

# URBAN SPRAWL

## OVERVIEW

For the greater part of the 20th century, people have been realizing the American Dream by pursuing the opportunities found in the suburbs. Suburban growth, however, has not come without complaints. Many anti-“sprawl” activists criticize the suburbs, claiming that it causes environmental as well as social ills. Some critics even claim that the suburbs caused the shooting at Columbine High School.

While there is no set definition of “urban sprawl,” critics are concerned about the impacts of suburban development and lifestyles. Compared to people who live in cities, suburbanites live in larger houses, on larger lots, and use automobiles more often. Critics of suburbia argue that this pattern of development causes an increase in traffic congestion, lengthens commuting time, increases air pollution, destroys farmland, reduces open space, and imposes additional costs on neighboring cities. Other critics take an elitist view and claim the suburbs are tacky and sterile. Former Vice President Al Gore, for example, charged that suburban development is a “cookie-cutter monster.”<sup>1</sup>

To combat suburban development, a coalition of special-interest groups promotes so-called smart growth initiatives at the federal, state, and local government levels. Smart growth promotes a return to the city lifestyles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries when people lived in apartments on small lots and either walked or took trolleys for transportation. To accomplish smart growth, proponents support gasoline taxes to provide subsidies for new rail systems. Smart growth initiatives also can include urban growth boundaries to halt the expansion of the suburbs, new zoning codes to densify existing neighborhoods, subsidies for developers who develop politically designated areas, restrictions on building new Wal-Marts and other discount stores, and restrictions on farmers so they cannot sell their land to build new homes.

Growth control has traditionally been a local issue, but the federal government is having an increasing influence on local land-use issues. In recent years, federal agencies supported smart growth initiatives, including the following:

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) “Growing Smart Project” produces model legislation for state and regional planning.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Al Gore speech at the Brookings Institution, 2 September 1998, <http://www.brook.edu/es/urban/gore.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.huduser.org/research/tech.html>.



- The Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Transit Administration "supports research into the interaction between transportation investments and land-use." It also is involved in the "Growing Smart Project."<sup>3</sup>
- EPA used its Smart Growth Network as well as its Transportation Partner's Program to support smart growth. EPA, however, was forced to halt these programs because they were funding nonprofit lobbying groups.<sup>4</sup>
- The federal government exercises control of local land use through regulatory programs such as the Endangered Species Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. However, such intrusive federal control is increasingly viewed as unproductive. In *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*,<sup>5</sup> for example, the Supreme Court ruled that the Army Corps of Engineers was overstepping its congressional mandate to regulate certain activities.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, the Supreme Court reminded the federal government that "regulation of land use [is] a function traditionally performed by local governments."<sup>7</sup>

The federal government should decrease the role it plays in local land use issues, but many lawmakers want to show leadership for growth control by implementing a series of programs. Through the use of the federal purse and its attached strings, these programs will give federal agencies greater control over local land-use decisions.

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### Recommended Readings

Live the American Dream Web site: <http://www.livetheamericandream.org>.

Gordon, Peter and Harry W. Richardson. *Why Sprawl is Good*. Portland, Oreg.: Cascade Policy Institute, 15 January 1997, <http://www.cascadepolicy.org/growth/gordon.htm>.

O'Toole, Randal. *The Vanishing Automobile and Other Urban Myths: How Smart Growth Will Harm American Cities*. Brandon, Oreg.: Thoreau Institute, 2001, <http://www.ti.org>.

Simmons, Daniel. *The Problems With Urban Planning: A Free-Market Guide To Suburban Development & "Urban Sprawl."* Washington, D.C.: Competitive Enterprise Institute, 1 March 1999, <http://www.cei.org/MonoReader.asp?ID=664>.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.fta.dot.gov/research/polplan/susdev/smgrow/smgrow.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Samuel and Randal O'Toole, *Smart Growth at the Federal Trough: EPA's Financing for the Anti-Sprawl Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, November 24, 1999), <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-361es.html>.

<sup>5</sup> 121 S. Ct. 675 (2001).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 684.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

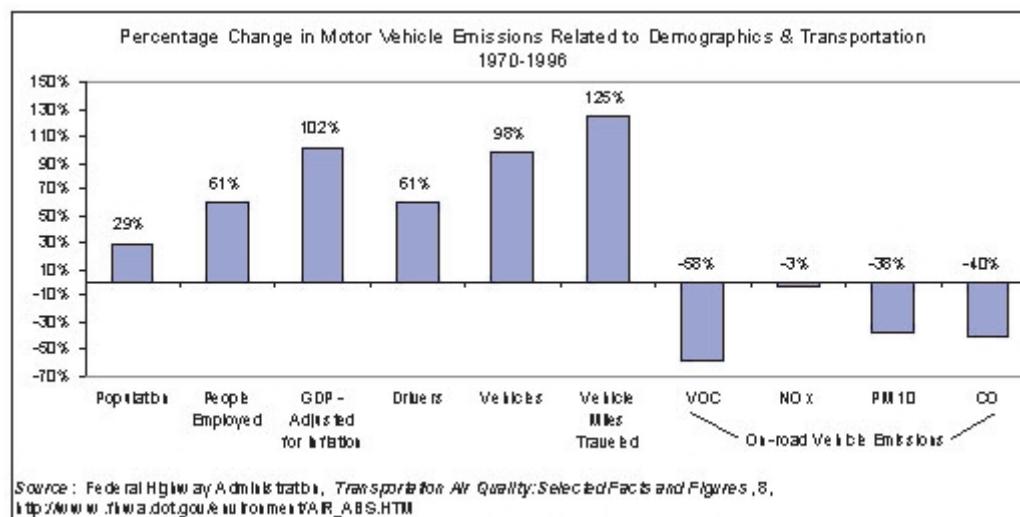


## AIR QUALITY AND AUTOMOBILES

Is the air getting dirtier as the suburbs grow? Does “sprawl” cause air quality to decrease? Contrary to conventional wisdom, data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) show that air quality has improved as the suburbs have grown.

### Improving Air Quality Is a National Trend

- According to EPA's *National Air Quality and Emissions Trends Report, 1997*, between 1978 and 1997, the concentration of carbon monoxide decreased 60 percent, lead decreased 97 percent, and ground-level ozone decreased 30 percent.<sup>1</sup>
- The EPA concludes: “Nationally, the 1997 average air quality levels are the best on record for all six criteria pollutants.”<sup>2</sup>
- As the graph below illustrates, between 1970 and 1996, the U.S. population, economy, number of vehicles, and vehicle miles traveled all greatly increased, but the amount of pollution emitted from on-road vehicles fell.<sup>3</sup>



### Why Has Air Quality Improved?

- While the suburban lifestyle embraces auto-mobility, technological improvements have dramatically reduced emissions from automobiles. Compared to a 1968 automobile, a car made in 1998 released 98 percent less of the combined carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, and nitrogen oxide emissions.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, *National Air Quality and Emissions Trends Report, 1997* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. EPA, December 1998), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Transportation Air Quality: Selected Facts and Figures* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Highway Administration, 1999), 8, [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/AIR\\_ABS.HTM](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/AIR_ABS.HTM).

<sup>4</sup> Wasatch Front Regional Council, *Communiqué: Newsletter of the Wasatch Front Regional Council*, February 1999, <http://www.wfrc.org/wfrc/communi1.pdf>.



- As people and jobs moved to the suburbs, air quality improved because commuting speeds improved from 28 mph in 1983 to 33.6 mph in 1995.<sup>5</sup> Higher commuting speeds mean less stop-and-go traffic, which produces higher emission rates than flowing traffic.<sup>6</sup>
- Federal regulation often is cited as the source of this progress. However, the full picture is more complicated. Economic growth has improved our ability to protect the environment and has fostered a growing citizen preference for a clean environment. Air quality had improved before the introduction of the federal regulations of the 1970s. Historical data show that the average ambient levels of airborne particulates declined by more than 20 percent during the 1960s, while ambient levels of sulfur dioxide fell by almost 50 percent. Carbon monoxide declined by more than 20 percent in urban areas.

## Recommendations for Continued Improvements

- The main prerequisite for continued improvements in air quality is economic prosperity. Hence, antisprawl policies that threaten to undermine prosperity promise to be environmentally counterproductive.
- Air quality has improved nationally because of technological improvements that reduced automobile pollution. We should continue to pursue strategies that keep technologically advanced automobiles moving smoothly.

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## Recommended Readings

State-specific fact sheets on air quality and automobile use are available at: <http://www.livetheamericandream.org>.

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O'Toole, Randal. "Dense Thinkers." *Reason*, January 1999, <http://www.reason.com/9901/fe.ro.densethinkers.html>.

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<sup>5</sup> Center for Transportation Analysis, *Our Nation's Travel: 1995 NPTS Early Results Report* (Oak Ridge, Tenn.: Center for Transportation Analysis, 1995), 13, [http://www.cta.ornl.gov/npts/1995/Doc/NPTS\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.cta.ornl.gov/npts/1995/Doc/NPTS_Booklet.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Transportation Air 29*, [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_2b.pdf](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_2b.pdf), accessed 30 September 2000.



## LIMITS ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Employers and employees are fleeing cities for the green pastures of suburbia. More than 62 percent of metropolitan area residents now live in the suburbs, and 57 percent of the jobs are located there.<sup>1</sup> As more people move to the suburbs, special-interest groups advocate so-called smart growth policies. Among other things, these policies call for more restrictive zoning laws and urban growth boundaries, which try to cage growth into politically determined boundaries. The problem with these programs is that they harm low and middle-income families by driving up housing prices and restricting housing choices.

### Political and Natural Barriers Can Limit Affordable Housing

- Many factors influence the supply of affordable housing, such as the amount of developable land. Some areas have elected to reduce the supply of developable land by instituting urban growth boundaries to halt suburbanization. Their supporters claim they "allow for growth without creating sprawl."<sup>2</sup> In Portland and Eugene these boundaries have contributed to making housing unaffordable for the typical family.<sup>3</sup> For example, today, only 33 percent of homes sold in Portland are affordable to median income families compared to 68 percent in 1991.<sup>4</sup>
- In Portland, between 1995 and 1997, housing-price appreciation, a large portion of which is attributable to the urban growth boundary, made 80,000 single-family homes unaffordable.<sup>5</sup>
- Housing prices in Portland's poorest neighborhoods doubled in the 1990s (without a corresponding increase in purchasing power), denying upwardly mobile families a chance at the American Dream of home ownership.
- Besides political barriers, geography limits the supply of affordable housing. San Francisco, California, geographically constrained on three sides by the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay, has the lowest percentage of affordable housing of any housing market in the country.

### Affordable Housing in Selected Areas

- Atlanta and Phoenix are generally regarded as bad examples of growth management, while Portland and Eugene are touted as good examples. Interestingly, housing affordability has actually improved in Atlanta and Phoenix, while Portland and Eugene have grown less affordable.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *The State of the Cities 2000* (Washington, D.C.: HUD, 2000), 40.

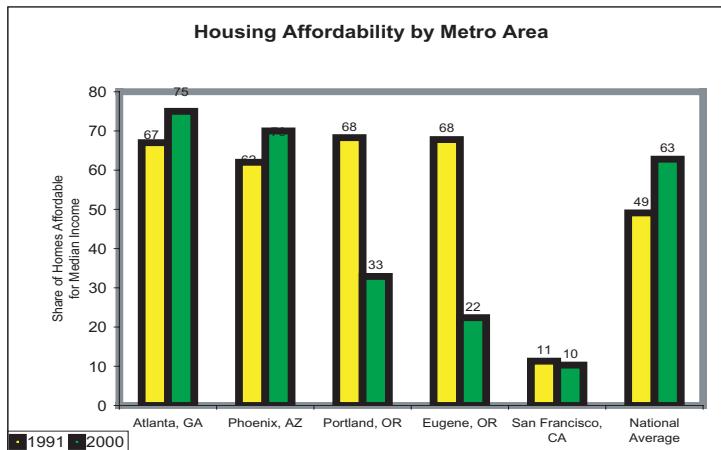
<sup>2</sup> Sierra Club, *Sprawl Factsheet*, <http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/factsheet.asp#Solutions>.

<sup>3</sup> National Association of Home Builders, *Housing Opportunity Index: First Quarter 2000* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Home Builders, 2000). The Home Builders measure affordability by the percentage of homes sold in a metropolitan area that a family earning the median income could afford to purchase.

<sup>4</sup> National Association of Home Builders, *Housing Opportunity Index: First Quarter 2000*.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Staley, Jefferson G. Edgens, and Gerard C.S. Mildner, *ALine in the Land: Urban-Growth Boundaries, Smart Growth, and Housing Affordability* (Los Angeles: Reason Public Policy Institute, November 1999), <http://www.rppi.org/urban/ps263.html>.





## Zoning and Regulation Drive Up Housing Prices

- Other political barriers also contribute to unaffordable housing. Brookings Institution economist Anthony Downs estimates that “probably over half of the cost of building new housing in the average United States community is a direct result of local government regulations rather than of any minimum requirements truly necessary for the occupants’ health and safety.”<sup>6</sup>
- Research by William Fischel, professor of economics at Dartmouth College, shows that zoning laws, including growth controls, accounted for California’s housing values rising 267 percent during the 1970s while the rest of the nation’s rose 176 percent. “By imposing costly subdivision conditions unrelated to home buyers’ demands, growth controls created an artificial scarcity of housing.”<sup>7</sup>
- President George H. Bush’s Advisory Commission on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing found that “exclusionary, discriminatory, and unnecessary regulations constitute formidable barriers to affordable housing, raising costs by 20 to 35 percent in some communities.”<sup>8</sup>

## Inclusionary Zoning Does Not Make Housing More Affordable

Slow growth advocates propose inclusionary zoning schemes to combat the housing price increases that accompany growth restrictions. Through the force of government, these plans set aside certain amounts of new housing for low- and moderate-income families. However, inclusionary zoning leaves many families behind:

- “Households that actually receive inclusionary units are unquestionably helped by inclusionary zoning. However, the fact that these households gain does not necessarily mean that inclusionary zoning improves the welfare of low- and moderate-income families in the aggregate.” In fact, with inclusionary zoning as usually practiced, “the members of the eligible class who do not receive units are hurt by the program.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Anthony Downs, “The Advisory Commission on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing: Its Behavior and Accomplishments,” *Housing Policy Debate* 2, no. 4 (1991): 1095-1109.

<sup>7</sup> William A. Fischel, “Comment on Anthony Downs’s ‘The Advisory Commission on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing: Its Behavior and Accomplishments,’” *Housing Policy Debate* 2, no. 4 (1991): 1139-1154.

<sup>8</sup> Advisory Commission on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing, “Not In My Back Yard: Removing Barriers to Affordable Housing,” in *Report to President Bush and Secretary Kemp* (Washington, D.C.: Advisory Commission on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing, 1991), ii.

<sup>9</sup> Robert C. Ellickson, “The Irony of ‘Inclusionary’ Zoning,” *Southern California Law Review* 54 (1981): 1167, 1203.



## Reducing Regulations Can Make Housing More Affordable

- In 1980, a Department of Housing and Urban Development housing cost reduction demonstration program showed cities that minimized their zoning, building, and subdivision regulations reduced the prices of new homes by 21 percent to 33 percent, relative to comparable local developments.<sup>10</sup>

## Most People Want to Live in the Low-Density Suburbs

While “smart growth” schemes, such as urban growth boundaries and forced densification, employ fancy rhetoric, most people do not want to live in densely populated areas. According to polling, people have a strong preference for low-density, single-family homes, and they want to retain their ability to choose their housing.

- More than 75 percent of respondents oppose, and only 15 percent support, building single-family homes at a higher density (smaller lots or more homes per acre) in their neighborhood. About 78 percent oppose building multifamily apartments, and 54 percent oppose building town houses in their neighborhood.
- When asked to consider two options — buying a \$150,000 town house in an urban setting close to public transportation, work, and shopping, or purchasing a larger, detached single-family home in an outlying suburban area, with longer distances to work, public transportation, and shopping — 83 percent preferred a \$150,000 detached unit in a suburban area.<sup>11</sup>
- In a national poll, 55 percent of respondents agreed with this statement, “people should be allowed to choose for themselves the size and location of their homes to fit their families needs.” Only 39 percent believed that “government should step in and control the size of new housing developments and prevent the development of farmland and other open spaces.”<sup>12</sup>

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### Recommended Readings

State-specific fact sheets on air quality and automobile use are available at <http://www.livetheamerican dream.org>.

Cox, Wendell, Ronald D. Utt, and Howard Husock. “Anti-Sprawl Efforts Take Aim At Dream of Home Ownership.” *In the Arena: Perspectives on Capitol Issues from The Commonwealth Foundation*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Commonwealth Foundation, 3 March 2000, <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.org/env/2000030301.htm>.

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<sup>10</sup> Bernard H. Siegan, *Property and Freedom* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 191.

<sup>11</sup> National Association of Home Builders, *Consumer Survey on Growth Issues* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Home Builders, 1999), [http://www.nahb.com/main\\_features/smart\\_survey/summary.htm](http://www.nahb.com/main_features/smart_survey/summary.htm).

<sup>12</sup> the polling company/Competitive Enterprise Institute, National Environmental Survey (Washington, D.C.: CEI, January 1999), 15.



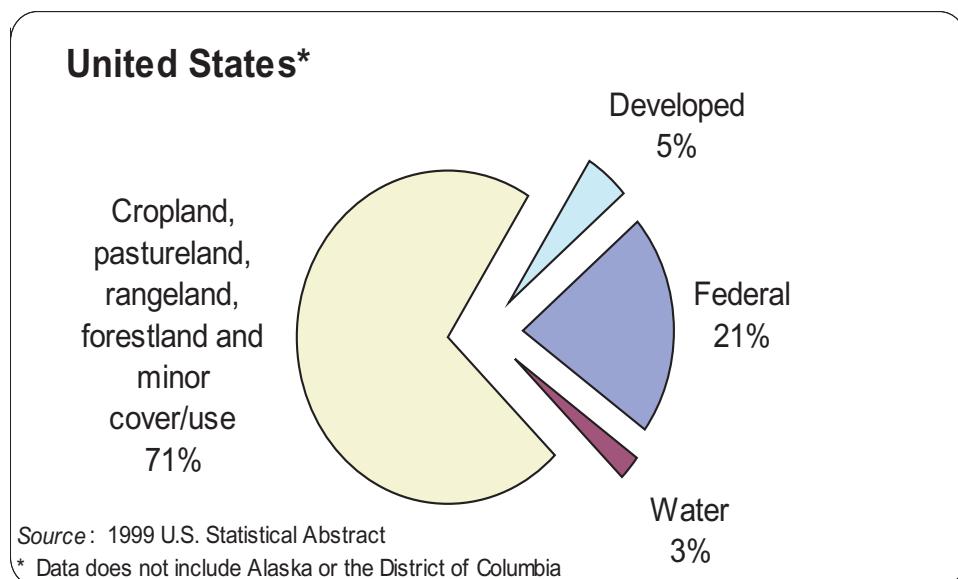


## OPEN SPACE AND FARMLAND

Does suburban development pose a threat to farmland and open space? Despite all the rhetoric about an “urban sprawl crisis,” the United States has developed only 5 percent of its total land area, with 71 percent used for rural purposes. We have plenty of land to meet the housing needs of our great-grandchildren and beyond and to provide them with plenty of open space and agricultural products.

### Perceptions May Create a False Sense of Crisis

- Eighty percent of Americans live in metropolitan areas.<sup>1</sup> Because most people live in urbanized areas, they may have a tendency to underestimate actual open space and farmland acreage.



### Current Rates of Growth Are Sustainable

- Out of the 1.9 billion acres of land in the United States (excluding Alaska and the District of Columbia), 92 million acres are developed.<sup>2</sup> The Sierra Club estimates that the United States converts 400,000 acres of land per year to developed use.<sup>3</sup> If we were to keep at that pace for the next 50 years, developed acreage would increase from 4.7 percent to 5.7 percent of total land area. Forestland, cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and minor uses cover 71 percent of the United States. In other words, there are more than 14 acres of open space for every developed acre.
- The amount of land for parks and wilderness areas exceeds urbanized land, and the rate of increase in parks and wilderness areas has outpaced urban expansion.<sup>4</sup> Between 1959 and 1992, the amount of urban land increased from 27 million acres to 58 million acres, a 115 percent in-

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999*, 119th (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, October 1999), 40, table 42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 240, table 395.

<sup>3</sup> Sierra Club, *The Cost of Sprawl*, <http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/report98/costs.html>, accessed 18 February 2000.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economics and Statistics System, *Major Land Uses*, <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu>. Data does not include Alaska, which has an additional 433,000 acres of urban land and 141 million acres of rural parks and wildlife areas.



crease. Over the same period, the amount of land in rural parks and wildlife areas increased from 32 million acres to 87 million acres, a 172 percent increase.

## Agricultural Production Is Not in Jeopardy

- Cropland makes up 19.7 percent of the United States, while 6.5 percent is pastureland.<sup>5</sup> The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that “farmland conversion does not pose a threat to the nation’s ability to produce food and fiber.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, “only about one percent of all U.S. prime soil (and about 0.6 percent of all non-prime land) was converted to urban use between 1982 and 1992.”<sup>7</sup>
- Of cropland lost from 1949 to 1992, 74 percent was caused by changes in farm population and income, while 26 percent was caused by urbanization.<sup>8</sup> Farmers continue to grow more food on less land. Agricultural productivity has increased 245 percent over the past 50 years and continues to increase.<sup>9</sup>

## Population and Land Consumption

- Between 1945 and 1992, the population of the United States increased 93 percent.<sup>10</sup> During that same time, developed land increased 43 percent.<sup>11</sup> In a broad geographic context, we are not consuming more space per capita, we are consuming less.

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Staley, Samuel. *The “Vanishing Farmland” Myth and the Smart Growth Agenda*. Los Angeles: Reason Public Policy Institute, January 2000, <http://www.rppi.org/pb12central.html>.

<sup>5</sup> *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 240, table 395.

<sup>6</sup> USDA, Economic Research Service, *Cropland Use and Urbanization*, <http://www.econ.ag.gov/whatsnew/issues/landuse/index.htm>, accessed 18 February 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel R. Staley, *The Vanishing Farmland Myth and the Smart Growth Agenda* (Los Angeles: Reason Public Policy Institute, January 2000), citing Luther Tweenen, *Competing for Scarce Land: Food Security and Farmland Preservation* (Paper presented to the American Agricultural Law Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 17 October 1997).

<sup>9</sup> Economic Research Service, *Cropland Use and Urbanization*.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Distribution Branch, <http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/state/stts/st4049ts.txt> and <http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/state/st-99-3.txt>. Accessed 16 February 2000.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Major Land Uses*, <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/data-sets/land/89003>, accessed 16 February 2000.



## TRANSPORTATION

Does public transit improve transportation options for low-income families? Is suburbanization, or “sprawl,” turning daily commuting into a nightmare? Does public transit provide convenient and rapid access to goods and services? Will increased government funding for public transit “stop sprawl”?

### Autos Help Low-Income Families and Working Mothers

- “Despite a greater likelihood to be without a car, people in low-income households are still most likely to travel by private vehicles. For the work trip, 84 percent of trips by workers in low-income households, compared to 90 percent in other households, use private vehicles.”<sup>1</sup>
- As a Progressive Policy Institute report explains, “In most cases, the shortest distance between a poor person and a job is along a line driven in a car.”<sup>2</sup>
- Dr. Sandra Rosenbloom, an expert on women’s transportation issues, reports that “working mothers are much more dependent on driving alone than comparable male parents” and “efforts to discourage auto driving penalize women much more than men.”<sup>3</sup>
- Public transit commuters have less time to spend with their families. The typical commuter spends 2.8 additional hours a week if they commute by bus instead of by car and four hours a week if they travel by subway or light-rail instead of by car.<sup>4</sup>

### Average Commuting Times Did Not Increase As Suburbs Grew

- Between 1969 and 1995, the U.S. Gross Domestic Product increased 111 percent;<sup>5</sup> the U.S. population increased 32 percent; U.S. workers increased 74 percent; people with drivers’ licenses increased 71 percent;<sup>6</sup> and household vehicle miles traveled increased 163 percent.<sup>7</sup>
- While the economy and road usage rapidly grew, the total miles of public roads increased a meager 5 percent over the same time period.<sup>8</sup>
- In spite of the large increase in the use of roads and only a slight increase in roadway, national average commuting time dropped from 22 minutes in 1969 to 20.7 minutes in 1995, a 6 percent decline.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Elaine Murakami (U.S. Federal Highway Administration) and Jennifer Young (University of Tennessee), *Daily Travel by Persons with Low-income* (paper delivered at the NTPS Symposium, Bethesda, Maryland, 29-31 October 1997), <http://www.cta.ornl.gov/npts/1995/Doc/LowInc.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Margy Waller and Mark Alan Hughes, *Working Far from Home: Transportation and Welfare Reform in the Ten Big States* (Washington, D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute and Public/Private Ventures, August 1999), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Sandra Rosenbloom and Elisabeth Burns, *Do Environmental Measures and Travel Reduction Programs Hurt Working Women?* (Tucson: Drachman Institute for Land and Regional Development Studies, University of Arizona, October 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Alan E. Pisarski, *Commuting in America II: The Second National Report on Community Patterns and Trends* (Washington, D.C.: Eno Transportation Foundation, 1996), 85, <http://www.enotrans.com>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, *National Income and Product Accounts* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Economic Analysis), <http://www.bea.doc.gov/beal/dn/ripaweb>.

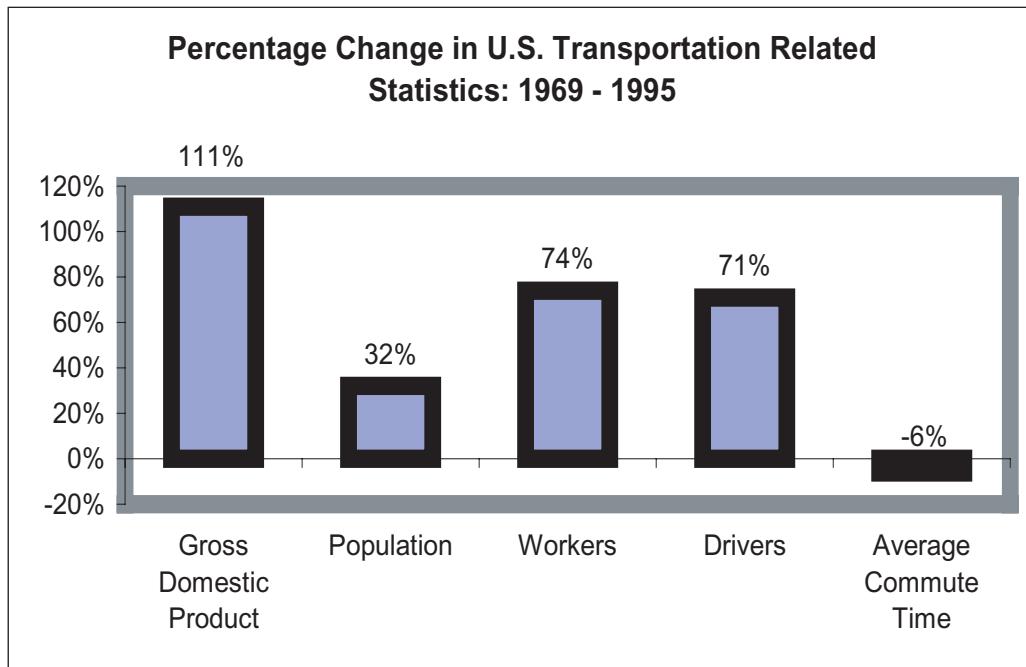
<sup>6</sup> P. S. Hu and J. R. Young, *Summary of Travel Trends* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, December 1999), 7, [http://www.cta.ornl.gov/npts/1995/Doc/trends\\_report.pdf](http://www.cta.ornl.gov/npts/1995/Doc/trends_report.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Federal Highway Administration, *Highway Statistics Summary to 1995*, table HM-212, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/summary95>.

<sup>9</sup> Federal Highway Administration, *Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey*, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/nptspage.htm>.





## Why Haven't Commuting Times Soared?

- “Suburbanization has been the dominant and successful mechanism for reducing congestion. It has shifted road and highway demand to less congested routes and away from core areas.”<sup>10</sup>
- Greater flexibility in work hours allows commuters to avoid rush hour.
- Switching from car pool and transit to single occupant vehicle trips is usually more time-efficient for workers.<sup>11</sup>

## Light-Rail Is Not a Viable Alternative to Automobiles

- Commutes take longer on light-rail. The average commuting time by light-rail is 45 minutes, while by car it is only 21 minutes.<sup>12</sup> The average speed of light-rail is 8.3 miles per hour,<sup>13</sup> while the average commuting speed in a private vehicle is 35.4 miles per hour.<sup>14</sup> Incorporating waiting-for-the-train time, the average trip speed for light-rail is a meager 6.7 miles per hour.<sup>15</sup>
- Light-rail does not reduce congestion or pollution. To reduce congestion and related pollution, light-rail must reduce the number of cars currently on the road and lure new drivers out of their cars. However, research from 11 U.S. cities shows that “with low ridership and most patrons drawn

<sup>10</sup> Peter Gordon and Harry W. Richardson, “Are Compact Cities a Desirable Planning Goal?” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 63 no. 1 (Winter 1997): 98.

<sup>11</sup> Center for Transportation Analysis, *Early Results Report* (Oak Ridge, Tenn.: Center for Transportation Analysis, 1995), [http://www-cta.ornl.gov/npts/1995/Doc/NPTS\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www-cta.ornl.gov/npts/1995/Doc/NPTS_Booklet.pdf), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Pisarski, 85.

<sup>13</sup> Center for Urban Transportation Research, *Public Transit in America: Findings from the 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey* (Tampa: Center for Urban Transportation Research, University of South Florida, 1998), 4-15, <http://www.cutr.eng.usf.edu/index2.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> Hu and Young, *Summary of Travel Trends*, 42.

<sup>15</sup> Center for Urban Transportation Research, *Public Transit in America*.



from bus transit, there is no case where new rail service has been shown to noticeably improve highway congestion or air quality.”<sup>16</sup>

## Continued Public Transit Investment Will Not Slow “Sprawl”

- Between 1970 and 1995, governments at all levels spent a cumulative \$299.5 billion (in 1999 dollars) on public transit subsidies,<sup>17</sup> only to see the number of transit trips decrease by 5 percent.<sup>18</sup>
- In one analysis it was revealed that in the two decades following the opening of San Francisco’s BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) — “it has, at best, had only modest impacts on local land uses.”<sup>19</sup> The same study found that “employment grew twice as fast in non-BART areas as it did in areas near BART stations.”
- Genevieve Giuliano, professor of urban planning at UCLA, explains that there is “overwhelming evidence that transit investment is not an efficient means for affecting land use patterns.”<sup>20</sup> She further explains, “If the aim is to reduce metropolitan spatial segmentation [sprawl], the effective remedy is to expand the range of housing and employment choices, not travel choice.”

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### Key Experts

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<sup>19</sup> David Luberoff, “What Can Transit Do?” *Governing Magazine*, November 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Genevieve Giuliano, “The Weakening Transportation — Land Use Connection,” *Access*, no. 6 (Spring 1995): 6.



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