



New Roads Are Not the Answer: Avoiding Traffic Congestion Through Transportation Choices

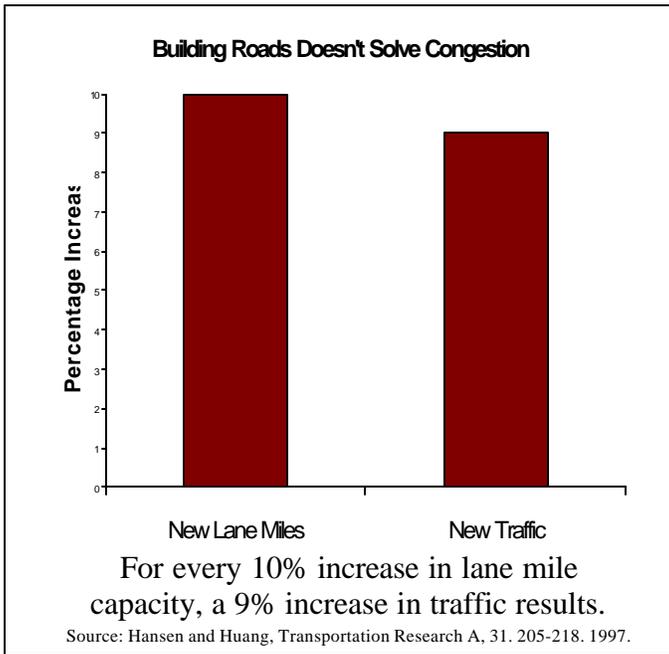
If You Build It, They Will Come

Traffic congestion has become an everyday reality for most Americans. Taxpayers are frustrated as more and more money is spent to expand roadways while most drivers still find themselves stuck in traffic. The average American now spends 443 hours per year behind the wheel. Why is this happening? It is called Induced Traffic. Studies show that new and expanded roads cause an increase in driving. Building new roads actually creates more congestion.



The Vicious Cycle of Induced Traffic

Congestion plagues a road, the road is expanded, and more people can now drive on the road. Public transit or carpool riders switch to driving, drivers switch routes and take longer trips, and congestion reappears at a greater level than before the construction. More traffic is dumped on local streets. Welcome to Induced Traffic. The short term benefits of increased road capacity result in long term suburban sprawl and reduced quality of life for residents. Roads in undeveloped areas soon attract new housing, shopping, and business centers. More people will now have to drive a longer distance in traffic to reach home, school, shopping, or work. Often, cities that spend the most on roadbuilding end up with the worst congestion.



Wasting Time Stuck in Traffic

The rise of sprawling malls and decentralized housing explains the increased miles Americans have travelled in the last fifty years. Building more roads does not cut the amount of time we spend trapped in a car, and we must recognize that more sprawl and smog producing highways cannot fix the problem. Communities should consider the impact of induced traffic when planning their transportation future.

Induced traffic immediately consumes 10-50% of new road capacity and 50-100% in four years.

Source: John Holtzclaw, "Induced Traffic Confirmed."
<http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/transportation/seven.asp>



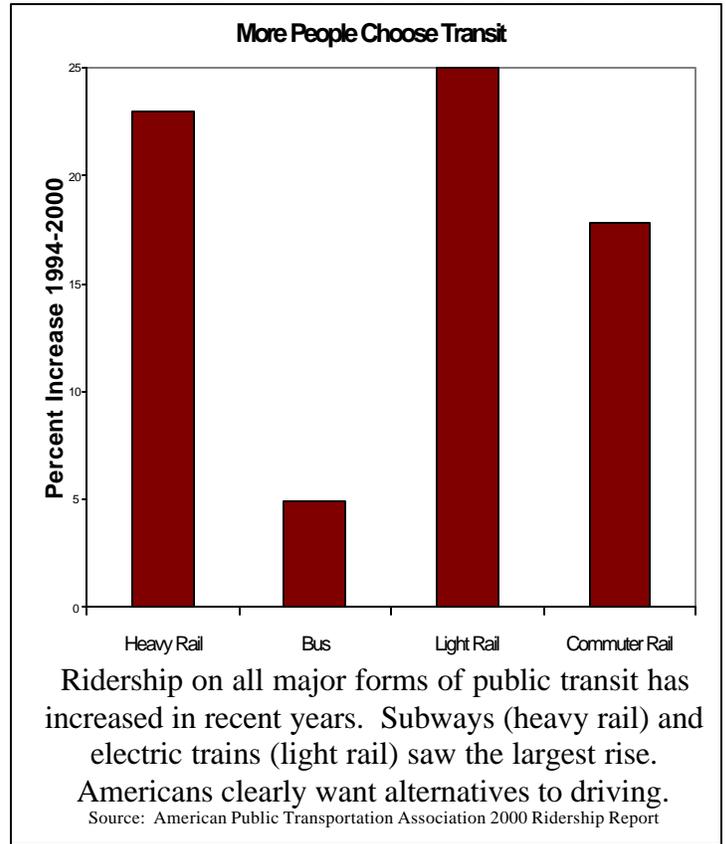


Solution: Transportation Choices

Real solutions to traffic jams do not include building and widening highways. A balanced transportation program funds a variety of travel options that will provide people with more choices. The American economy added 30 million new commuters since 1980, and many have chosen to use public transit rather than drive.

Sprawl & Congestion: Long-Term Answers

- Increase funding for clean public transportation options such as fuel-efficient buses and light rail electric trains.
- Reduce funding for road and car-only projects.
- Increase funding for sidewalks and bike paths.
- Encourage Transit-Oriented Development to integrate public transit with housing and business.
- Increase public involvement in the transportation planning process so citizens' have an equal voice in their community's future.
- Encourage innovative incentive-based programs that encourage walking, biking, or car-pooling.
- Authorize zoning decisions that encourage mixed-use development.



**80% of commuters
would prefer
convenient public
transit to driving.**

Source: Surface Transportation Policy Project, *Ten Years of Progress*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the Sierra Club's support for safe, clean public transportation or about the Challenge to Sprawl Campaign, please contact:

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Fight Pollution, Fight Congestion, Fight Sprawl:

More traffic, pollution, and congestion from new roads are not inevitable. Communities can plan a variety of transportation choices so residents aren't always forced to drive. Transportation policy can help enhance communities for the future and eliminate the need to build more roads.



Experience a More Convenient Community with Travel Choices: Combining transit and development produces a mixture of land uses and easily accessible transportation options for all citizens, including bicyclists, pedestrians, children and the elderly. Visit www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/community/transformations/index.asp to see more about how transportation enhancements can transform your community.