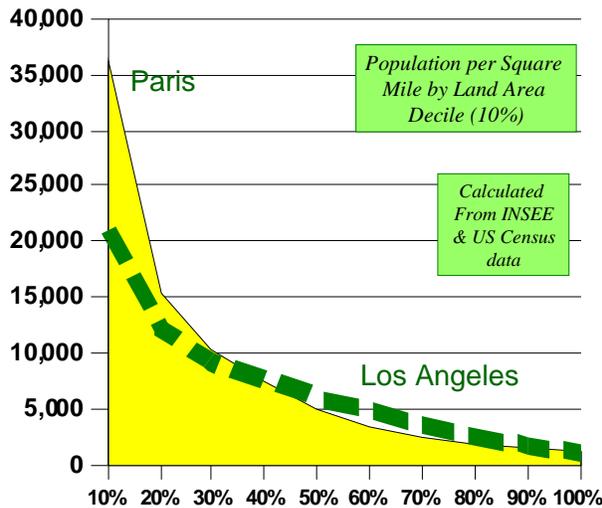
Even with this broader definition, Los Angeles is the most dense large urban area in the United States. With a population density of 6,200 per square mile, Los Angeles is one-third more dense than the New York urban area. This surprises many people, including urban experts. It is true that the core of New York is considerably more dense than the core of Los Angeles. However, suburban densities are far higher in Los Angeles than in New York. This is illustrated by two figures (Comparing Suburbs: 15 Miles from CBD and Comparing Suburbs: 35 Miles from CBD), which illustrate residential densities in Los Angeles and New York at the same distances from the core. Los Angeles is slightly less dense than the Toronto urban area,²⁰ which has a density of 6,300 per square mile (2,450 per square kilometer). The effect of the comparatively high density Los Angeles suburbs is illustrated in a population density profile comparison to New York (Figure: Density

Profiles: Los Angeles & New York)

Paris Suburbs Sprawl More than Los Angeles Suburbs: Many European suburbs are developing at lower densities than Los Angeles suburbs. For example, over the past 40 years, *all* of the 2.3 million new residents of the Paris urban area have been added in the Grande Couronne, or the outer suburbs. This development has been at approximately 4,500 per square mile (1,800 per square kilometer). The inner suburbs of Paris are more dense, but are the products of an age in which automobile ownership was substantially limited. By contrast, the suburbs of Los Angeles have a population density of 5,700 per square mile, one quarter more than the automotive era Paris suburbs (Density Profiles: Los Angeles and Paris).

Los Angeles: Market Based Densification: A recent anti-suburban (anti-sprawl) European Commission report applauded Munich and Bilbao for being the only two urban areas in Europe that had increased their population by a greater percentage than their land area since 1950.²¹

Density Profiles: 2000/1999 LOS ANGELES & PARIS URBAN AREAS



In fact, the champion in this regard is Los Angeles, which managed to increase its population at more than 50 percent above its increase in land area from 1950 to 2000, a rate well above that of either Bilbao or Munich. Interestingly, Los Angeles managed to become more dense by relying on market forces. Unlike many urban areas in the United States, Los Angeles did not broadly adopt large lot zoning practices in its suburbs, and as a result, suburban single-family detached housing has typically been on one-quarter acre lots or blocks (10 per hectare). The urban planning restrictions that have led to the critical housing affordability problem in Los Angeles came only in more recent years. The houses on smaller lots that are illegal to build on in Boston, New York or Washington have been developed in Los Angeles.

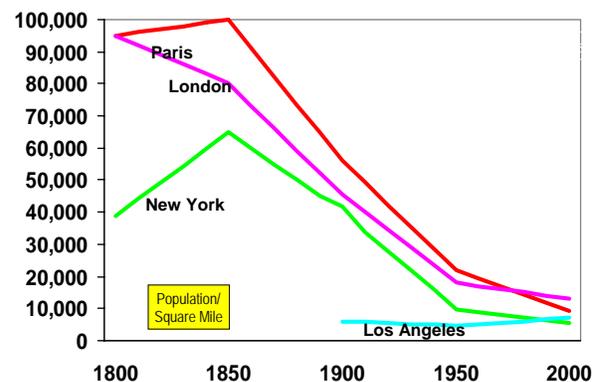
Densities have risen in Los Angeles in recent decades, while densities have declined markedly in most other large urban areas.²² The international

data is even more stark. Over the past 200 years, densities in the largest urban areas have fallen dramatically, for example, the urban density of Paris has declined more than 90 percent since the early 1800s (Figure: Declining Urban Densities).²³

The increase in density is not limited to the urban area. Unlike most of the world's large city cores, central Los Angeles has increased its density. The central area had 1.33 million residents in 1950, and declined to 1.28 million in 1960. By 2000, the population had risen to 1.72 million, a 30 percent increase from 1950. Over the same period of time, the balance of the city has increased in population from 640,000 to nearly 2,000,000. Growth in the balance of the urban area has been even greater, from 2,000,000 residents to nearly 10,000,000.

The Central City (Municipality): Los Angeles is the central city (municipality). It covers nearly 500 square miles (1,300 square kilometers) and was the largest municipality in the world in area for some decades.

Declining Urban Densities FROM WALKING TO AUTOMOBILE URBAN AREA



DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT & COMMERCE

The myth of Los Angeles urban sprawl was also fed by the lack of a strong downtown area (central business district). Employment is dispersed throughout the metropolitan area (as has also become the case in virtually all other metropolitan areas of the western world)



Table 1 Los Angeles Urban Area & Metropolitan Area: Distribution of Population: 2000						
Sector	Population	Land Area (Square Miles)	Density	Land Area (Square Kilometers)	Density	
Central Area ²⁴	1,752,000	128	13,700	332	5,300	
Balance of City	1,943,000	341	5,700	883	2,200	
City of Los Angeles	3,695,000	469	7,900	1,215	3,000	
Los Angeles & Orange Counties	8,628,000	1,336	6,459	3,460	2,494	
Riverside & San Bernardino Cos.	1,507,000	439	3,434	1,136	1,326	
Suburbs	10,134,000	1,775	5,700	4,597	2,200	
Urban Area	13,829,000	2,244	6,200	5,812	2,400	
Exurban & Rural	806,000					
Metropolitan Area	14,635,000					
Combined Los Angeles, Riverside-San Bernardino & Mission Viejo urbanized areas. Metropolitan area estimate based upon Forstall, Greene & Pick 2003 estimate.						

Downtown

As an automobile oriented urban area, Los Angeles was able to decentralize commercial activities and its core has remained comparatively modest. It is estimated that in 2000 downtown Los Angeles had approximately 145,000 jobs, ranking 9th in the nation (PP 4-5). Much smaller Houston and Seattle have larger central business districts. San Francisco, with approximately one-half the population of Los Angeles, has a central business district with more than twice as many jobs.²⁵ Transit's work trip market share was estimated at 19.6 percent in 2000. Downtown accounted for less than three percent of the urban area employment. This compares with an average of 10 percent for other urban areas, with New York having 20 percent of its employment in the central business district (Manhattan, south of 59th Street).

Los Angeles has long been reviled for the inadequacy of its downtown area relative to its population. Downtown is, however, an area steeped in history and interesting for its development patterns. In fact, even before the building boom of the 1970s, downtown Los Angeles was quite a substantial downtown area, for a metropolitan area of 2,000,000 population, which is approximately how many people lived there in 1930. Generally, downtown areas were built out by 1930 and it is not surprising that Los Angeles never developed a downtown area of the size that would have been appropriate for a Chicago or New York at their much larger 1930 sizes.. Since 1930, buildings have been added to the nation's downtowns, but generally their importance has declined, their geographical expanse has stagnated and their total number of jobs has risen little.

Downtown: Office Buildings: Downtown was unusual in Los Angeles, however, because of the relatively low heights of the buildings (PP 47-56, 67-69). By 1930, smaller metropolitan areas like Cleveland, Cincinnati, Seattle and Minneapolis had generally taller buildings than downtown Los Angeles. This was due to a 13 story building limit, which was applied to all buildings in the city of Los Angeles except for City Hall (28 floors) and the Federal Court House Building (18 floors), immediately to the north of City Hall. There are differing stories on the genesis of the height limit. Some claim that it was due to earthquakes, though the defining earthquake of early Los Angeles did not occur until 1933 (the Long Beach "earthquake"). Others claim that it was a measure meant to cause the downtown to sprawl more, increasing property values.

Whatever was behind the height limit, it was studiously enforced until the late 1950s, when it was relaxed. The first building to exceed the height limit was a new headquarters for the United California Bank, built on a Wall Street West, Spring Street. The bank's investment did not prove to be wise, as the entire office and commercial district that had occupied Spring Street and the now eastern downtown area moved west in the next 15 years.

Not long afterwards, other buildings were built higher, such as the City National Bank Building and One Wilshire. These are among the few major new buildings in downtown Los Angeles that bear the same name at their crowns as they did when built. Another is the Union Bank tower, which has undergone a minor name change, from “Union Bank” to “Union Bank of California.” The Union Bank tower was completed in 1968 and at 42 floors and 516 feet (157 meters) was the first building in Los Angeles to exceed City Hall in height.

In 1965, the Occidental Tower (now Transamerica Center) came close to equaling City Hall in height, at 32 floors and 452 feet (138 meters). Popular lore says that this building, a few blocks south of downtown, was to be the center of the new downtown, according to the developer’s consultants. In fact, today, the Transamerica (now the SBC Tower) is as orphaned from downtown as it was in 1965. Presumably, the consultants moved on to project urban rail ridership and costs. The SBC Tower also has a particularly displeasing crown that cries out for surrounding by larger buildings that would have blocked it from view.²⁶

The Crocker Bank Building took the title at 42 floors and 620 feet (189 meters) in 1967. The architect of this structure apparently decided that there was no point in continuing the cruciform form around the building, and placed the windowless elevator shaft facing the west, exposing an uncomplimentary anterior view to the new downtown. The 52 floor, 699 foot (213) twin towers of the Arco Center followed in 1972. Then, the United California Bank replaced its Spring Street headquarters with a 62 floor, 858 foot (262 meters) tower in 1973. The UCB Building was among the ten tallest buildings in the world. At about the UCB Building was to lose its title to Library Square, a fire broke out on the 12th floor and within two hours had consumed much of five floors and damaged much above. National television news networks carried the fire live. The building was restored and is now the Aon Tower.

Finally, in 1989, Library Square was built, the first (and thus far only) building to exceed 1,000 feet on the west coast (though the Las Vegas Stratosphere Tower is 110 feet or 34 meters higher). Library Square, like its predecessor UCB Tower was among the top 10 in the world when constructed. This building is also known as the US Bank Tower, at 73 floors and 1,018 feet (310 meters). Library Square has retained the “tallest building” title since that time, though remains only barely in the world’s top 25 as of the beginning of 2007. Its world rank will drop farther, with a number of very tall buildings due to be completed in Asia in the next few years. The downtown building boom reached its peak under the administration of Mayor Tom Bradley, who led the city for a record four terms from 1973 to 1993. Little has been added to the area in major office construction since that time.

All the while, the old commercial core to the east of the new construction was losing influence. By the 1970s, much of Spring Street’s activity had moved west and many buildings were empty. The fashion industry, principally women’s wear, occupied a large share of the space that was abandoned, but much of it moved in the longer run. Broadway, one block to the west of Spring Street, became a strong Hispanic shopping street, as nearby department stores closed or followed the office buildings west. The Arco Center, in the new downtown to the west, required demolishing one of the nation’s best examples of high-rise art deco, in the Richfield Building.

Downtown: Government: The Los Angeles civic center has been called the largest governmental center in the United States outside Washington, DC (PP 57-62). There is a mall and related buildings that extend from the John F. Ferraro²⁷ Building (Department of Water and Power), through the Kenneth Hahn²⁸ Hall of Administration, to City Hall and City Hall East. Some buildings are adjacent to the mall on the north or south side, such as the Disney Center, the California Department of Transportation Building (Caltrans) and the Hall of Justice. My grandfather used to work for the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department out of the Hall of Justice. This classic building was damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake, has been disused since that time and is now being refurbished.

City Hall occupies a complete block and was the tallest building in the city until the Union Bank Tower was completed in 1965. City Hall is 28 floors and 454 feet (138) tall. It is said to be modeled on an ancient Persian mausoleum.

The California Department of Transportation building is one of those many modern buildings without a legitimate place outside the waste bin of an architect's office. It is particularly out of place in the civic center mall that has so many well designed buildings. The Caltrans Building does not offend to the same extent as say the Lloyd's Bank in London, however, the architect's contemptuousness for good taste is clearly evident. Of course, the worst building on the mall is the Disney Center, which strives, however unsuccessfully, to lower the bar even farther than it had been depressed by the Bilbao Guggenheim.

The new Roman Catholic Cathedral is also located adjacent to the civic center mall. This modern (and controversial) structure replaced St. Vibiana's Cathedral, which was a modest building appropriate to the Los Angeles that existed when it was constructed. For the size of its diocese, St. Vibiana's had to be one of Roman Catholicism's smallest cathedrals.

The distinctive headquarters of the *Los Angeles Times* is also located adjacent to the civic center mall. Its placement is representative of the power that the newspaper had in Los Angeles political affairs until recent decades.

Downtown: Residential: Downtown Los Angeles is, like most other major urban cores in the United States, experiencing something of a renaissance in residential development. A number of older commercial buildings on Spring Street and neighboring streets have been converted from their emptiness to condominiums. However, Spring Street does not emit the activity that is evident in other resurgent downtown residential districts, such as Kansas City, St. Louis, Denver or Seattle. There was a proposal to build a 90 story condominium tower, which was not constructed. There was also an early attempt to increase the number of people living downtown when the Bunker Hill Towers were built in the 1970s. These buildings represented virtually all of the middle-income housing in the downtown area until recently.

Largest Employment Centers: Warehousing and Distribution Districts

One of the world's largest warehousing and distribution centers is to the southeast of downtown. This area begins virtually at the edge of downtown and follows the Santa Ana Freeway (Interstate 5) to the southeast and also extends directly south, well to the east of the Harbor Freeway (I-110), toward the Long Beach Freeway (I-710). This area has more than jobs than downtown, at nearly 200,000. Transit's work trip market share was a respectable 13 percent (pp 3-4).²⁹

Another large warehousing and commercial district is along the San Diego Freeway (I-205) between Torrance and Long Beach. This center has 160,000 jobs and is also larger than downtown. The transit work trip market share is a more typical four percent.

The Wilshire District

Until the 1960s, Wilshire Boulevard (pp 43-46) was the commercial area of the future. During the 1930s, strip commercial and retail development began on this street that runs from downtown to the ocean in Santa Monica. Most of the development was in the first four miles (seven kilometers) from downtown. Tall and mid-rise buildings were constructed and it seemed as if the area's commercial core was moving to Wilshire. Many of the richest houses of worship in the city either moved to Wilshire Boulevard or were established there, such as Immanuel Presbyterian, Wilshire Christian, St. James Episcopal, First Congregational (one block off Wilshire), St. Basil's Roman Catholic and the Wilshire Boulevard Temple. One of the area's most notable art deco buildings is the Wiltern Theatre, at the corner of Wilshire and Western Avenue.

But like downtown, Wilshire Boulevard’s influence was to be muted in the future. Little new construction has taken place on the Boulevard in the last three decades. The tower at the corner of Wilshire and Western, which was among the city’s tallest when built in the 1960s could use a major exterior refurbishment.

Just to the north of the Wilshire district is one of the area’s historical eating establishments, *Tommy’s Famous Hamburgers* (PP 77). This unique stand sells hamburgers and tamales with chili sauce and in my time routinely had long lines of people waited to be served. The food is eaten either in one’s car or standing up at the stand. *Tommy’s* was established in 1947 and holds the same place in local lore as *Harry’s Café de Wheel* in Sydney, where some of the world’s finest meat pies are served in a similar environment.

Further to the west, there is considerable commercial development along Wilshire Boulevard at the “Miracle Mile,” in Beverly Hills and in Santa Monica. Century City, one of the area’s largest peripheral commercial centers (“edge cities”), is located just to the south of Wilshire Boulevard, and west of Beverly Hills. In the Westwood area, there is both commercial and residential development. Nonetheless, Wilshire Boulevard has not taken part in much of the more recent development in the Los Angeles area.

Area	Employment	Share of Urban Area Employment	Transit Work Trip Market Share	Share of Urban Area Transit Commuters	Rail Transit?
Central-Commerce-Vernon	191,800	3.9%	13.1%	8.8%	
Downtown	143,700	2.9%	19.6%	9.8%	YES
Torrance-Long Beach (405)	160,800	3.3%	4.2%	2.3%	YES
LAX-EI Segundo	116,700	2.4%	4.5%	1.8%	YES
Century City	44,800	0.9%	6.7%	1.0%	NO
Long Beach: Downtown	37,100	0.8%	5.4%	0.7%	YES
Total	694,900	14.2%	10.1%	24.4%	
Balance of Urban Area	4,199,400	85.8%	5.2%	75.6%	
Urban Area	4,894,300	100.0%	5.9%	100.0%	

Data from US Bureau of the Census: CTPP, 2000

Edge Cities

Joel Girardeau coined the term “edge cities” (in his book of the same name) to denote large commercial centers that had developed outside the traditional downtown areas. Edge cities arose early, with perhaps the first one being New Center in Detroit (1920s), located well north of downtown. It was the corporate headquarters of General Motors, which has since moved downtown to Renaissance Center, which was built by an organization that included its competitor, the Ford Motor Company.

Major edge cities came a bit later in Los Angeles. Wilshire’s Miracle Mile and Westwood are edge cities. Probably the largest edge city in the area is south of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), with more than 115,000 jobs. Century City, built just south of Wilshire Boulevard and west of Beverly Hills. Century City has approximately 45,000 jobs. In recent decades, major new edge cities have appeared all over the Los Angeles area. Glendale (PP 75) has seen its formerly modest core grow to include a number of high rise buildings. There are other edge cities, such as Warner Center in the San Fernando Valley and a number of edge cities in Orange County. Downtown Long Beach (37,000 jobs), however, is not an edge city. It is rather a traditional downtown area of the area’s second largest municipality, with more than 400,000 residents.

Dispersed Employment

The vast majority of employment in the Los Angeles urban area is in smaller centers or dispersed (Table 2).

Art Deco Architecture

Los Angeles is or has been home to some of the best art deco architecture. The Richfield Building may have been the ultimate, but was demolished to make way for the Arco Center in the late 1960s.³⁰ At least two marvelous examples remain, the Eastern Columbia Building, downtown on Broadway³¹ and the Wiltern Theatre (PP 45).

SPORT

Urban Tours by Rental Car has not covered sport in the past. However, the uniqueness of Los Angeles in this regard justifies some discussion. Los Angeles has twice hosted the Olympic Games (1932 and 1984) and, remarkably did so in 1984 with little or no public subsidy (a matter of some sensitivity as the cost of the 2012 London games escalate at a rate that rivals and urban rail project).

Two large Los Angeles area universities, the University of Southern California (USC) and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) have been among the nation's most successful in sport. Both play in football stadia with capacities above 90,000 (USC in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and UCLA at the Rose Bowl, PP-76). USC has been a frequent football (gridiron) power and has won two recent national championships and come close on two other occasions. UCLA won an unprecedented seven of nine national basketball championships under legendary coach John Wooden in the 1960s and 1970s.

Perhaps most remarkably of all, the nation's second largest metropolitan area does not have a professional football team. None of the nation's 32 teams is located in the Los Angeles area. There were two teams in 1994, and both moved for the 1995 season. It is fair to wonder when Los Angeles will be large enough to justify a National Football League team.

TRANSPORT

As noted above, Los Angeles has a well coordinated and effective transportation system.

Roadways: Los Angeles is renown for its roadway system, especially its freeways. However, contrary to common understanding, a number of urban areas are better served by freeways than Los Angeles, such as Montreal, Toronto, Madrid, Barcelona and Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto.³² Los Angeles is also claimed to have built the first freeway, the Arroyo Seco Parkway (now called the Pasadena Freeway). However, this followed the building of similar roadways in the New York area by at least a decade.

The Pasadena Freeway used the Figueroa tunnels for east northeast bound roadway (PP 10). These tunnels, built a few years before, were a part of what was claimed to be the world's longest street, Figueroa Street, which traversed nearly 30 miles (50 kilometers) from Eagle Rock to the Los Angeles Harbor. Thus, it was no longer possible to travel Figueroa Street over that long distance and other streets emerged as longer.

It is unclear which street is now the world's longest. The spurious claim that Toronto's Yonge Street is the longer (supposedly at more than 1,100 miles or 1,800 kilometers) has finally been revealed as a fraud --- Yonge Street is not even continuous in the Toronto urban area. Chicago's Harlem Avenue is nearly 40 miles (65 kilometers) long, Toronto, however, may still have the longest street --- Steeles Street, which is more than 45 miles (70 kilometers) long, all within the continuous urbanization.

As noted above, Los Angeles has a dense grid of arterial streets that provide those who know their way around generally reliable alternatives to freeway congestion. These arterial streets are a principal reason why the Los Angeles transportation system performs so well despite the high population density.

As the most dense urban area in the United States, Los Angeles faces a huge challenge in containing traffic congestion. In the early 1980s, when national traffic congestion data was published for the first time by the Texas Transportation Institute, Los Angeles was the second most congested urban area, following Houston. Los Angeles has since become considerably more congested and is without rival (Houston managed to improve its traffic congestion by building more freeways) in the United States.

The problem is that there are too many people. The population density is simply too high, not to mention the fact that one-half of the proposed freeway network was not built. When sections of planned freeway were cancelled, no one prepared reports outlining the consequences. Nonetheless, the consequences came in the form of the nation's worst traffic congestion.

Despite its intense traffic congestion, things are much better than they could be. Los Angeles is not nearly so congested as the largest European urban areas or many Asian urban areas. Los Angeles traffic congestion has been kept moderate by international standard because of its superior arterial street system. Los Angeles has one of the best planned roadway transport systems in the world, with a grid network of wide streets at one-mile (1.6 kilometer) intervals, with one-half mile (0.8 kilometers) intervals in many cases (PP 12-13). Thus, there is usually an alternate route to congested freeways.

While I was on LACTC, we approved completion of the I-105 freeway (Glenn Anderson Freeway) from Norwalk to the Los Angeles International Airport area. This freeway has been cited as the last major segment of the US interstate system. A part of the final approval included building a light rail line (the Green Line) in the middle. Nonetheless, the "lion's share" of travel along the corridor is on the roadway, rather than the public transport line. My motion to extend the interstate designation of the Harbor Freeway from the I-105 interchange south to the Los Angeles Harbor was passed and enacted into federal law.³³ Finally, a special committee on which I served, chaired by County Supervisor Peter F. Schabarum, sought to end the now 50 year old dispute on the routing of the Long Beach Freeway through South Pasadena. We rendered our decision, which was no more effective than ordering the wind to stop. A right-of-way purchase for this freeway gap forced my great-aunt and her husband to sell their home in the early 1960s.

Public Transport

While Los Angeles is not known for high transit ridership, only two metropolitan areas in the United States, New York and Chicago, have higher transit usage. The transit market share (of automobile plus transit use) is 1.8 percent, which is slightly below Portland (2.2 percent), but more than double that of San Diego or Miami.³⁴ The transit market share is slightly above the national urban figure of 1.4 percent and double the "outside New York" figure of 0.9 percent.³⁵ Car pools have nearly three times the share of public transport in Los Angeles and nearly as many people work at home.

Buses: Los Angeles has one of the nation's largest bus systems, though the largest system, now operated by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACTMA)³⁶ it has suffered significant ridership losses since 1985. There are a number of additional bus operators in the metropolitan area, the largest of which are Orange County Transit, Foothill Transit, the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Long Beach and Santa Monica. The yellow school buses that are characteristic of the United States are found in the thousands in Los Angeles. In the United States, the total travel on school buses is greater than that of all the nation's public transport trains and buses on school days (PP 62-66).³⁷

Competitive Contracting (Competitive Tendering): One of my principal interests while on the Commission was to improve the cost effectiveness of the large (3,000 bus) bus system. The principal mechanism was competition, through the use of competitive contracting (or competitive tendering) such as has been used to convert the bus system of London. The result was a reduction in costs per mile of 50 percent from 1985 to 2000 and a service expansion of 30 percent. In 1985, few Los Angeles buses were competitively contracted.

However, programs put in place by LACTC, which led to the establishment of large competitively contracted systems in the San Gabriel Valley and the city of Los Angeles.³⁸ The latest data indicates that nearly 900 of the 3,500 (25 percent) public transport buses in Los Angeles County are competitively contracted. The result is obvious downtown in the variety of bus liveries that operate. A number of transit agencies now provide service, including Foothill Transit, Orange County Transit, Commuter Express (city of Los Angeles Department of Transportation), the city of Torrance and the city of Montebello (service was already provided by the Santa Monica and Gardena systems).

When LACTC began operation in 1977, there was an agenda to combine the services of the large Southern California Rapid Transit District with the various municipal bus operators. Through the work of the LACTC Service Coordination Committee, of which I was chair, we issued various quasi-judicial decisions and implemented policies that led the present situation, in which much more service is now provided to downtown Los Angeles, at cost efficiencies that never could have been achieved by SCRTD (or its successor, LACMTA). Generally, however, the area's abundant high-occupancy-vehicle lanes on freeways have not been used to provide high-quality express bus service.

This is changing. Foothill Transit has just begun a "Silver Streak" express bus service, which will provide luxury, rapid transit service along the San Bernardino Freeway. Foothill Transit, which is not only competitively contracted, but which has competitive management, is implementing the kind of high-quality freeway service that SCRTD and LACMTA have largely been constrained by their pre-occupation with building rail, regardless of the cost.

To its credit, LACMTA has implemented successful bus priority programs on city streets (such as Wilshire Boulevard and Ventura Boulevard) that have substantially increased ridership. This is an outgrowth of the re-examination of bus and rail services that was forced upon the agency by the Bus Riders Union lawsuit. Former Mayor Richard Riordan can also take credit for this development as a result of his review of the South American surface busway systems that have demonstrated the ability of buses to match the schedules and capacity of light rail systems (such as Porto Alegre, Sao Paulo, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte and Manuas in Brazil, Bogota in Colombia and now, in Mexico, Leon and in Indonesia, Jakarta).³⁹ The Orange Line, a rapid busway, has recently been opened across the San Fernando Valley (PP-79), providing a high level of service at a fraction of the cost of a rail line.

Rail: In addition to the buses, Los Angeles has two metro lines (the Red Line, with two branches) and three light rail lines, the Blue, Green and Gold lines (see "Birth of the Los Angeles Rail System: A Personal Postscript"). Despite adding more than 500 miles of urban rail, traffic volumes have exploded in Los Angeles and traffic congestion has considerably worsened. Moreover, insufficient cost control led to destructive fare increases and a successful effort by the Bus Riders Union and the NAACP to reduce spending on the rail system and instead to focus efforts on improving public transport mobility for the many low income citizens of Los Angeles. For the two decades since 1985, public transport ridership lagged behind the modern peak year of 1985 when there were only buses.

Commuter Rail: The commuter rail system has seven lines and operates under the name "Metrolink." It is run by an independent agency and is competitively contracted, like many of the buses.

The Los Angeles commuter rail system illustrates the problem of attempting to divert drivers from cars to public transport. This is best illustrated by the experience with the commuter rail system. In 1994, the Northridge earthquake destroyed freeway interchanges (PP 26) between the San Fernando Valley and the Santa Clarita Valley (Interstate 5 and State route 14). The only routes between the two valleys were circuitous roads and the Metrolink commuter rail line to downtown. Ridership rose strongly as a result of the severed arterials. But as soon as the freeways were repaired, ridership fell sharply and remains small compared to the traffic on the freeways.

Before the earthquake, rail ridership was 1,000 daily for the entire route from Lancaster (in the Antelope Valley) to downtown Los Angeles. After the earthquake, ridership rose to 22,000. By 1995, after the freeways had been repaired, ridership had fallen back to 3,000 and was averaging 3,700 in late 2006.⁴⁰ By comparison, daily passenger usage of the two freeways rose from 300,000 person trips per day to more than 400,000 at the interchange--- an increase 30 times that of the sustained rail line increase.⁴¹ Metrolink has estimated that its trains take three percent of the traffic off of adjacent freeways --- an amount quickly negated by the growth in traffic volumes.

Airports

Los Angeles is served by five commercial airports. The largest is Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), which is among the busiest in the world and where virtually all international flights land and take off. The airport is owned by a city of Los Angeles agency, which also owns Ontario International Airport, to the east. There is also Burbank Airport, which has changed names as frequently as downtown buildings. Orange County-John Wayne Airport is located well to the south of LAX. The least busy is Long Beach Airport.

BIRTH OF THE LOS ANGELES RAIL SYSTEM: A Personal Postscript

The most costly decision in which I was involved was in the development of the Los Angeles rail system. As members of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC), we were frequently told by staff and consultants that re-establishing a rail system would significantly reduce traffic congestion. It was because of that belief that I had become involved in transportation politics and, more importantly, introduced the motion in August 20, 1980 special meeting that created the funding for the rail system. Had it not been for my amendment, there would have been no matching funding for the Los Angeles subway (Red Line), nor would there have been the necessary funding for other Los Angeles rail lines, such as the Blue Line light rail line.

There had been considerable discussion about using our legislative power to place a transit tax on the ballot in the November 1980 election. We held hearings around the county, however the general view of members was that no ballot issue would be referred to the voters at this time. One of the legends of Los Angeles politics, County Supervisor and LACTC Chairman⁴² Kenneth Hahn had other ideas. He called a special meeting of the commission.

The special meeting was chaired by Chairman Hahn. His plan, announced only a few days before would have established a one-half cent sales tax, subject to voter approval in the November general election, for the purpose of lowering the bus fare to \$0.50 for five years. The Hahn plan was a surprise, because we had been holding hearings on a ballot proposition around the county and the general view was that we would not place an item on the ballot.

Early in the meeting, Mayor Ed Russ of Gardena had previously introduced an amendment that dedicated one-quarter of the new tax to local transportation programs, to be administered by municipalities and Los Angeles County for the unincorporated area. I was very skeptical of this program, but in retrospect, am pleased to say that the Russ Amendment was, by far, the most valuable part of Proposition A. The resulting Proposition A Local Return program led to massive bus service increases, which were largely competitively contracted by a multiplicity of transit agencies and municipalities that were not constrained by the bureaucratic and political forces that impose such high costs on large public transport operators like the SCRTD/LACMTA..

My motion had not been planned, but was introduced because of my frustration that we were about to place a sales tax initiative on the ballot that would simply fuel higher unit costs in the longer run, giving the public virtually no gain (Due to SCRTD's record of inefficiency and weakness in bargaining with its unions).

Supervisor Baxter Ward, surely the most ardent supporter of urban rail I ever met, introduced a motion that would have required one-half of the funding to be used for rail construction --- under the Hahn plan only what was left over could be used for rapid transit. Both Baxter and I knew there would be nothing left over for rapid transit unless funding were “fire walled.”

I was sitting next to Baxter, with whom I had experienced more policy differences than with anyone else on the commission.⁴³ I suggested that we should try to get a 35 percent amendment for rapid transit. He responded that 35 percent wasn’t enough, but was convinced by my argument that it was better than nothing. He was willing to second my motion, however, if the usage were defined as “rail” not “rapid transit,” which would have included rapid busways. I introduced the motion, which was seconded by Supervisor Ward.⁴⁴ Chairman Hahn accepted the amendment. I was later to learn that this was because Supervisor Hahn was afraid he might lose Supervisor Ward’s vote and the overall program would be rejected. To accommodate the motion, the Chairman reduced his fare reduction program to three years.

Proposition A, as it was called, was authorized by a majority vote of the electorate and validated by a California state supreme court decision in 1982 after it had been held up due to Proposition 13 (tax limitation) concerns. My rail amendment required that, effective July 1, 1985, 35 percent of Proposition A funding be committed to building rail transit.

As I had expected, transit unit costs rose to consume the new operations funding, eventually leaving nothing more than a deficit. For three years, Proposition A provided funding to reduce and maintain the bus fare, throughout Los Angeles County, at 50 cents. Ridership increased 40 percent in three years and by the end of the program, in mid-1985, the Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD) was carrying nearly 500 million annual passengers. But with the SCRTD lacking cost control, the 35 percent set aside for rail in 1985 created a huge deficit in the budget. A series of large fare increases followed, eventually precipitating the legal action by the NAACP and the Bus Riders Union, which required LACMTA to pay more attention to the bus service that represents the only mobility for many low-income citizens of Los Angeles.

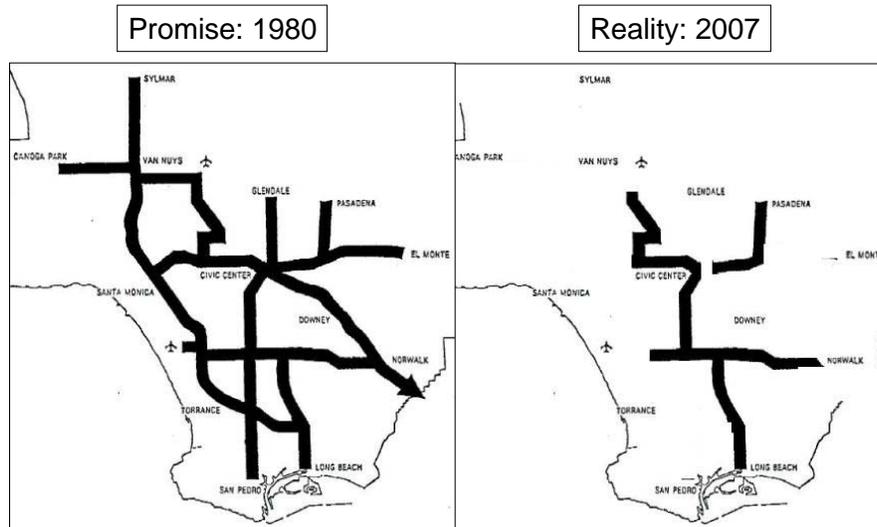
All of this could have been readily avoided if competitive contracting had been adopted. But neither LACTC nor SCRTD had an appetite for that. My attempt to develop a serious strategic planning process that permitted the low fares to be kept after 1985 and to keep unit costs from rising had not been adopted by LACTC. By 1993, ridership had fallen back a full quarter, despite the addition of rail service.

The Proposition A tax that we put on the ballot in 1980 was to have built 11 rail lines. Another one-half cent tax was passed by the voters in 1990. At this point, comparatively little of the system has been built, despite the addition of a second tax in 1990 (Figure: Los Angeles: Promise & Reality). Essentially, four of the promised rail lines have been built, and the extension of one has been built as a busway (the Orange Line in the San Fernando Valley).

Of course, the promised reduction in traffic congestion from diverting demand to rail never materialized, because no net diversion occurred. Indeed, as of 2005, Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority ridership remained below 1985 levels, despite the fact that Los Angeles County has added at least 15 percent in population *and* the rail lines.

Los Angeles: Promise & Reality

RAIL SYSTEM



Related Links

Urban Terms: <http://www.demographia.com/db-define.pdf>
 Los Angeles Index: <http://www.demographia.com/dbx-la.htm>
 Los Angeles Transportation Index: <http://www.publicpurpose.com/utx-la.htm>
 Demographia World Urban Areas: <http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf>
 The Megacity Book: http://www.rentalcartours.net/megacity_book.pdf
 Los Angeles County Transportation Commission Archives: <http://www.publicpurpose.com/lactc-ix.htm>
 Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey: <http://www.demographia.com/dhi-ix2005q3.pdf>
 Urban Tours by Rental Car: Index : <http://www.rentalcartours.net>
 Demographia website: <http://www.demographia.com>
 The Public Purpose Website: <http://www.publicpurpose.com>

¹ For definitions of urban terms see <http://www.demographia.com/db-define.pdf>.

² Urban area includes US Bureau of the Census urbanized areas of Los Angeles, Riverside-San Bernardino and Mission Viejo. Rankings: Among urban 707 areas with more than 500,000 population (<http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.com>, 2007.03 edition)

³ Urban area rankings: Projections among 205 urban areas with more than 500,000 population (<http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua2015.com>)

⁴ Based upon Richard L. Forstall, Richard P. Greene and James B. Pick, *Which Are the Largest: Why Published Populations for Major Urban Areas Vary so Greatly*. This document contains the only known, consistent estimates of world metropolitan areas. It is limited to the largest 20.

⁵ Los Angeles Consolidated Area, including Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties.

⁶ Megacities and their estimated populations are shown at <http://www.demographia.com/db-megacity.pdf>.

⁷ The Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) was established by state law in 1976 for the purpose of administering highway and public transport policy in Los Angeles County, which was (and is) the largest county in the United States. Its membership included the Mayor of Los Angeles, the five Los Angeles County Supervisors, the Mayor of Long Beach, two elected officials from smaller municipalities and two additional appointees of the Mayor of Los Angeles, who were the City Council President and me. I was the only member of LACTC who was not an elected official. Each of the members had an appointed alternate and Deputy Mayor Ray Remy usually sat in for Mayor Bradley.

⁸ Picture Appendix Page reference.

⁹ See *Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey*, <http://www.demographia.com/dhi-ix2005q3.pdf>.

¹⁰ <http://www.demographia.com/db-ua2000pop.htm>.

¹¹ <http://www.demographia.com/c-bosatlsburbs.jpg>.

¹² <http://www.publicpurpose.com/ut-dvmtua2005.htm>. Also see: <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-boston.pdf>, <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-houston.pdf>, and <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-toronto.pdf>.

¹³ This distinction is highlighted because of the tendency of unfamiliar researchers to confuse municipalities with metropolitan areas. For example, a highly-placed researcher at an Australian bank managed to conduct research on US metropolitan housing markets and mistakenly used municipality data instead of metropolitan area data. The error rendered his entire analysis useless. The term “city” can be misleading, because it can denote a municipality or a metropolitan area. More often that not, when the term “city” is used in the US context, it refers to a municipality. See “Urban Terms Defined” <http://www.demographia.com/db-define.pdf>.

¹⁴ In this article, the term Los Angeles means the Los Angeles urban area unless specific reference is made to the “city of,” “county of” or metropolitan area.

¹⁵ <http://www.demographia.com/db-metgovts2002.htm>.

¹⁶ <http://www.lava.net/cslater/TQOrigin.pdf>.

¹⁷ Consolidated area.

¹⁸ http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/cityfutures/papers/webpapers/cityfuturespapers/session3_4/3_4whicharethe.pdf.

¹⁹ <http://www.demographia.com/db-2005migdom.pdf> and <http://www.demographia.com/dhi-ix2005q3.pdf>.

²⁰ Urban area as defined by *Demographia*. Toronto, which includes the Statistics Canada designated urban areas of Toronto, Hamilton and Oshawa. The Bureau of the Census Los Angeles urban area is slightly more dense than the Statistics Canada designated Toronto urban area.

²¹ http://www.fromtheheartland.org/blog/2006/12/european_commission_sprawl_rep.php#more

²² This reality continues to amaze and rattle anti-suburban interests, which routinely point to Los Angeles as a model of what should not be. Some of their research even suggests that Los Angeles has become less dense, rather than more. There is an often repeated myth, for example, that between 1970 and 1990, the area of urban development in Los Angeles expanded 300 percent, while the population rose 49 percent. In fact, according to the US Bureau of the Census, the land area increased 18 percent and the population 37 percent over the period.

²³ <http://www.demographia.com/db-paris-pc.htm>

²⁴ Community areas of Northeast, Boyle Heights, Southeast, West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Liemert Park, South Central, Wilshire, Hollywood, Silverlake-Echo Park, Westlake, Central City, Central City North.

²⁵ <http://www.demographia.com/db-cbd2000.pdf>.

²⁶ For a photograph, see <http://www.emporis.com/en/wm/bu/?id=sbctower-losangeles-ca-usa>.

²⁷ Named for the late City Council president and USC football star, who was also a member of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission and was its first chairman (1977).

²⁸ Named for the late Kenneth Hahn, who was a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors from 1952 to 1992 and became something of a Los Angeles political legend. He was also a member of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission.

²⁹ <http://www.publicpurpose.com/ut-cprof-la.htm>.

³⁰ http://www.usc.edu/dept/geography/la_walking_tour/new_downtown/arco_towers_and_old_richfield_building.html

³¹ <http://www.emporis.com/en/wm/bu/?id=116407>

³² <http://www.publicpurpose.com/ut-worldfwy.htm>.

³³ Congressman Glenn Anderson’s amendment would have redesignated only the section from I-10 to I-105 as an interstate as originally drafted.

³⁴ <http://www.publicpurpose.com/ut-usa2005r.htm>.

³⁵ <http://www.publicpurpose.com/ut-usa2005ny.htm>.

³⁶ The successor agency to the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission and the Southern California Rapid Transit District.

³⁷ <http://www.publicpurpose.com/sch-tr96.htm>.

³⁸ These programs were developed in the Service Coordination Committee, which I chaired during by tenure.

³⁹ See rental car tours: <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-palegre.pdf>, <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-sao.pdf>, <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-curitiba.pdf>,

<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-belo.pdf>, <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-manaus.pdf>, <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-leon.pdf>, <http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-jakarta.pdf>.

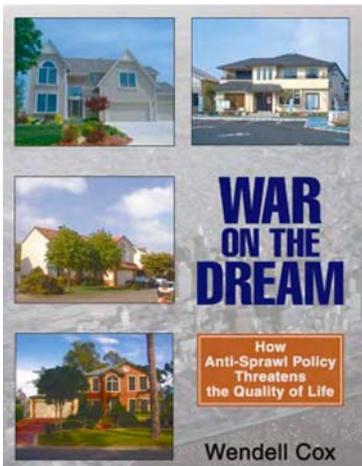
⁴⁰ http://www.its.dot.gov/JPODOCS/REPTS_TE/13775_files/13775.pdf.

⁴¹ Calculated using Caltrans data, assuming the national average of 1.6 persons per vehicle.

⁴² The office of chair rotated on an annual basis.

⁴³ Our most significant disagreement was over the establishment of the Santa Clarita bus system, in the early 1980s. I had been successful, over his objections, in obtaining funding to start this modest system of competitively contracted service, which was in his constituency area. The system has since grown to include more than 50 buses.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the August 20, 1980 Los Angeles County Transportation Commission special meeting, page 23.



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Urban Tours by Rental Car: About the Series

Urban Tours by Rental Car offers perspectives on urban development obtained by automobile tours through urban areas. Rental cars are not the favored method for visiting cities, especially those outside one's own country. Instead, tourists and urban planners favor packaged tours or local public transport systems. Both are splendid ways for seeing the city as it used to be --- the very reason for most tourist visits. The historical core areas contain monuments, prime government and religious edifices and quaint neighborhoods that are often centuries old. This is particularly important to tourists from the newer urban areas of the American, Canadian or Australian West, where history extends not far before World War II. It is further understandable that few tourists travel thousands of miles to see the newer suburban areas that look very much like home. But most tourists do not profess to be students of the urban area.

For the urban planner interested in understanding the whole urban area, it is not enough to study the core alone, regardless of its architectural attractiveness, romanticism, history or affirmation of an individually preferred life style. No one, regardless of the depth of their education can develop reliable conceptions from an unrepresentative sample, and urban cores are the very essence of unrepresentative samples. Both public transport and packaged tours miss the larger part --- the expanse of sprawling residential and business development that rings virtually all major urban areas. They may be of little interest to many urban planners, but they should be.

Stripping away regional architectural facades, one might as well be in the suburbs of Phoenix, Portland, Perth or Paris. Here, the automobile is king, because no public transport system has been developed that can effectively serve destinations outside the core (at least at a price any society can afford). While public transport market shares are higher in European suburban areas than in the New World, much of the difference is attributable to lower incomes and less automobile access. Indeed, public transport's principal weakness, lack of automobile competitiveness, is itself a contributing factor to the rising motorization occurring from the suburbs of Copenhagen and Nagoya to the suburbs of Lagos and Mumbai. To oversimplify this phenomenon as being a "love affair with the automobile" is the equivalent of saying that Singaporeans or Brazilians have a love affair with air conditioning. Human beings prefer comfort to discomfort and they prefer free time to time over which they have no control.

It is no wonder that tourists return to the United States thinking that all Paris looks like the second arrondissement (less than one percent does) and that urban planners think all of Milan looks like the architectural treasures that surround the Cathedral. In fact, the sprawling suburbs of Europe, Japan, Canada and Connecticut resemble one another in many ways. For any seeking to study the urban area in its entirety --- not just the favored haunts of core-dwelling elites --- there is no alternative to "getting behind the wheel." Thus, *Urban Tours by Rental Car*



East Suburban toward Tejon Pass



East Suburban & Ontario Airport



East Suburban: Ontario



East Suburban: Diamond Bar



Industrial District South of CBD



CBD, Santa Monica Mountains & San Fernando Valley



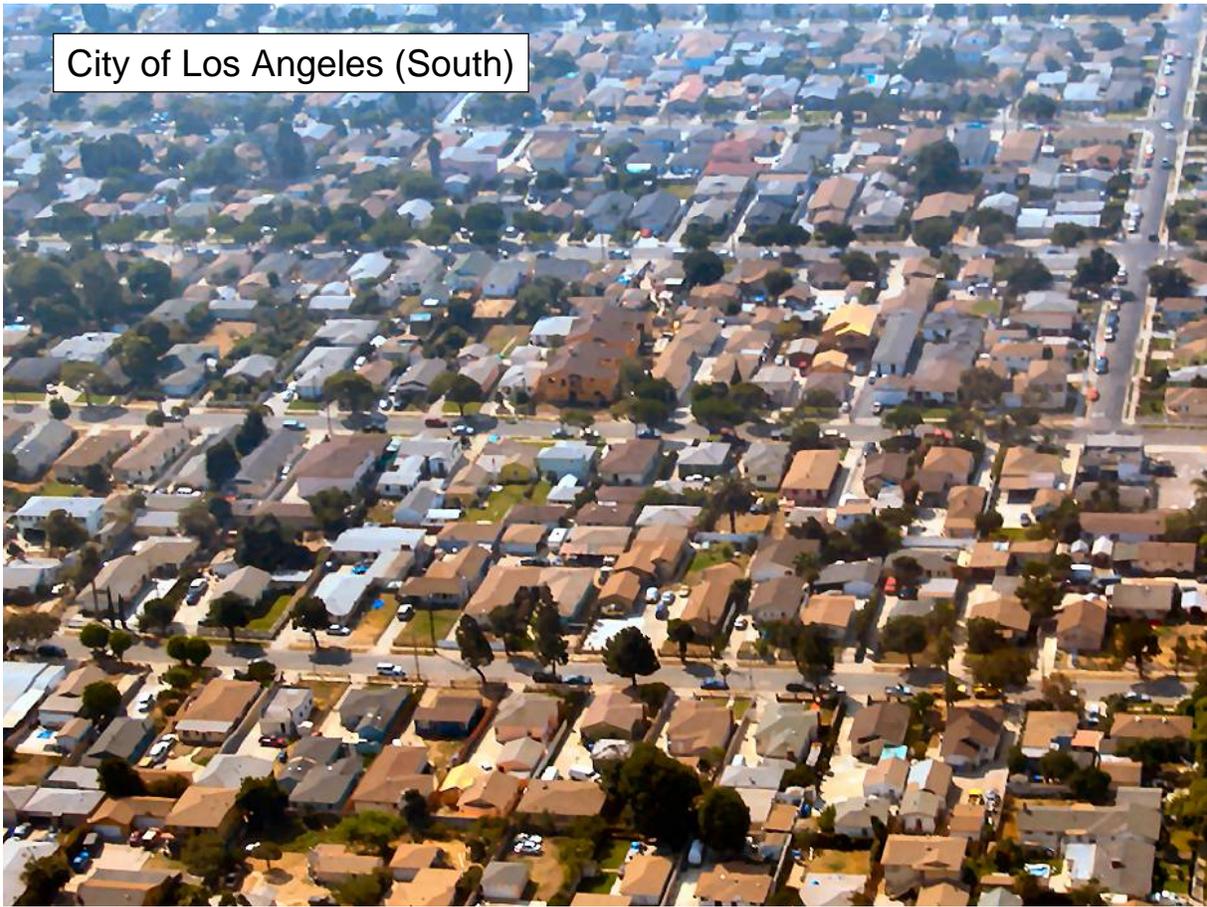
CBD Glendale and San Gabriel Mountains in Distance



I-110 (Harbor Freeway)



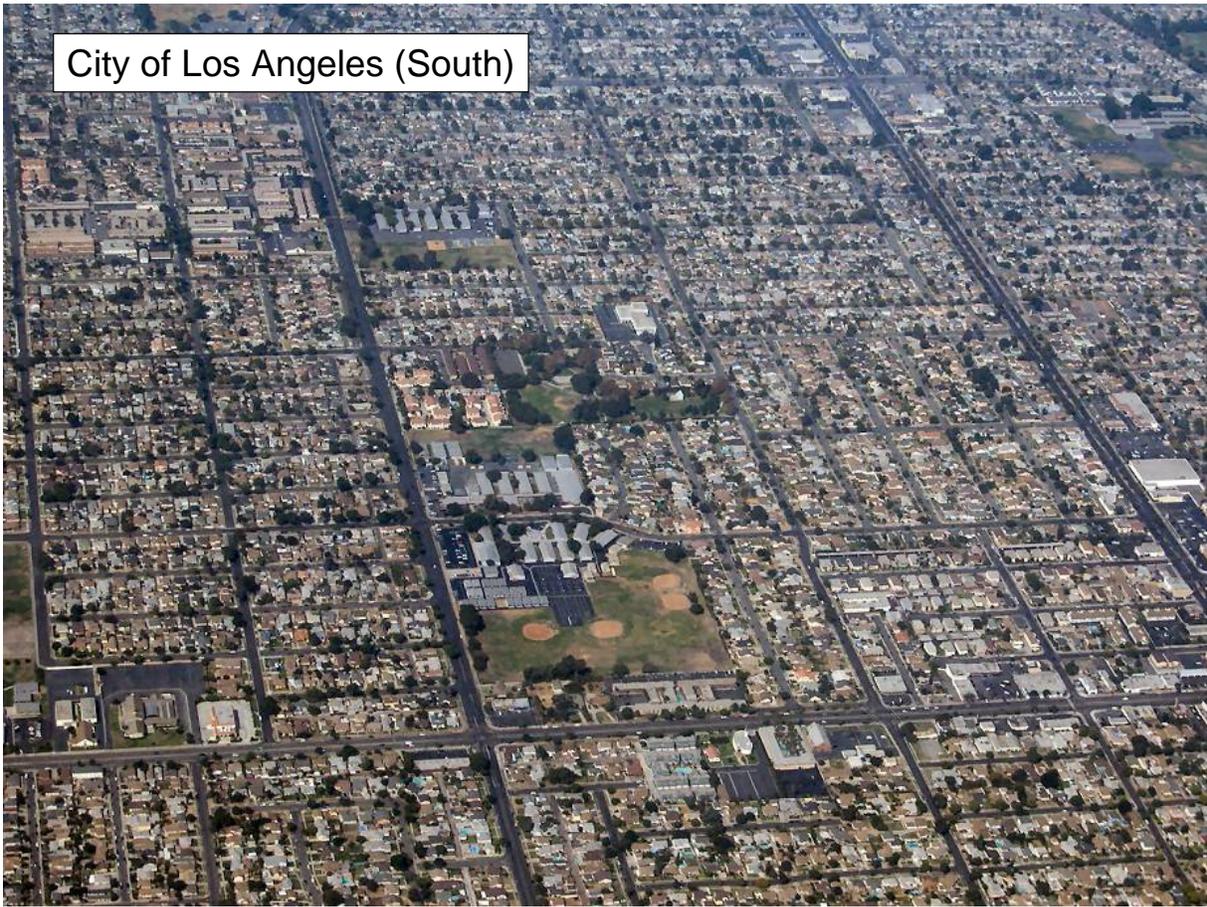
City of Los Angeles (South)



SE Suburban
I-710/I-105 Interchange



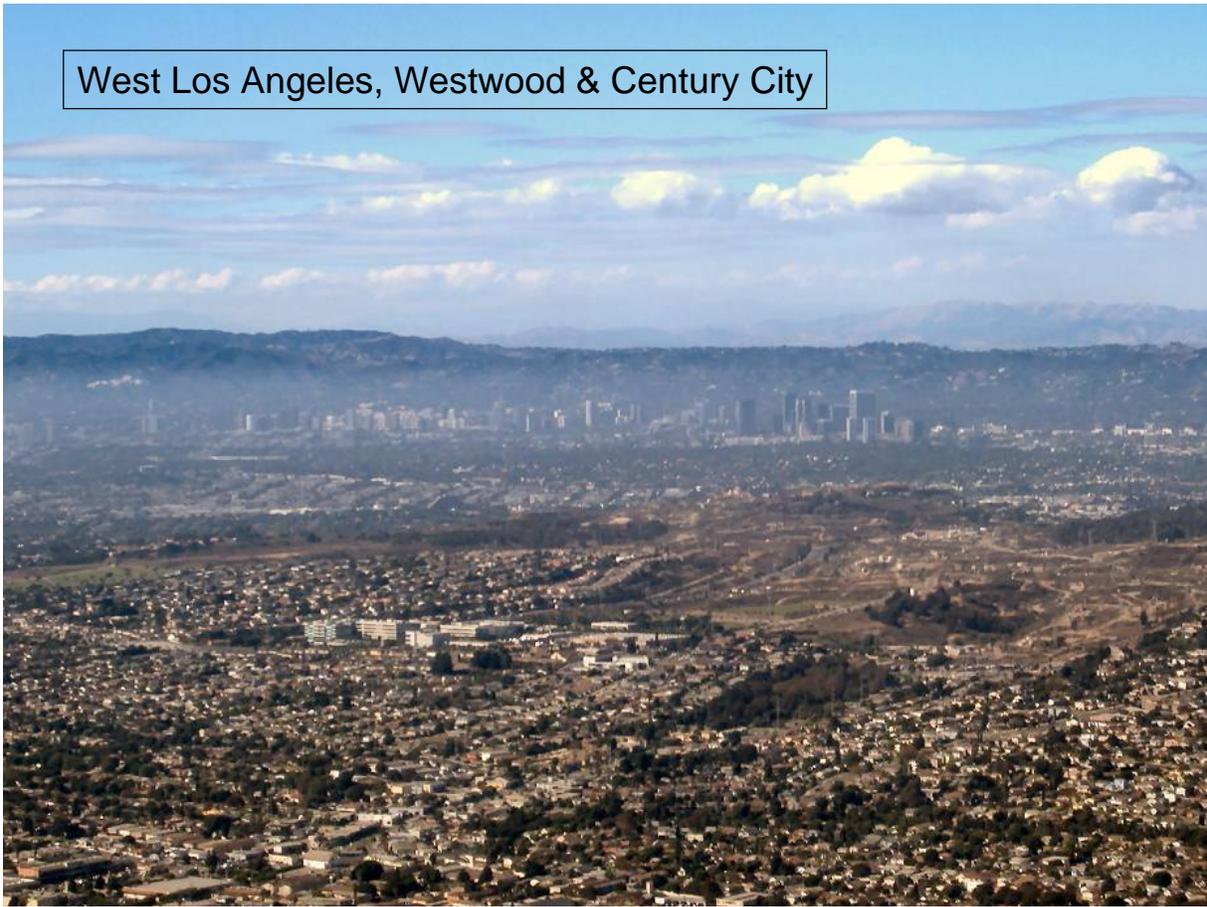
City of Los Angeles (South)



I-110/105 Interchange Looking South

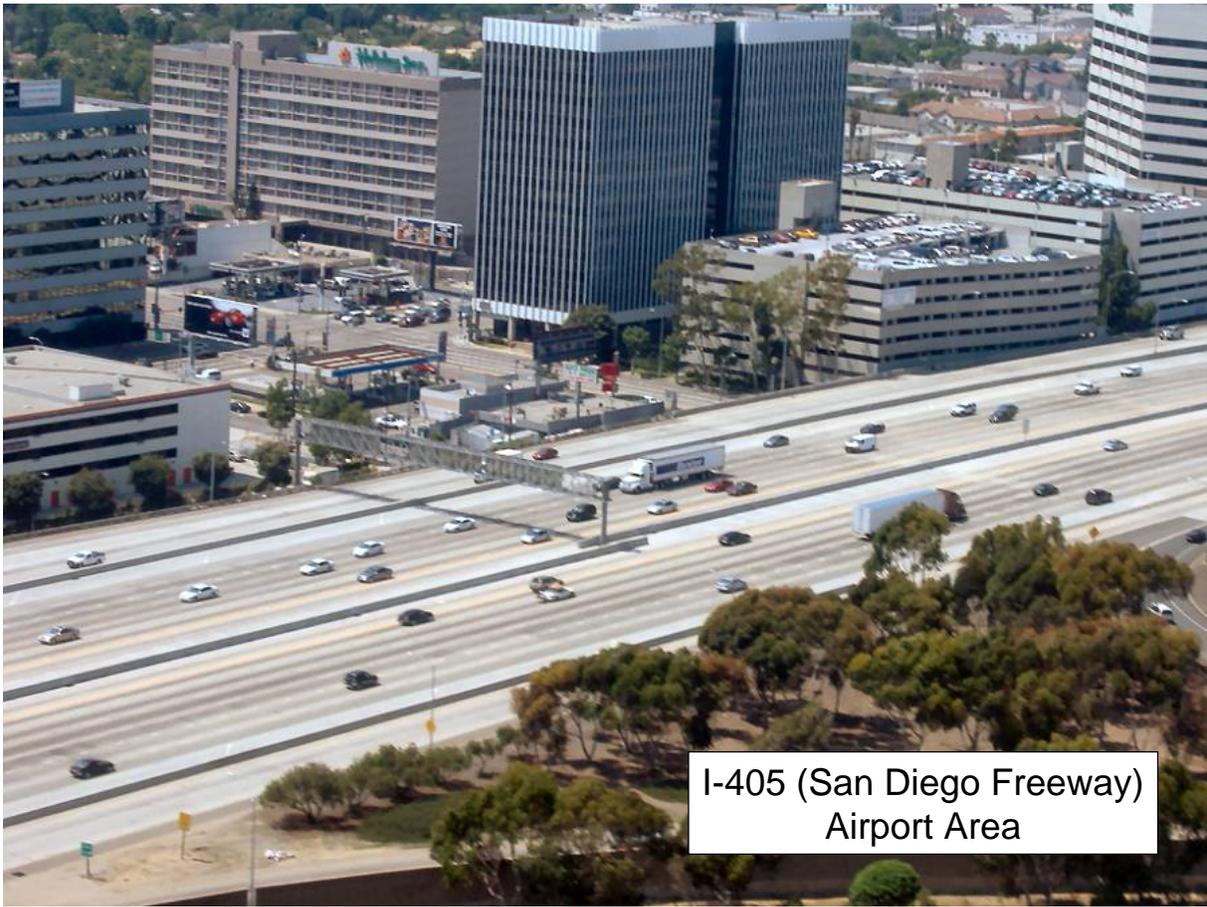


West Los Angeles, Westwood & Century City



Southwest Suburban





I-405 (San Diego Freeway)
Airport Area



I-405 Sepulveda Pass

Sepulveda Pass



Pasadena Freeway (Figueroa Tunnels)

I-210, Foothill Freeway, La Crescenta



Ronald Reagan Freeway, Simi Valley



CA-2: Glendale Fwy, Glendale



“Mile Street” Sherman Way



Simi Valley (Exurban)



Simi Valley (Exurban)



Simi Valley (Exurban)



Exurban Los Angeles (Temecula)



Simi Valley (Exurban)



Simi Valley (Exurban)





Simi Valley (Exurban)



Simi Valley (Exurban)

Simi Valley (Exurban)



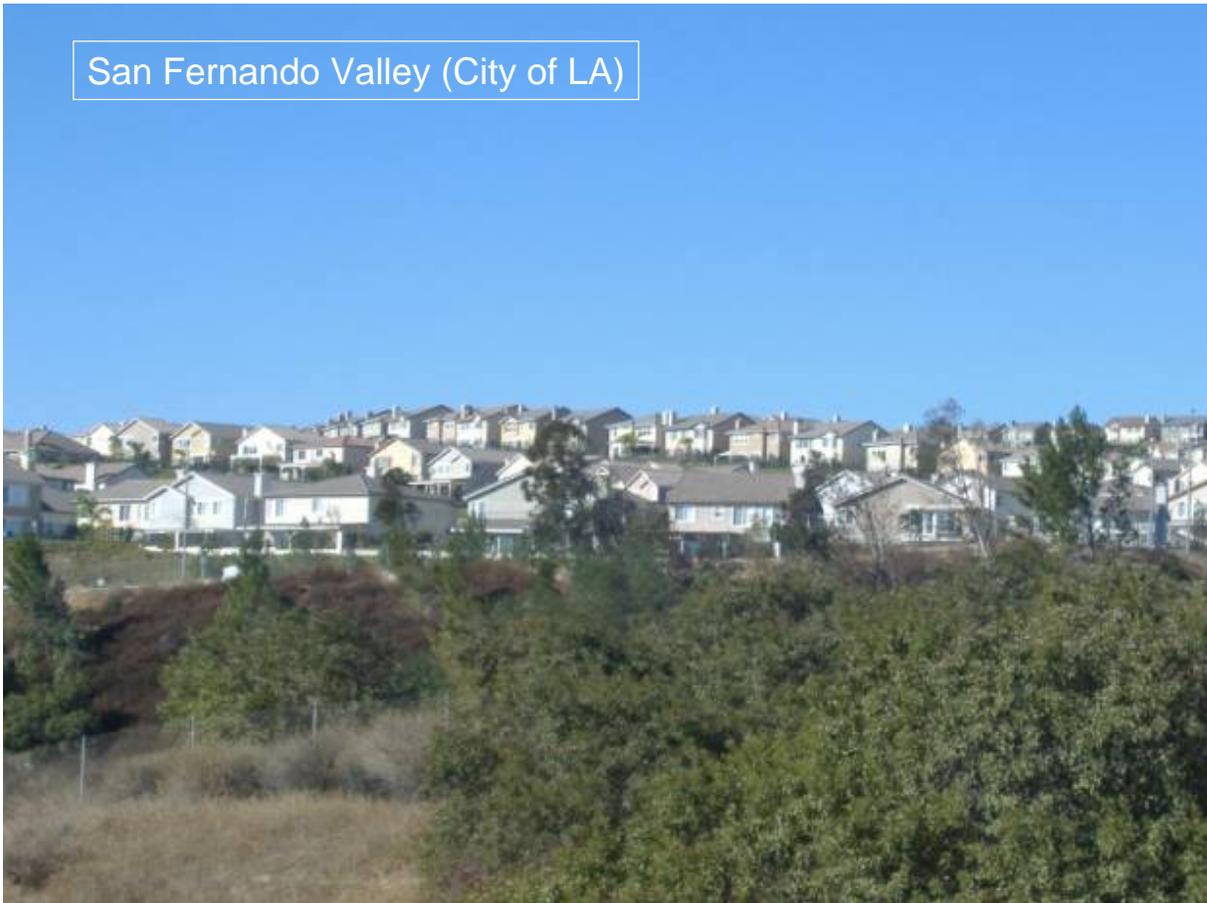
Simi Valley (Exurban)



Simi Valley (Exurban)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



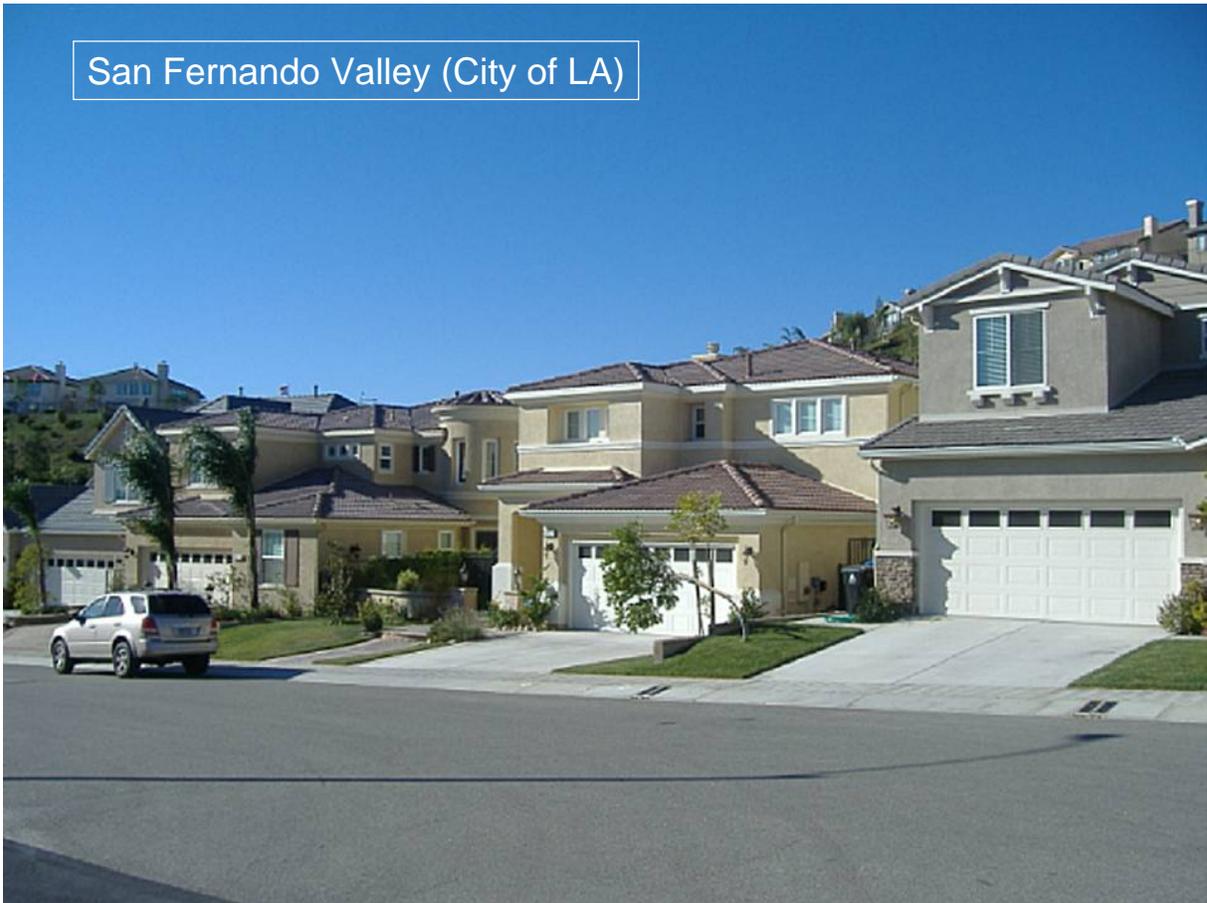
San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)

San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)





San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)

San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



San Fernando Valley (City of LA)



I-5/State 14 Interchange)

Foothill Freeway (City of LA)



Santa Clarita (Exurban)



Santa Clarita (Exurban)



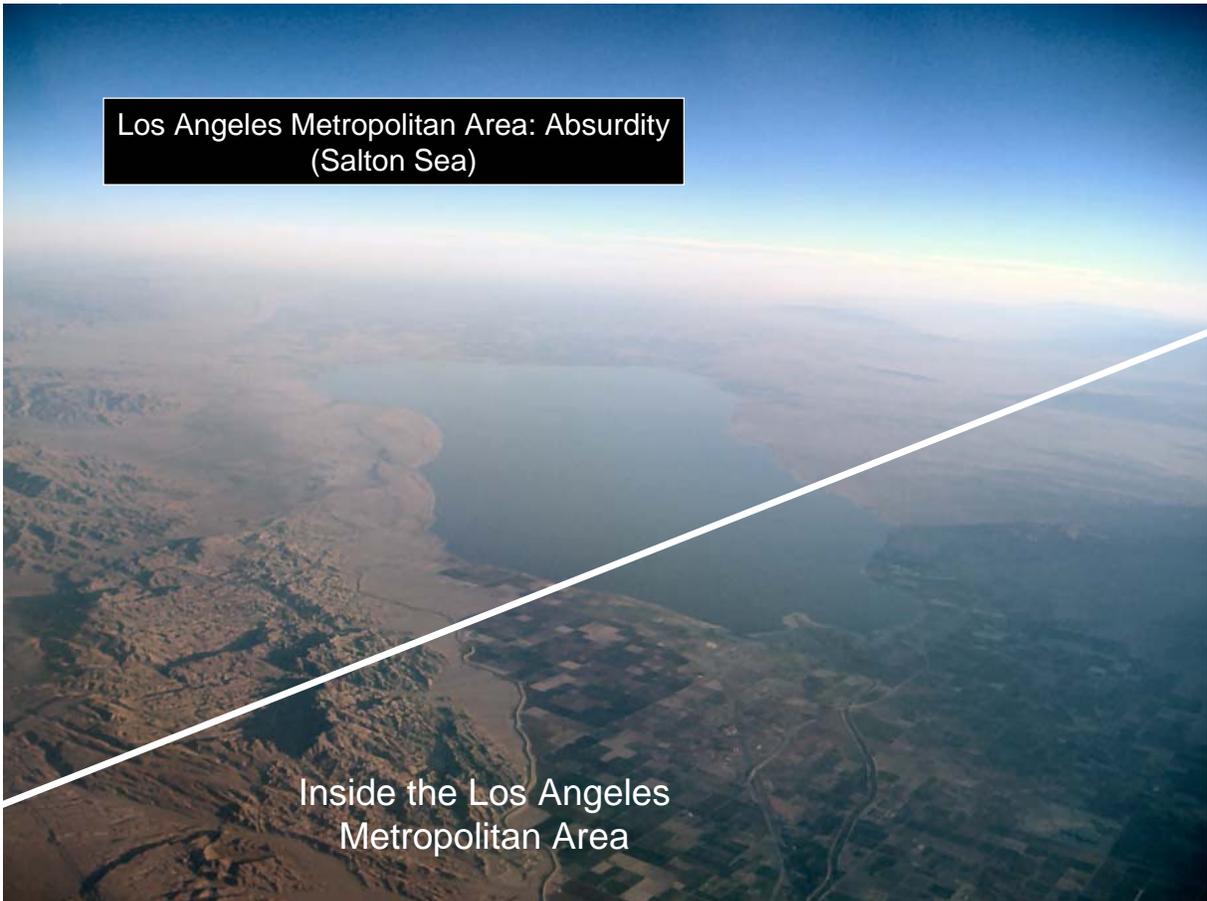
Santa Clarita (Exurban)



Santa Clarita (Exurban)



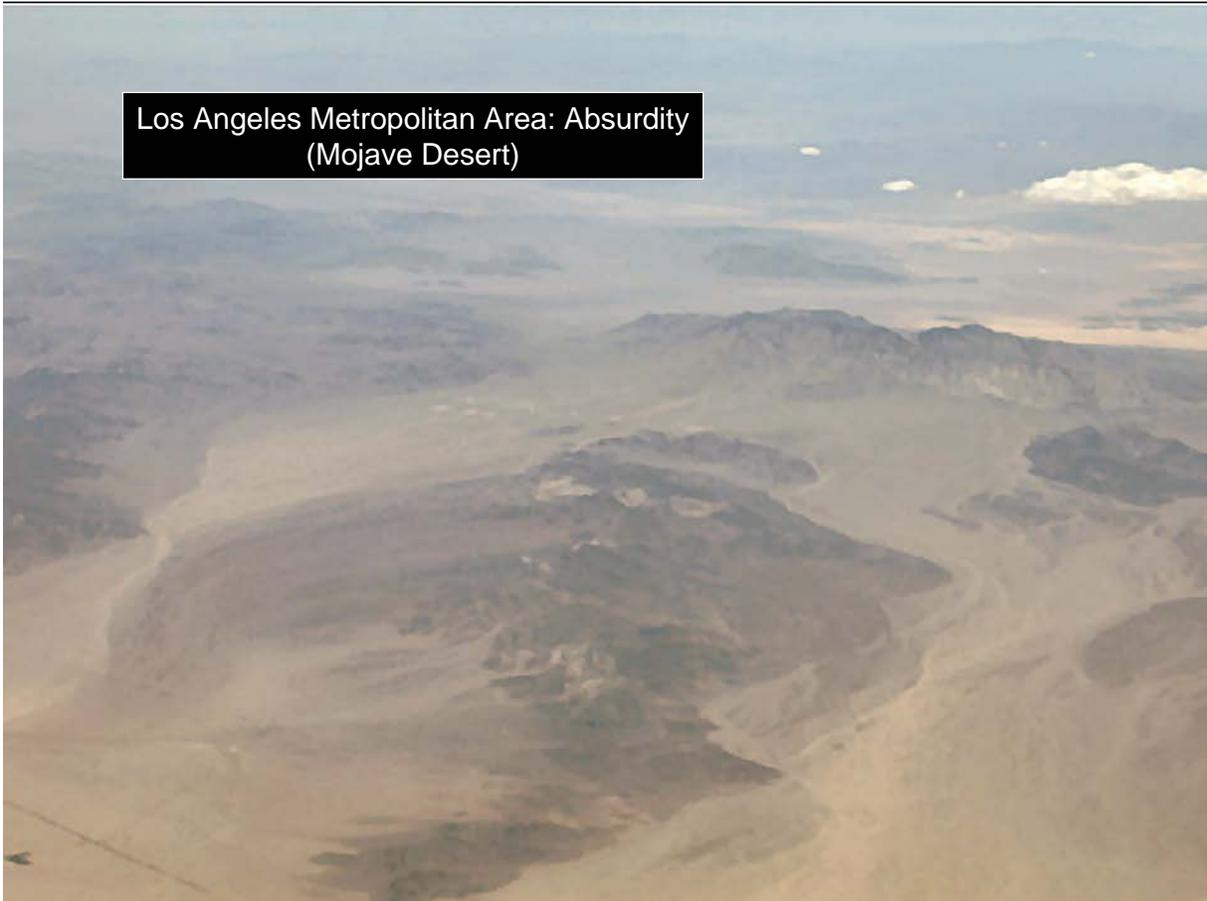
Los Angeles Metropolitan Area: Absurdity
(Salton Sea)



Inside the Los Angeles
Metropolitan Area



Los Angeles Metropolitan Area: Absurdity
(San Bernardino Mountains)



Los Angeles Metropolitan Area: Absurdity
(Mojave Desert)

Temecula (Exurban)



Temecula (Exurban)



Mission Viejo (Suburban)



San Clemente (Suburban)





Los Angeles Metropolitan Area: Absurdity
(Santa Catalina Island)
San Diego Metropolitan Area: Absurdity
(San Clemente Island in distance)



Los Angeles Metropolitan Area: Absurdity
(Colorado River & Arizona Beyond)



Santa Monica & Pacific Ocean



Airport Area, City of LA

Airport Area, City of LA



Airport Area, City of LA



Airport Area, City of LA



Ronald Reagan Freeway, Simi Valley



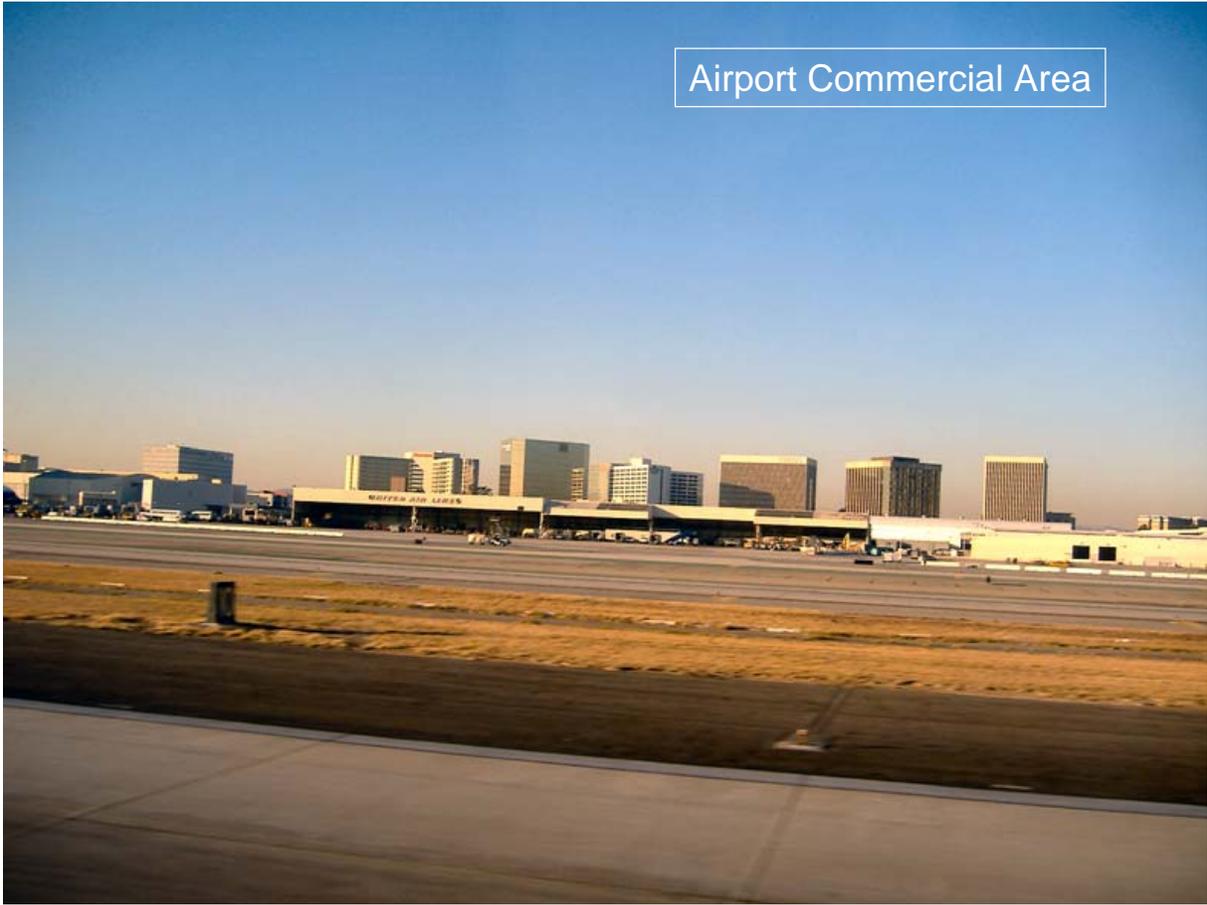
Ronald Reagan Freeway Between
San Fernando Valley & Simi Valley



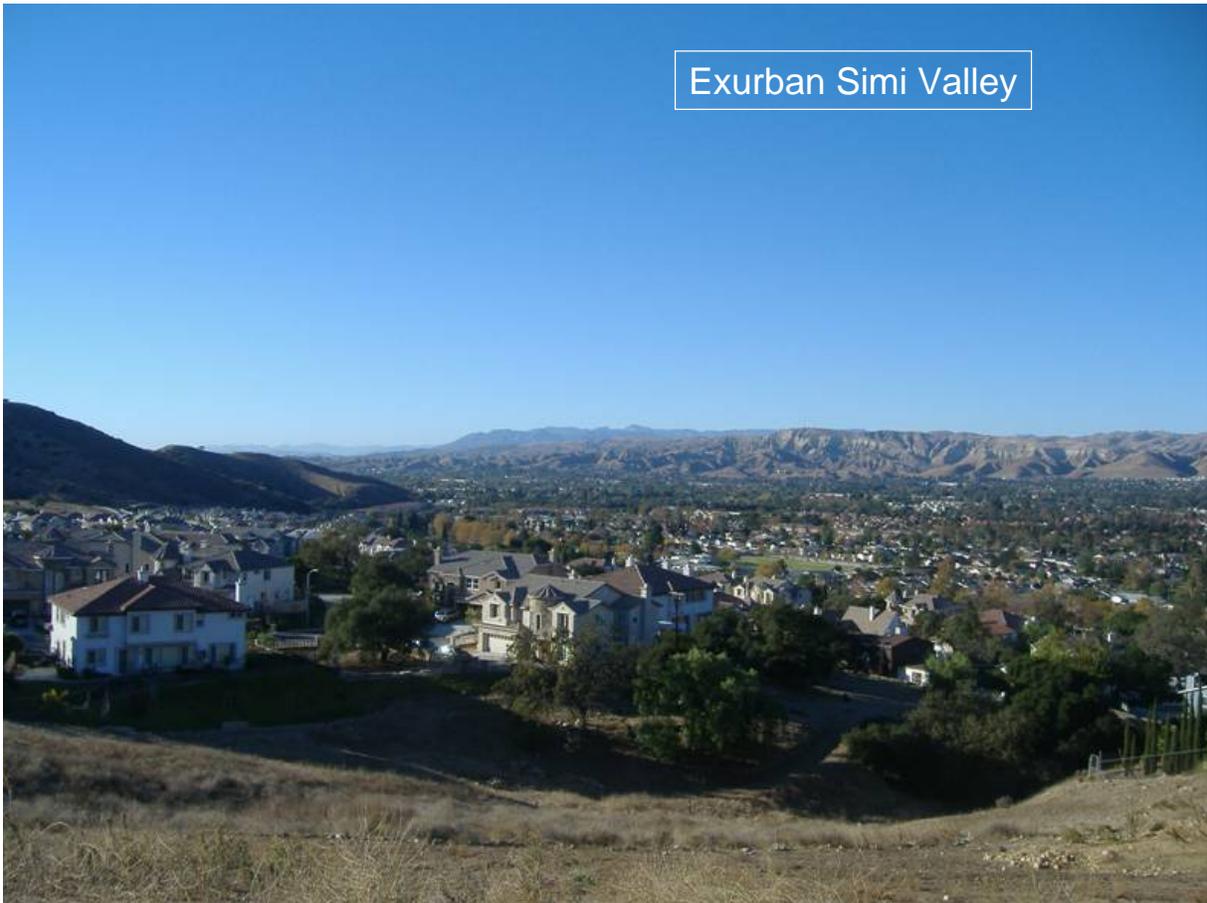
Leaving LA International Airport



Airport Commercial Area



Exurban Simi Valley



Exurban Simi Valley



Exurban Simi Valley





Pasadena



Pasadena



Park Built Over Freeway, La Canada



I-210, Foothill Freeway, La Crescenta

Ronald Reagan Freeway, Simi Valley



CA-2: Glendale Fwy, Glendale



Wilshire Boulevard



Wilshire Boulevard
Immanuel Presbyterian Church



Wilshire Boulevard
Wilshire Christian Church



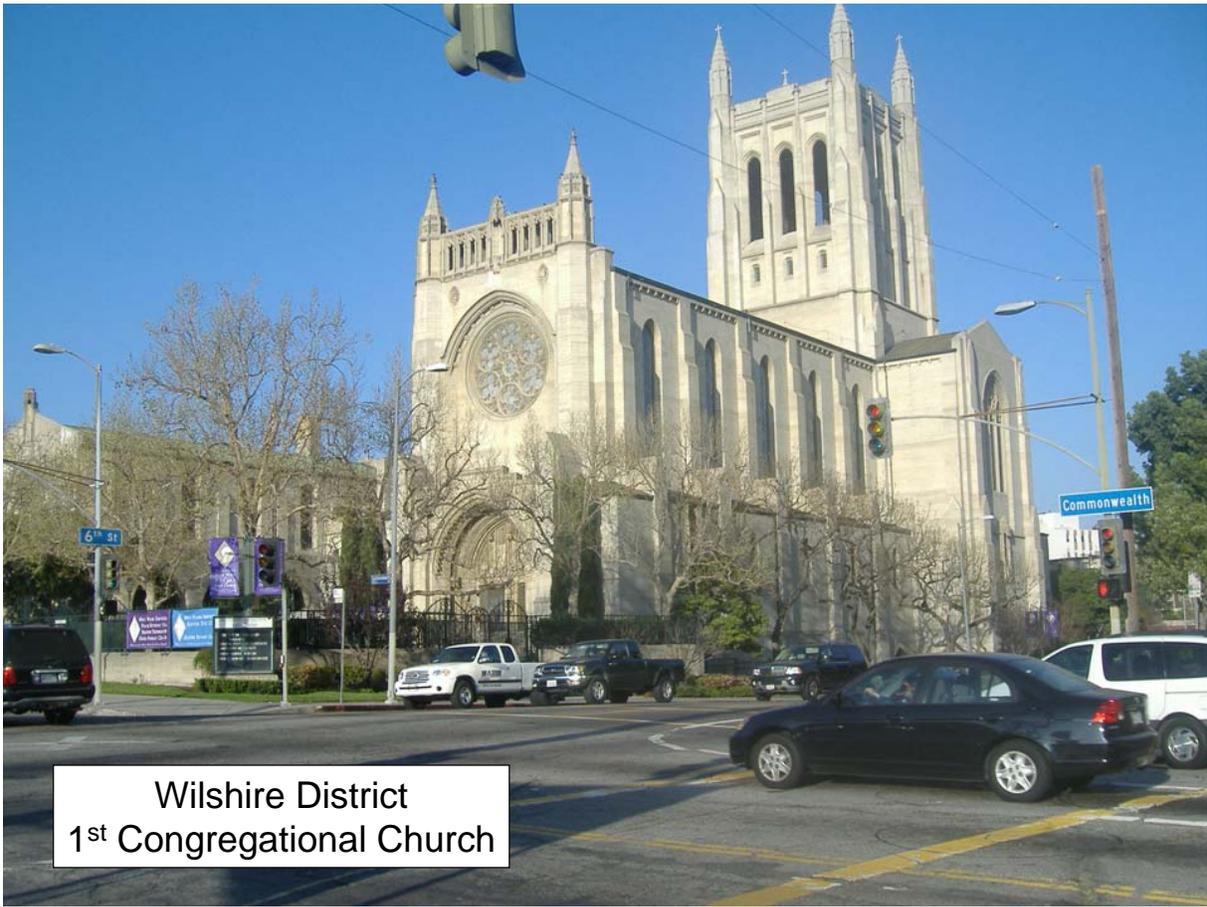
Wilshire Boulevard
Wilshire Boulevard Temple

Wilshire Boulevard

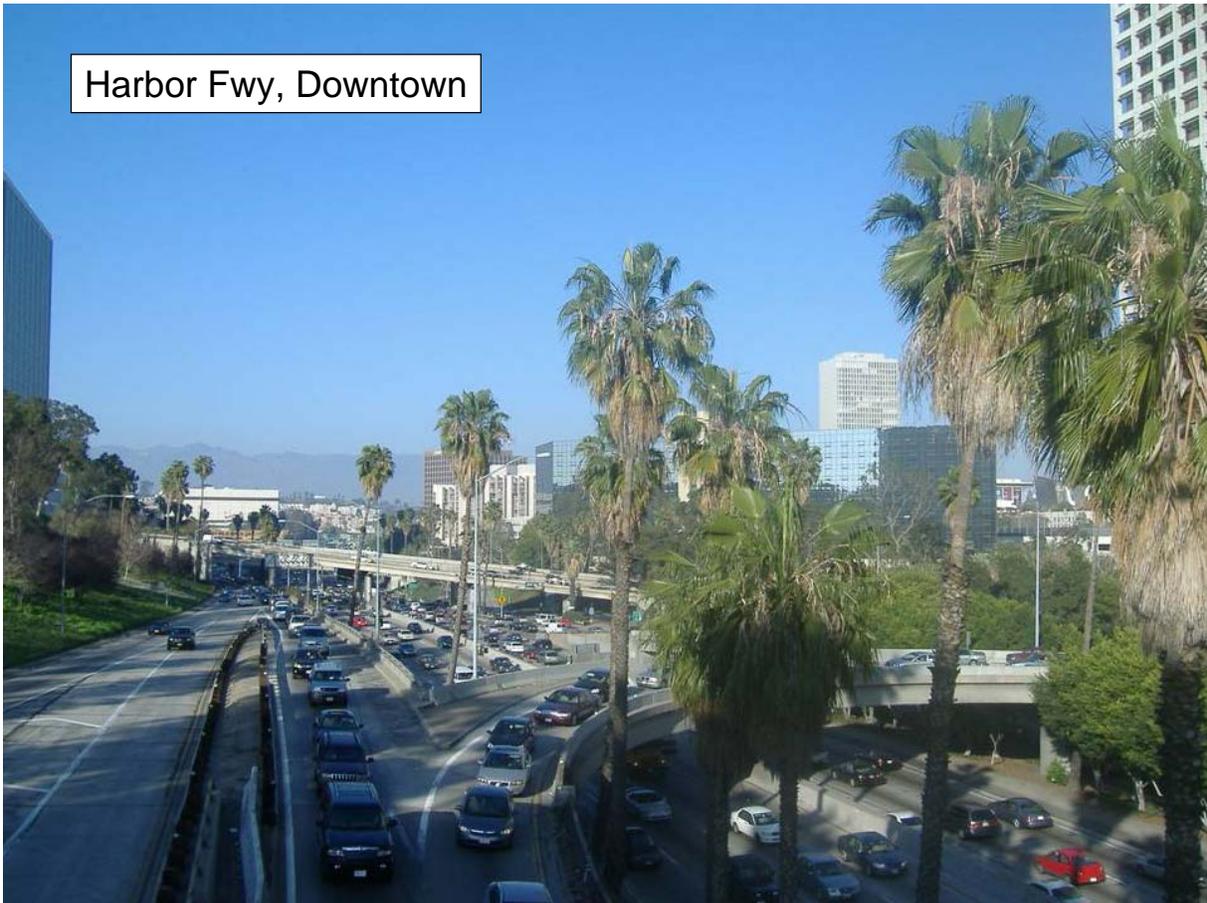


Wilshire District
St. James Episcopal Church





Wilshire District
1st Congregational Church



Harbor Fwy, Downtown

Broadway, CBD

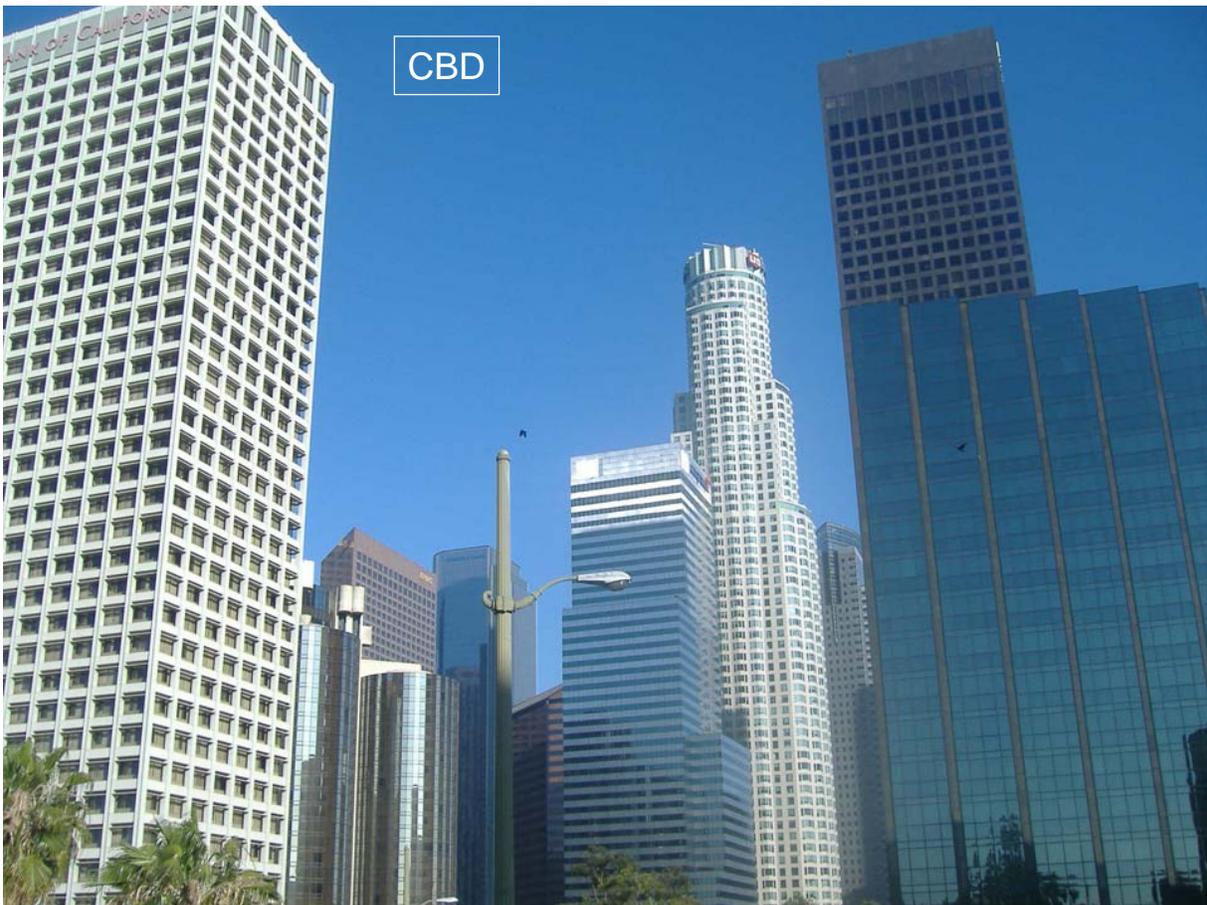


Old Union Bank Building





Spring Street

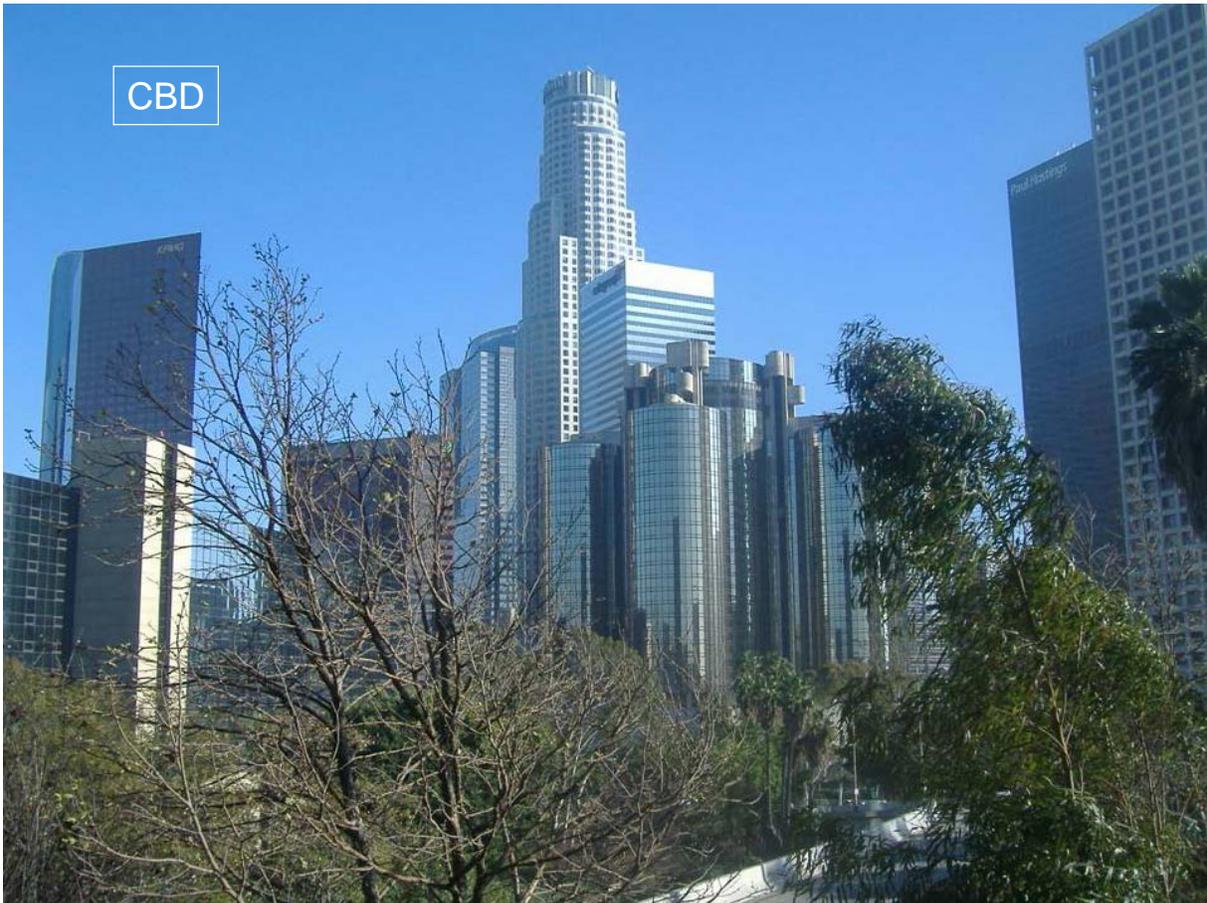


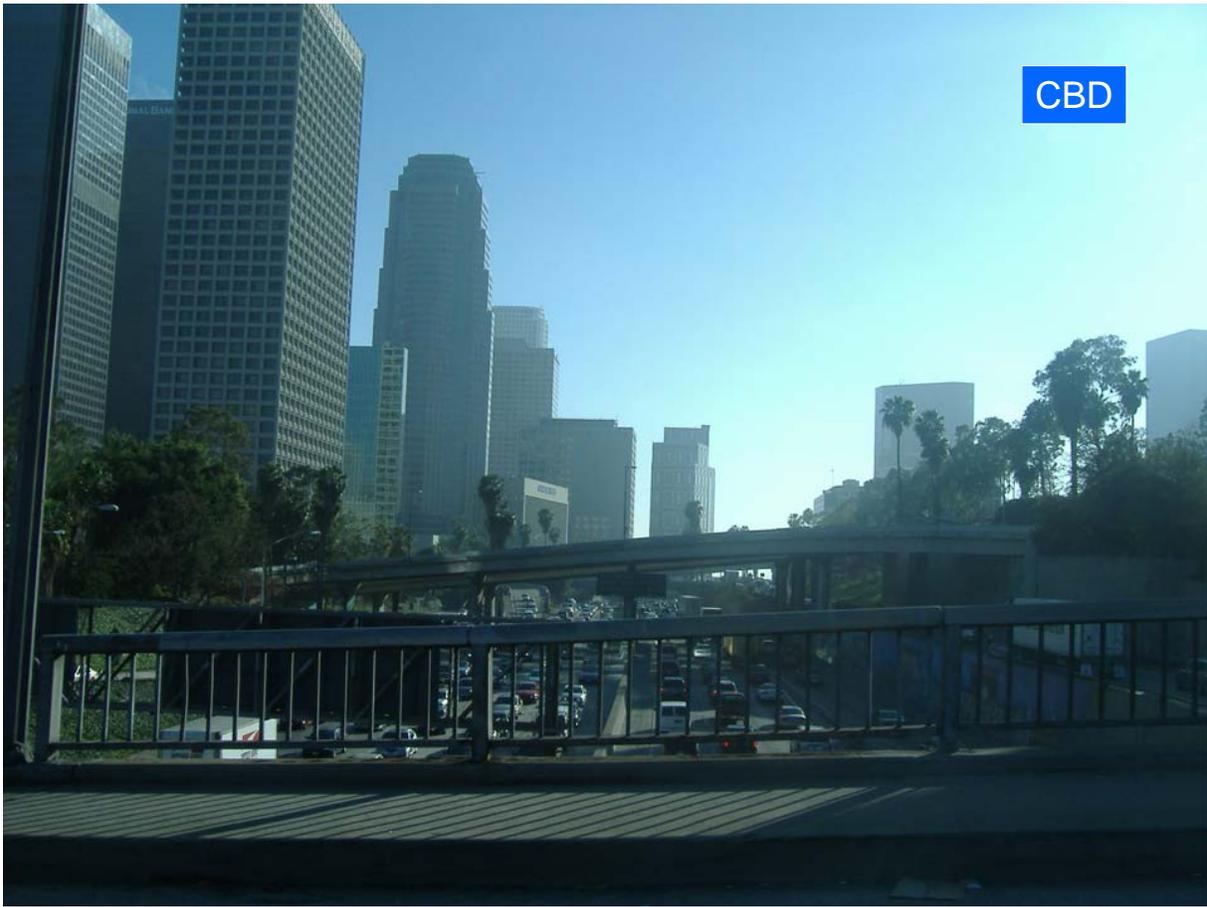
CBD

CBD: Union Bank Building
Tallest: 1965-1967

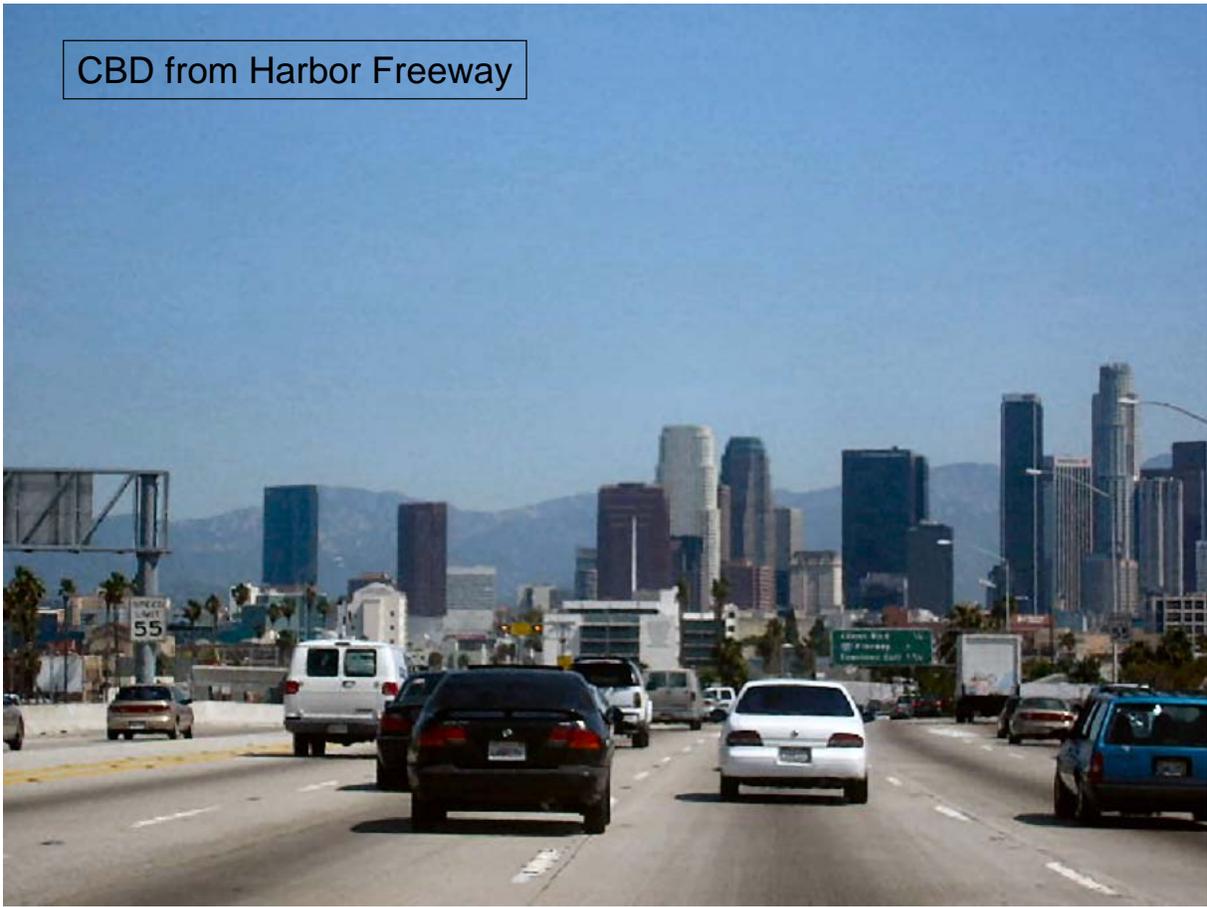


CBD





CBD from Harbor Freeway



CBD from Harbor Freeway



CBD



CBD: Crocker Bank Building
Tallest: 1967-1972
Aon Tower: 1973-1989





Library Square
Tallest
1989-



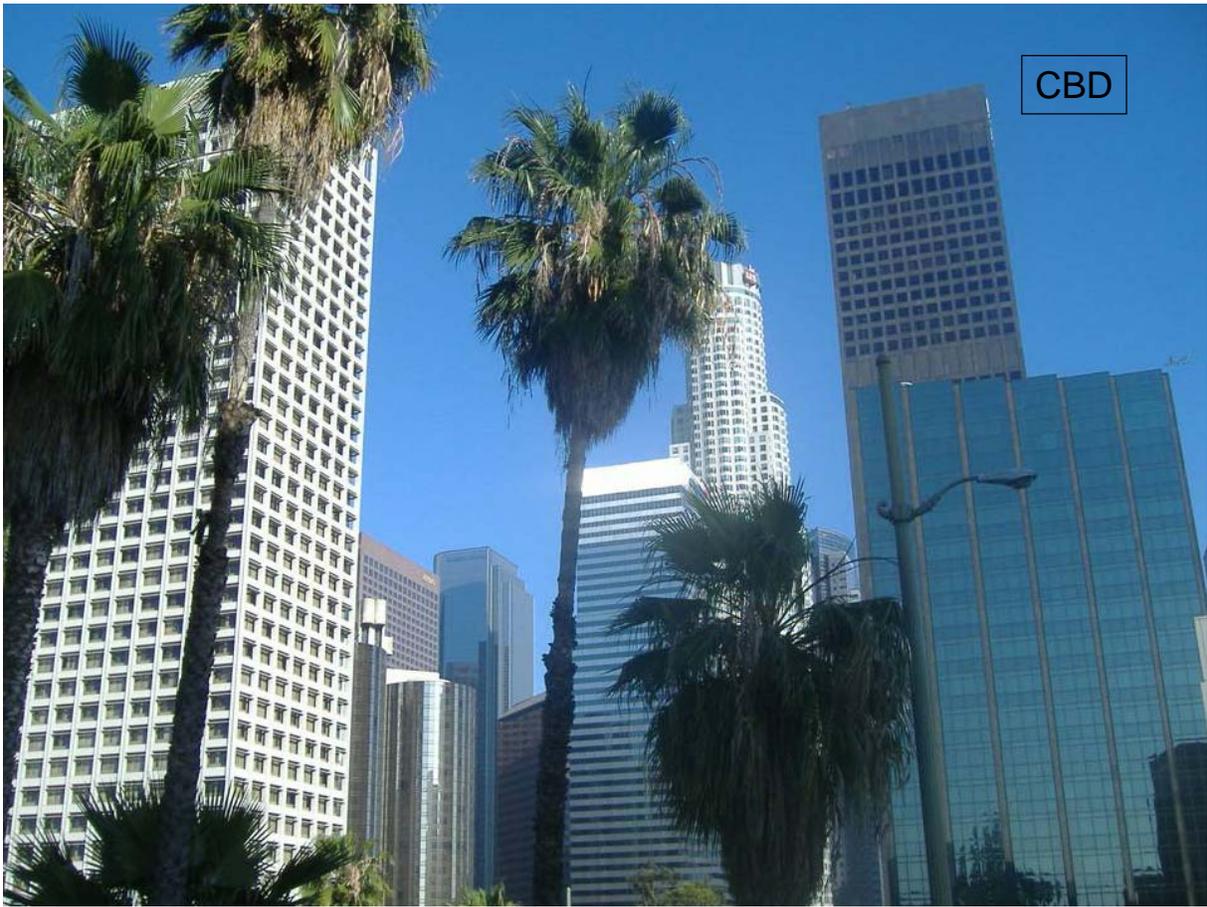
Grand Avenue: CBD

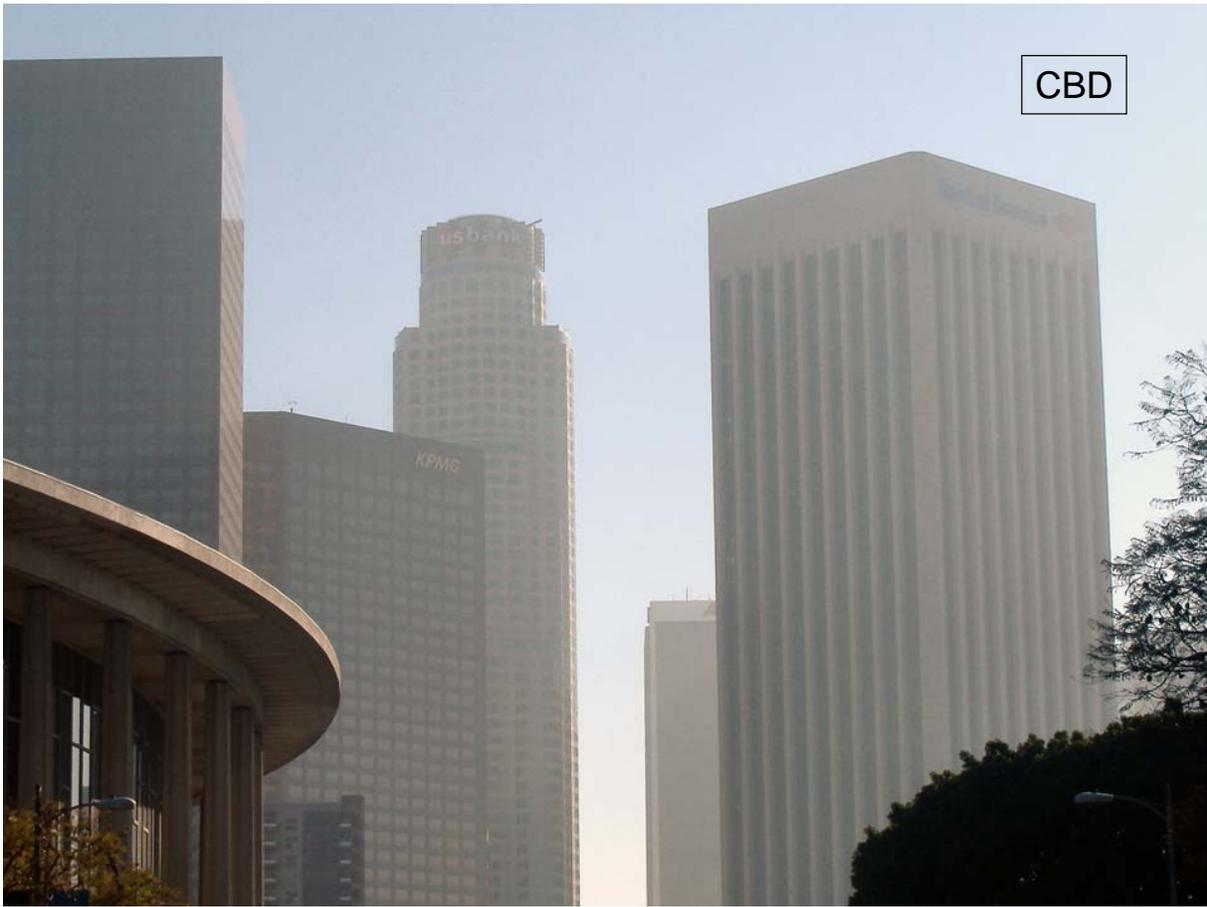
CBD Bunker Hill



CBD Arco Center
Tallest: 1972-3







CBD



CBD from Wilshire District

City Hall
Tallest
1928-1965



City Hall





City Hall



Hall of Justice



Federal Building



Federal Building



Kenneth Hahn
Hall of Administration



John Ferraro
Water & Power
Building

City Hall East
& LAPD Building



New Caltrans Building



Disney Center



LADOT Commuter Bus



Foothill Transit Bus



City of Montebello Bus



Orange County Transit Bus



LADOT Circulator

Metrolink Commuter Train



Bus Rapid Transit: CBD

School Buses & CBD

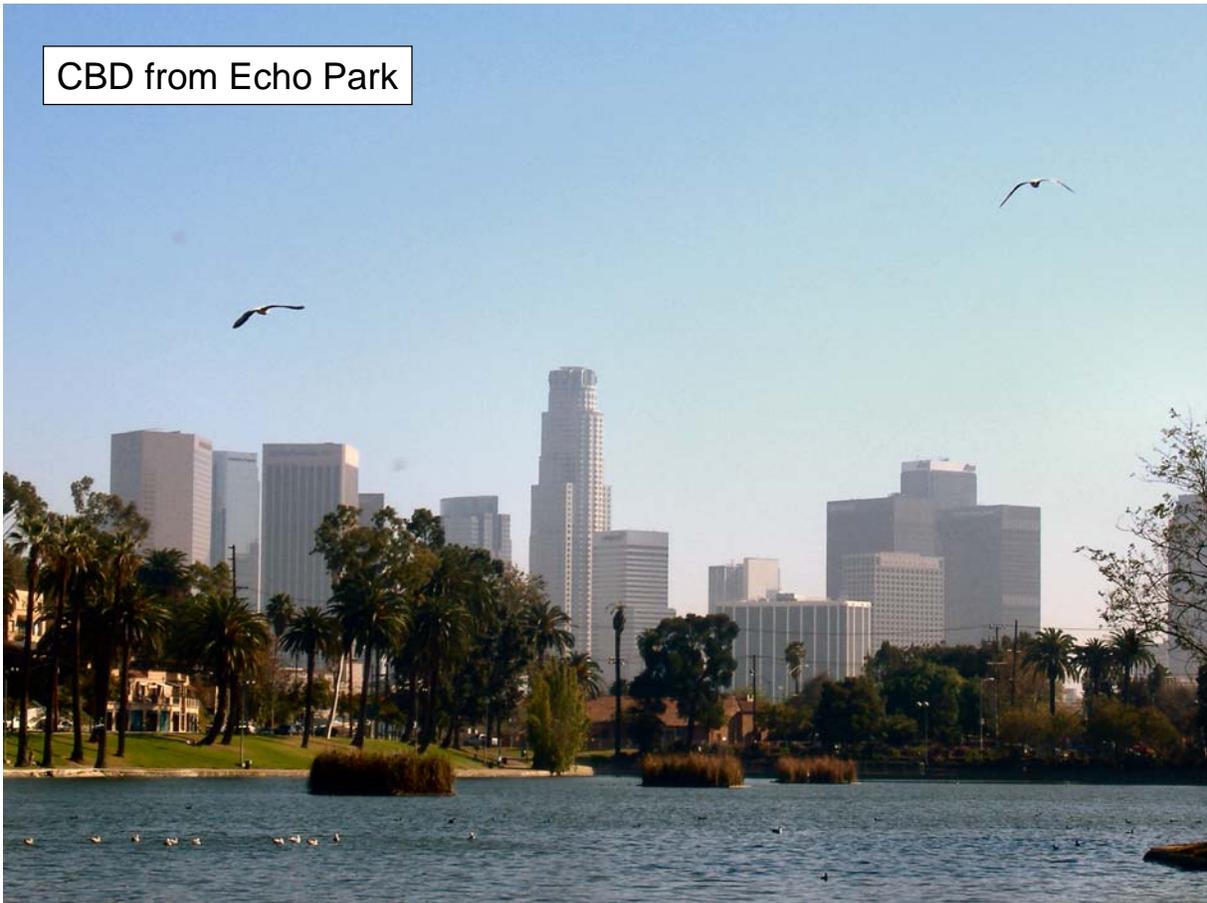


Echo Park

CBD from Echo Park



CBD from Echo Park



CBD from Echo Park



Echo Park



Angelus Temple



Residential, City of LA



Residential, City of LA



Residential, City of LA

Residential, City of LA



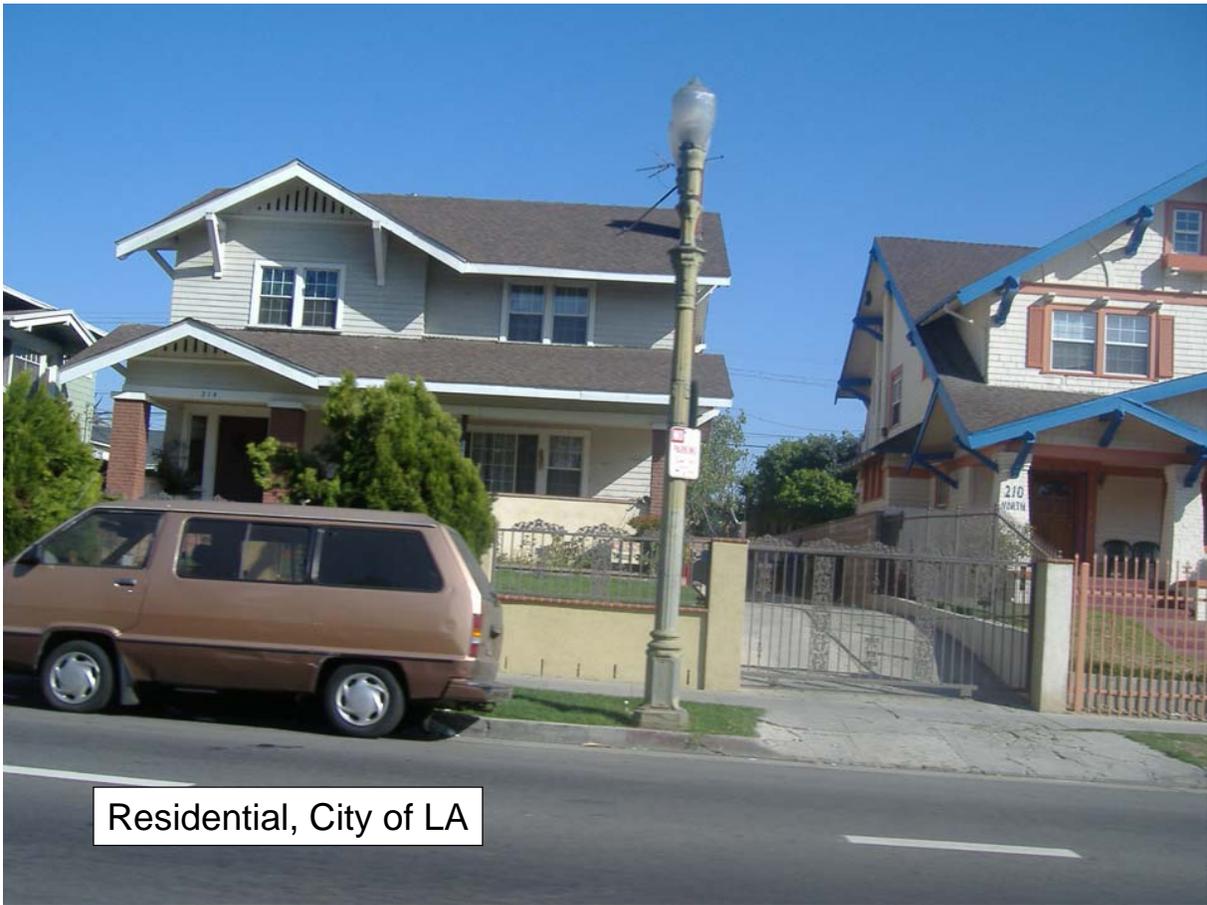
Residential, City of LA



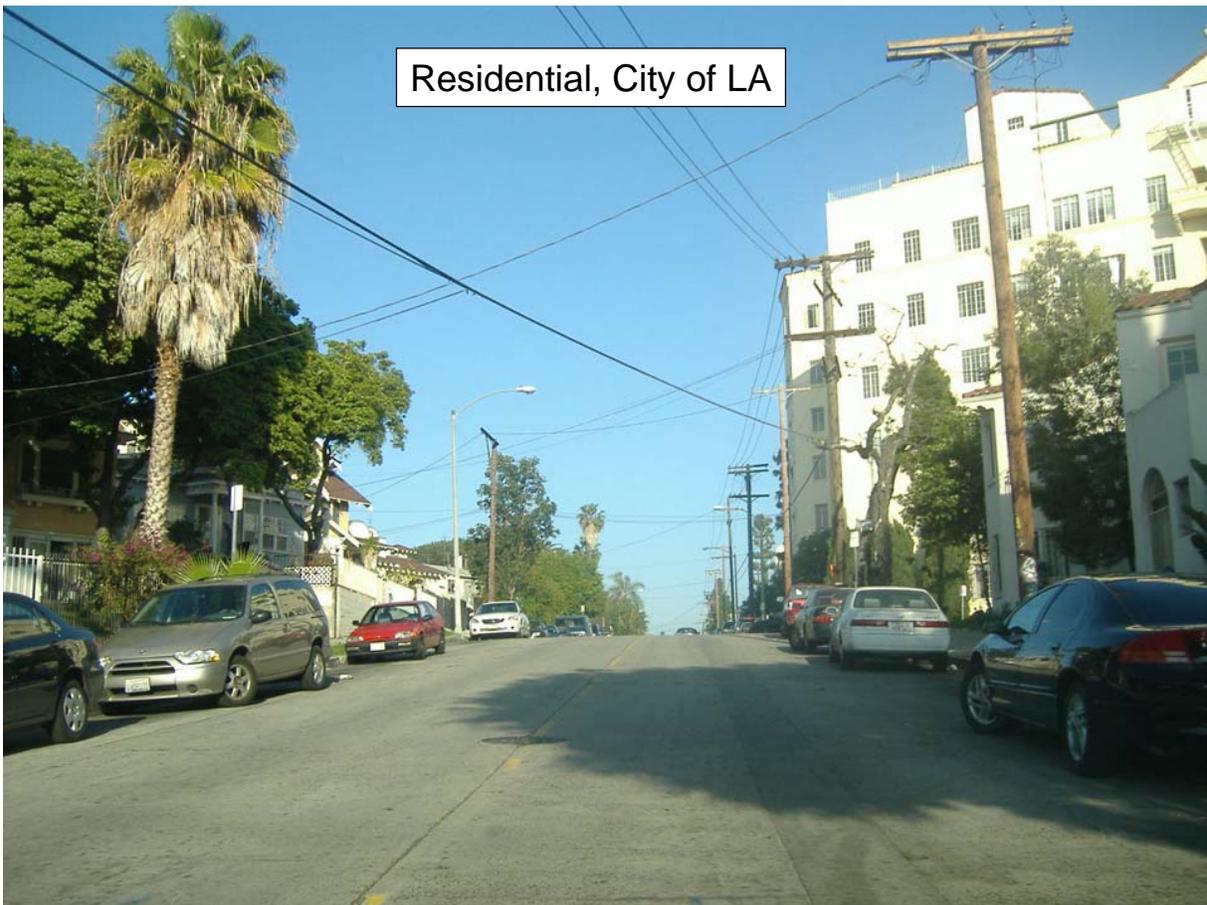
Residential, City of LA



Residential, City of LA



Residential, City of LA



Residential, City of LA



City of LA



Fargo Street

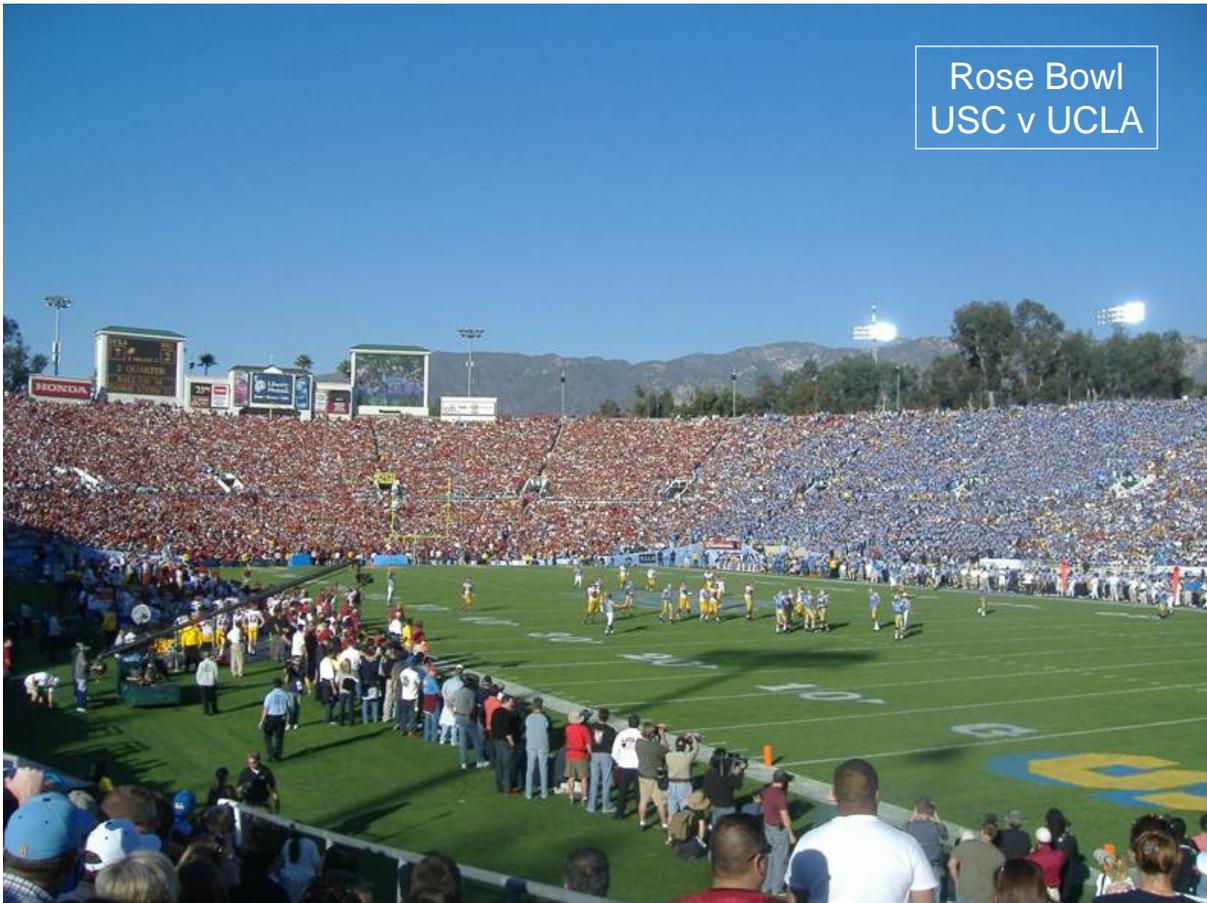
Glendale



Hollywood



Hollywood & Vine



Rose Bowl
USC v UCLA

Tommy's Famous Hamburgers: Beverly & Rampart

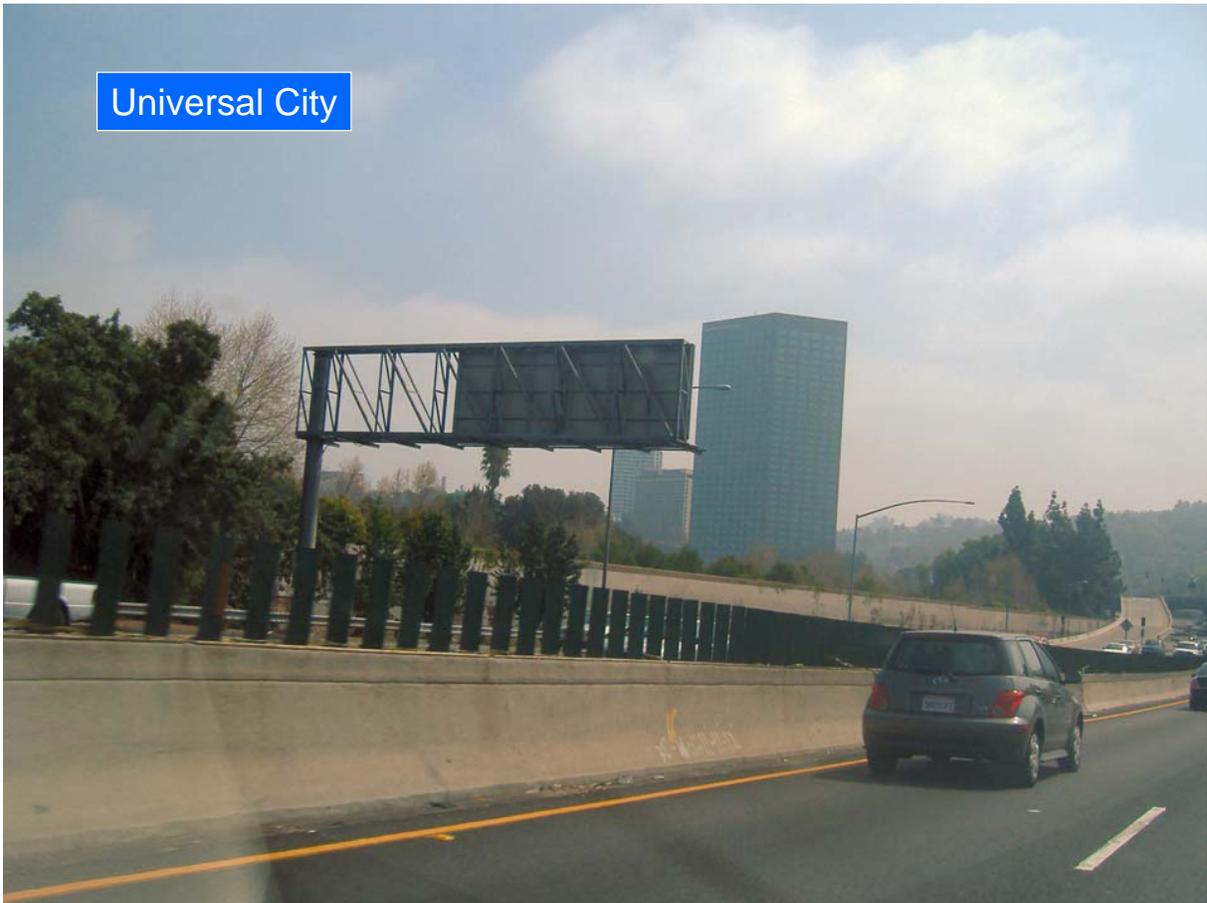


San Fernando Valley





San Fernando Valley



Universal City



Orange Line Busway



San Fernando Valley

A-380 at Tom Bradley Terminal, LAX



Hollywood Sign/Freeway/Presbyterian Church