

# Long-Range Transportation Planning

Dave Haley

*Dave Haley is president of DAVCO Builders, Inc., a real estate investment, development, and management firm in San Ramon, California. He is also chairman of the Tri-Valley Economic Council's transportation committee, whose members are appointed by a group of chambers of commerce in the San Francisco region.*

To create efficient, economical, and high-quality transportation systems, we should add a new tool to the land use planning process. Today, most jurisdictions plan and mitigate all land uses on the basis of a 20-year time horizon. They then amend or revise their general plans annually to accommodate additional growth by changing or adding pieces to the "transportation puzzle," without having a reasonable grasp of what the final, completed puzzle will look like. And we lack regional authority of effectively implement a regional

transportation network.

Population and economic growth will certainly not stop short in 20 years. Communities should plan to create evolving transportation networks that can receive growth beyond the next 20 years. They should encourage innovative ideas by exploring future growth scenarios.

Major transportation projects—like subregional collector streets, state and regional highways, and mass transit systems—usually take 15 to 20 years to plan, design, and build.

Another 30 years are needed to pay

for them. The existing 20-year general plan process forces transportation networks to be sized and built for only the growth expecting within that plan's time span. The useful life of a completed transportation system should be at least 30 years, and the growth that will occur during those 30 years should be considered.

## INSTEAD, PLAN 50 YEARS OUT

Transportation system needs—the types, locations, and sizes of various transportation elements—can be more successfully identified by adopting a more reasonable time horizon for their planning and by preparing a regional plan.

The regional, long-range transportation plan should cover 50 years and augment each jurisdiction's current (and next) 20-year general growth and land use plan. These general plans reasonably project possible growth alternatives 50 years down the road.

Transportation is one of the most important components in both regional and local land use planning, providing the structural framework that moves people and goods from one place to another. Transportation uses take up approximately 20 percent of all urban land. Best viewed as a regional system, transportation needs to be planned broadly and separately from other land uses. Its large, expensive elements require long planning/development lead times.

Achieving a good quality of life and high environmental standards depends on recognition of three basic land use planning assumptions:

- The nation's population and economy will continue to expand after the next 20 years. National trends will determine where and when this growth will occur.
- Planning should keep up with technology and current lifestyles.

Experienced. Capable. Accurate.



The professional edge.

G. Michael Hawkins  
P.O. Box 23337  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87192  
(505) 291-9915

Richard T. Conner  
P.O. Box 52726  
Lafayette, Louisiana 70505  
(318) 237-7308

*Complete Right of Way Acquisition and Permitting Services.*

# Achieving Good Land Use Planning With Workable Transportation Systems And Networks

Plans should be phased and sufficiently flexible to accommodate technological breakthroughs as they occur. Otherwise, planners will be reluctant to engage in long-range planning, fearing that innovations will render current strategies obsolete.

- Transportation systems could evolve along better-defined transportation corridors. Whatever the technology of future transportation systems, they will undoubtedly use land corridors, and these can certainly be defined in planning.

A region's growth-based transportation needs are distributed among all its jurisdictions, and each jurisdiction must share in the region's provision of transportation services. The state must mandate regional transportation planning in order to assure such universal participations.

## PUTTING AN END TO THE GROWTH/NO-GROWTH DEBATE

The possible benefits of state-mandated, rolling, 50-year regional transportation plans that embrace all county and city jurisdictions are impressive. The cost of transportation systems and networks would be dramatically reduced, as projects work better and last longer. Rerouting and reconstruction needs would decline. Building projects would be planned better and better related to an area's transportation networks.

Perhaps most importantly, this planning should stop the growth versus no-growth debates that constantly impede good planning, by recognizing growth needs and providing a means for dealing with them.

## FITTING TRANSPORTATION TO GROWTH

The 20-year general plan process should be used for local community

planning and for mitigating site-specific transportation—and other development—costs. The 50-year plan should guide local transportation plans while defining major long-term regional transportation projects to be implemented, managed, and funded.

Land use authority, except for regional transportation networks, should remain in the hands of local jurisdictions. Regional balance between employment centers and residential areas will be achieved through market forces. Accessibility will be achieved through good transportation planning.

People should be easily able to change the location of their jobs without changing residences. The norm for the future appears to be two or three working persons per household. Finding local employment for all the workers in a household is, and will continue to be, difficult. The mobility of employers adds yet another dimension to the workplace/residence relationship. This complexity makes a regional transportation network critical, as this network must make affordable housing accessible to various employment locations.

Long-range transportation planning should focus on regional and subregional networks, identifying rights-of-way and the types of systems needed. The majority of funding and dedication of rights-of-way could be provided on a local basis. Local communities would receive funding assistance and would contribute to major state and regional systems. If some areas choose to discourage growth (and withhold funding support), regional, state, or federal sources could advance funds for regional systems with local reimbursement, based on the area's fair share of costs, when growth occurs.

A regional agency, a metropolitan transportation commission (MTC), could manage the long-range trans-

portation plan. The MTC would be responsible for transportation planning (with guidance from each city and county), allocating costs, and obtaining funds for state and regional transportation systems.

The key to all this is exploring the larger picture and understanding long-term growth needs. Thus, communities can define and develop better water and sewer facilities, functional downtown areas, and other major components of urban systems. The densification of land uses need not overwhelm transportation networks, unduly constrict open space, or reduce air quality. If we plan for growth, we can manage it.

Computer technology should be used to chart the past 50 years of land absorption (areas put into urban uses) within a region and project the next 50 years of probable land absorption (keeping in mind redevelopment of some areas). Regional growth trends over this long period of time will fill in land areas that now limit growth unreasonably. Consideration should be given to the current population base and its rate of growth versus the past's lower population base and the amount of land absorbed into urban uses or areas that were redeveloped at higher densities. In the short term, local political or market pressures will cause development to accelerate or slow down, but such ups and downs tend to even out over the longer term.

Recent changes in the economic philosophies of China and the Soviet Union point to the need for long-range transportation planning tools. Most major countries in the world are resolved to upgrade their infrastructures so they can better compete in the global economy and improve their citizen's quality of life. As we move to direct funds into capital assets, a legislative framework to

*Continued on Page 20*