

# Grand Jury Report on Light Rail:

- **Negligible impact on traffic congestion**
- **Slower than the auto.**
- **No advantages over express buses.**
- **Will not improve commuter travel times, energy conservation and safety.**
- **Virtually none of the pollution improvement is attributable to transit**
- **Expensive relative to other transit modes**
- **Development . . . is spurred by tax subsidies, not light rail.**

- **The average auto work trip is about 19 minutes while the average transit work trip is 50 minutes.**
- **Express buses . . . about 60 % faster than light rail's 16.2 miles per hour.**
- **Public transit is less fuel-efficient** than the auto.
- **Transit's share of land travel in the U.S. has dropped from approximately 6 % to less than 1 % since 1950.**
- **Light rail is inflexible**

All of the above is copied, unchanged, from a 1999 report by the Orange County Grand Jury:

<http://www.ocgrandjury.org/pdfs/GJLtRail.pdf>

Details and more at: [NoLightRail.com](http://NoLightRail.com), [Ortem.org](http://Ortem.org), [PublicPurpose.com](http://PublicPurpose.com)

# Some Highlights of the Grand Jury Report

## LIGHT RAIL AND CONSUMER MISMATCH

.Page 6: . . Light rail's ability to move large numbers of people has virtually no value to the modern urban area because it doesn't match the needs of the modern urban traveler. Demographic studies have shown the following factors important to the peak hour commuter:

- Proximity—Consumers want service that is conveniently close to both their trip origin and destination. The trip by auto or transit must begin near home and end near work.
- Frequency—Consumers want freedom to travel whenever they want or need. That equates to service that is frequent and available virtually all day, every day.
- Travel time—Consumers want to get where they are going as quickly as possible. Additionally, riders dislike

transferring from one route to another.

- Segmented trips—The work trip has increasingly become segmented. A segmented trip is one with more than one purpose. Frequent and convenient point-to-point transit service is simply not available for those trips.

- Cost—Work trips must be affordable.

. . .Studies have shown that transit is exceedingly unattractive for the work trip to suburban areas. Transit has no advantage for those consumers who can afford to make a choice in deciding how to make peak hour trips in the urban area. The auto, on the other hand, provides the on-demand, rapid service point to point transportation commuters to suburban jobs want.

## TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND LIGHT RAIL

Page 9: . light rail does not reduce traffic congestion because it attracts few auto drivers. For example, approximately 20 % of Washington, D.C. rapid rail ridership formerly drove autos for their trips, while 25 % of San Diego's light rail riders were former auto drivers. The majority of new light rail riders are:

- Former bus riders who have been forced to transfer to rail because their bus routes now feed rail stations instead of the former destinations (usually downtown).
- Riders in "free fare" downtown zones (such as Portland, St. Louis, and Buffalo). For example, all light rail and bus service in downtown Portland is operated without fares.
- Drivers who use free downtown peripheral parking at rail stations to avoid downtown parking charges and ride short distances to their jobs. This reduces auto use by a very

small amount and has little positive effect on pollution as well

- Former car pool riders whose car pools continue to operate or have become single-occupant trips. The autos stay on the road.

Light rail has not reduced traffic congestion on nearby freeways.

- For example, in Portland, traffic on the adjacent freeway has continued to grow and is now at least 58 % higher than before light rail was opened. During rush hour, adjacent freeway lane carries seven times as many riders as light rail inbound to downtown. In the reverse direction, a single freeway lane carries over 80 times the passengers on the light rail line.

## AIR POLLUTION AND LIGHT RAIL

Page 9: Considerable progress has been made in improving air quality in the United States and California's Los Angeles basin. From 1970 to 1992, annual road travel increased by more than 100%. At the same time, transportation-related carbon monoxide emissions fell 32 %, volatile organic compound emissions fell 53 %, and nitrogen oxide emissions rose only 1 %. Unhealthy air quality days dropped by more than two thirds in U.S. metropolitan areas from 1987 to 1996, and auto pollution is expected to drop about 25 % more from 1996 to 2010 despite continu-

ing growth in miles traveled. The best year for air pollution in the Los Angeles area for the past 50 years was 1997—despite a tripling of the basin's population. Most of the improvement in air quality is improved vehicle emission technology. Virtually none of the pollution improvement is attributable to transit. Because light rail does not appreciably reduce auto use, U.S. Department of Transportation reports state it cannot materially reduce air pollution.

## LIGHT RAIL AND ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Page 10: Public transit is less fuel-efficient than the auto. Only commuter rail, such as Metrolink, is more energy efficient than the auto. In 1995, light rail consumed 13 % more energy than the auto per passenger mile. A principal factor in the energy intensiveness of the electric rail

modes (light rail and heavy rail) is the great amount of energy needed to produce electricity. For instance, coal generation of electricity consumes three times as much energy as it produces in electricity.