



**BOOK REVIEW OF DAVID BRODSKY'S  
"LA FREEWAY -  
AN APPRECIATIVE ESSAY"**

**by Richard Robison**

David Brodsky's *LA Freeway - An Appreciative Essay* is a well researched, definitive and interesting study of transportation and its prominent role in the development of Southern California. He observes that freeways are not unique to Southern California but have reached their highest level of development and acceptance in the auto centered culture of that region.

The author combines detailed research with philosophical insight in his recounting of early Southern California transportation history. His story is effectively relayed and documented as well as visually portrayed by an outstanding collection of maps, diagrams and photographs. It was interesting to find that the transportation corridors first used by the regions Indians were later used as railroad rights of way in order to promote and to serve railroad real estate developments. These same transportation corridors form the basis for the freeway system which now serves and unifies these same areas.

Brodsky notes that he grew up in Southern California and shared with many others in the area the typical

love-hate relationship with the automobile. He studies and documents the rail vs. auto issue which has been argued for many years in Southern California. He feels that the freeway will long remain the preferred way of life because of the freedom, independence, security and mobility that it offers to Southern California motorists.

The author states that the early-day electric railways and then the freeways were instrumental in allowing Southern California to develop as a sprawling city of back yards and quiet streets rather than a crowded industrial metropolis. The private automobile on the freeway allows this low density, pastoral type of life to continue. The motorists also can travel about the region with only the radio as a distraction and/or enjoy solitude and have undisturbed time for meditation.

To his surprise David Brodsky's research led him to the conclusion that rail transit is not energy and cost efficient and is not able to provide most of the needed transportation services which are available with the auto and bus on

the freeway system.

During the writing and researching of this book, Mr. Brodsky became aware that many of us, himself included, share a number of transportation myths. One of these is that mass transit is the answer to the energy crisis. The author's analysis of the Bay Area Rapid Transit System and other studies indicates that these transportation modes are not energy efficient nor are they the answer for Southern California.

This book has been of particular interest to the reviewer for a variety of reasons, one of which being many years of personal involvement in Southern California freeway rights of way.

However, I recommend this book to anyone interested in transportation, land planning or California history, and to all of us in Southern California whose daily lives are affected in one way or another by the impact of the freeways.

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