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Cars Are Basic™

3 January 2008

John Ledbetter, Plan Santa Barbara:
cc: Betty Weiss
City of Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA

Santa Barbara General Plan Update - Plan Santa Barbara

Re: Transportation Issues

Key words: Plan Santa Barbara, Smart Growth, EPA, congest, false and misleading, DOT, bicycle count, destinations, traffic calming, petitions, CEQA, State and De la Vina, roundabouts

Cars Are Basic™, Inc. (CAB) is a transportation advocacy organization. As a participant in the public process developing [Plan Santa Barbara](#), CAB submits the following information that was in part presented to the Santa Barbara City Council five years ago.

It is our understanding that [Plan Santa Barbara](#) is the update of the Master Plan/General Plan, and that the update is optional, not required. CAB contributes the below information on behalf of the public interested in preserving efficient, safe, and balanced transportation protocols in Santa Barbara.

Smart Growth

The *Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)* began promoting the concept of "Smart Growth" and its associated traffic planning practices in the 1990's.¹ Although not identified as such in staff reports, "**Smart Growth**" concepts are currently in use by the City of Santa Barbara following their adoption by the city's administration over a decade ago.

"**Smart Growth**" promotes urban growth to stop expansion of sprawl. The traffic aspect of "**Smart Growth**" contends that high density development of urban areas works if the citizenry is forced to give up automobiles for "alternative transportation," systems typically owned and regulated by the government, such as mass transit. "**Smart Growth**" *traffic practices purposely congest streets and decrease parking to coerce citizens out of their automobiles.*²

In 2004, the *EPA* published a **White Paper** on the success of "**Smart Growth**" traffic planning. It concluded no congestion results from intentionally taking away road capacity by narrowing roads, installing roundabouts / bulbouts and other such hazards on the streets, and refusing to expand street capacity.³

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The *EPA* was "**forced**" to withdraw this report by the federal Department of Transportation (DOT).⁴ DOT revealed that the *EPA* had used "*false and misleading*" information to support of their conclusions. It was a major defeat for "**Smart Growth**" traffic planners.^{5,6} The City of Santa Barbara has been given the DOT documentation.

The "*false and misleading*" information on which the *EPA* based its conclusions came from bogus *sampling*. They selected urban areas with stagnant or declining populations. They then stated there was no increase or detriment to vehicle travel within these communities resulting from intentional congestion devices and practices. The prestigious Heritage Foundation did an in-depth review of the *EPA* report and compared the communities and statistics in the report to communities of similar sizes and backgrounds. The results showed that "**Smart Growth**" did its job: *It did congest streets. It also caused pollution and hurt business.* (See Attachment A.⁷)

"**Smart Growth**" traffic "*solutions*" to bump citizens out of their cars are not working. In Santa Barbara, these efforts have included installing *34 miles of bicycle lanes, expanding bus service, narrowing streets, and providing satellite parking and shuttles.* Despite these expensive and intrusive attempts to rid the city of motorists, a June 2006 report by the City Traffic Division states that there are more cars on the streets of Santa Barbara than there were in the 1970's.⁹ Concurrently, Browning Allen, Director of the City's Traffic Division, announced that "This is not a data driven program" (at a March 2006 Transportation and Circulation Committee [TCC] meeting).⁹

The City **bicycle count has dropped ~30%** compared to the 1973 base line study, making recent claims of huge increases in bike counts by the City Traffic Division appear to mimic the *EPA*'s bogus reporting activities to promote "Smart Growth." An example is the *November 8th TCC meeting, Agenda Item #3*, which called for Review of Intersection Improvements at State Street and De la Vina. Traffic Division **staff reported** there were **90 bike riders** observed during a 2 hour period, who were about equally divided traveling east and west on State St., and there were **60 pedestrians** during the same period. **CAB has monitored this significant intersection for six (6) years on a quarterly basis and refutes this claim.** These numbers are not an average daily occurrence. We have monitored this intersection as a bellwether, and the current year average is **40-42 riders from 7-9 AM weekdays.** An enlightened guess would be that purported 60 pedestrians were employees of the businesses in the area, including Trader Joe's and adjacent shops and services as well as customers of the coffee shop, who traveled no more than 100 feet not crossing either State or De la Vina.

The Freeway

"**Smart Growth**" advocates have stopped the *widening of the 101 Freeway*. Followers state that 101 widening will *create more traffic*. CAB contends that economic prosperity and attractive *destinations increase traffic, not streets*. Without economic prosperity and destinations, there are fewer cars and little traffic.

By not allowing the widening of Highway 101, "**Smart Growth**" has adversely impacted city traffic corridors by pushing transient freeway traffic onto overcrowded city streets. It has also generated diversion of traffic



through residential areas, significantly decreasing quality of life in numerous neighborhoods as well as imposing irreversible damage to the environment.

Environmental Concerns

“**Smart Growth**” traffic impediments aka “*traffic calming*” are not popular. In 2000, a petition with 10,000 signatures (in a municipality with 40,000 voters) was submitted to the City to halt the narrowing of Shoreline Drive. The petitioners included Santa Barbara City College. A lawsuit was filed by citizens of Santa Barbara. Under CEQA, this much public opposition should have triggered an Environmental Impact Report. City attorneys fought the citizens and won, and Shoreline Drive was narrowed. No EIR was completed by the City.

In 2006, two petitions with over 300 signatures were submitted in opposition to the St. Francis roundabouts. An appeal was filed, and public hearings were contentious, with hundreds of angry citizens calling for removal of the roundabouts. It prompted City Council to promise that no more roundabouts would be built for the time being.

CAB is concerned about “**Smart Growth**” traffic plans for **Outer State and the De la Vina at State intersection**. The area is home to an average of 30,000 car trips a day. Plans call for intentional congestion and attendant diversion of traffic through residential neighborhoods.

“**Smart Growth**” advocates do not use actual accident reports for alteration of streets as required by law. *They use alleged “speeding.”* They say traffic must be slowed down to a crawl. A major nation-wide study, entitled “Contrary to Public Opinion,”¹⁰ **found posting speeds at the 80th percentile of the highest average speed worked to reduce accidents and efficiently route traffic on non-limited access streets (most city streets)**. The same study stated that lowering speeds increased accidents. (See Attachment D.¹¹)

CAB joins other organizations in demanding a comprehensive EIR be ordered by the City to assess all proposed development and traffic plans prior to any further congestion and/or changes in our streets. *We urge that this EIR also address impacts of growth in adjacent communities on our traffic planning and solutions.*

We further request that a realistic analysis of all “**Smart Growth**” effects on Santa Barbara be completed and presented to the public before including any of its concepts into the General Plan Update.

Only with a foundation of accurate factual information will **Plan Santa Barbara** build a better future for our City.

Sincerely,

Scott Wenz
President, CAB



1. **“Ten Years of Smart Growth”** by Regina C. Gray, US Department of Housing & Urban Development, *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*; Volume 9, Number 1; 2007; page 7. <http://www.huduser.org/periodicals/cityscape/vol9num1/ch5.pdf>
2. For a reproduction of the U.S. Department of Transportation's full critique of the EPA report, see **TOLLROADSnews**, "EPA Lauds Immobility in CAPORTS (Plus FHWA Comment in Full)," May 15, 2004, at www.tollroadsnews.com/cgi-bin/a.cgi/DFgWgqaHEdiRW6r2jfFwDw (June 15, 2004).
3. The EPA denies that there is a link between population growth and traffic congestion. When the DOT pointed out this failing, the EPA responded, "We do not believe the rate of growth is a major factor influencing transportation system performance--we do not feel it necessary to control for growth rate." **TOLLROADSnews**, "EPA Lauds Immobility in CAPORTS."
4. **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Development, Community, and Environment Division, Characteristics and Performance of Regional Transportation Systems, February 2004, withdrawn April 2004.** Electronic version posted as a courtesy of Demographia, at www.demographia.com/db-epa-withdraw.pdf.
5. The Public Purpose, **"Traffic Congestion Trends: 1986-2001,"** Highway & Motor Fact Book, at www.publicpurpose.com/hwy-tti20011986.pdf.
6. Kenneth Orski, **"The Backlash Against Smart Growth,"** Innovation Briefs, Vol. 14, No. 6 (November/December 2003), at www.innobriefs.com/abstracts/2003/nov03.html#3.
7. **“The EPA Withdraws Inaccurate Smart Growth–Traffic Congestion Report”** by Wendell Cox and Ronald D. Utt, Ph.D., Heritage Foundation, July 24, 2004, Backgrounder #1782
8. US Census rates The geographical area that defines the South Coast is growing. (2000 census shows only a 0.2% increase in population in Santa Barbara county. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06083.html>) Adjacent development and growth rates impact the streets of the City of Santa Barbara.

