

Sprawl DA

A. Uniqueness – California is working to eliminate Sprawl in the Status Quo

Andy Evangelista University of California.edu “Putting the Breaks on Sprawl” January 11, 2009 (<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/22644>)

Planners are now looking to design communities that are denser, more compact, pedestrian-friendly and public transit-oriented. Employers, schools, stores and services will be closer to homes. The trick is to design convenient and lively neighborhoods, and at the same time, get people out of their cars as much as possible.

"UC researchers will play a pivotal role in California's efforts toward a more sustainable future," said Kurt Karperos, chief of the Air Quality and Transportation Planning Branch for the state air board. "Whether it's developing the state-of-the-art computer models that planners need to design the cities of the future or helping our elected officials understand the science that governs how we travel around our communities, UC researchers are our key researchers in reducing greenhouse gases from cars. They provide the sound science from which the state can build new policies."

New law to curb sprawl

And California has been a leader among states in developing policies to combat climate change. Last year, the state passed Senate Bill 375, the nation's first law to control greenhouse gas emissions by curbing sprawl.

"SB 375 is focused on changing land use patterns throughout California that will reduce people's dependency on the automobile, reduce long distance commuting patterns, and reduce green house gas emissions as a result," said Gary Binger, co-director of the Center for a Sustainable California at UC Berkeley. One of the center's goals is to be a resource for implementing SB 375.

Although it could take decades for many environment-friendly communities to sprout all over the state, 2010 will be a critical year for planners laying the seeds for the new-style development and state agencies looking to whittle the carbon footprint. □□The landmark SB 375 directs the state air board to establish greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2020 and 2035 for each region in the state by Sept. 30, 2010. The air board will update these targets every eight years. It will then work with each of the state's 18 metropolitan planning organizations, which must develop a "sustainable communities strategy" to achieve these targets.

The agencies will need models or tools to predict accurately, for example, how their proposed strategies will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If housing is added to a community because of population growth and to make it denser, which modes of transportation will people likely select and how many trips will they take? If increased or improved public transit is offered, will people ride and how much will that reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Do carpool lanes or toll roads really reduce vehicle miles traveled? Will taxes or fees to discourage driving have unintended or uneven effects on certain socioeconomic groups? Without the tools to get answers to questions like these, policymakers and planners will be shooting at state-set emission targets in the dark.

B. Link – Plan implements high speed rail, thus increasing Sprawl

Jason Kambitis on March 16, 2010 Wired.com “High-Speed Rail As a Conduit of Sprawl” (<http://www.wired.com/autopia/2010/03/high-speed-rail-and-sprawl/>)

It's fast, it's efficient and it is the future of transportation, but will high-speed rail cause sprawl?

Yes, it could, warn some urban planners. Despite the promise of creating more densely populated urban centers, high-speed rail could do quite the opposite by making it easier for people to live far from urban centers.

Let's use California as an example, since high-speed rail has made the most progress there. The Golden State, long known as a trendsetter for transportation and environmental policy, has received more than \$2.3 billion in stimulus funds toward a proposed line linking San Francisco and Los Angeles by way of the Central Valley. The money is earmarked for construction, land acquisition and engineering and it follows the \$9.95 billion allocated by a state ballot initiative. If and when the line is completed by 2030, riders will zip between the two cities in 2 hours and 38 minutes and pay less than half what it would cost to fly.

But that convenience could increase emigration from California's urban centers to the exurbs and beyond. In other words, it could lead to more sprawl.

An example of this can be seen in cities like Palmdale, which is 58 miles north of Los Angeles. By cutting the commute time between those two cities from 1 hour and 25 minutes, to 27 minutes, outward growth of the Los Angeles area will undoubtedly continue. It's easy to see why — home prices in Palmdale are more than half of those in L.A., and high-speed rail could make getting downtown as quick and easy as living downtown. Pushing people further into the exurbs runs counter to a major goal of high-speed rail, namely cutting our carbon output while creating denser, more sustainable communities.

Before this conversation goes any farther it should be said adopting high-speed rail is fundamental to the country's economic vitality because it provides cost-effective transportation options that link major commerce centers. It is in many ways more beneficial than the continued use of automobiles as the primary means of moving people around. The time is now and the technology is here. That said, there are some potential flaws regarding where stations are built and how the rail infrastructure is integrated with communities that could lead to sprawl.

C. Impact – Sprawl has a few negative implications

Reid Ewing, Rutgers University, Rolf Pendall, Cornell University, Don Chen, Smart Growth America “Measuring Sprawl and It's Impact” last accessed March 17, 2010

1. Greater Risk of Fatal Crashes

Residents of more sprawling areas are at greater risk of dying in a car crash, the research indicates. In the nation's most sprawling region, Riverside CA, 18 of every 100,000 residents die each year in traffic crashes. The eight least sprawling metro areas all have traffic fatality rates of fewer than 8 deaths per 100,000. The higher death rates in more sprawling areas may be related to higher amounts of driving, or to more driving on high-speed arterials and highways, as opposed to driving on smaller city streets where speeds are lower. Speed is a major factor in the deadliness of automobile crashes.

2. Higher rates of driving and vehicle ownership

The research indicates that in relatively sprawling regions, cars are driven longer distances per person than in places with lower-than-average sprawl. Over an entire region, that adds up to millions of extra miles and tons of additional vehicle emissions. Also, the study found that in the ten most sprawling metropolitan areas, there are on average 180 cars to every 100 households; in the least sprawling metro areas (excluding New York City and Jersey City, which are outliers), there are 162 cars to every 100 households. The research indicates that this is not simply a matter of greater or lesser affluence; even controlling for income, households are more likely to bear the expense of additional vehicles in more sprawling areas.

3. Depressed Rates of walking and alternative transport use

In more sprawling places, people on their way to work are far less likely to take the bus or train or to walk. Twice the proportion of residents take public transit to work in relatively non-sprawling metro areas versus those with below-average scores. Likewise, thousands more residents walk to work in regions that sprawl less.