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Cars Are Basic™

18 January 2008

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

Re: Follow-up, Santa Barbara General Plan / Plan Santa Barbara

One of the items promoted in "alternative" transportation agenda the supposed health benefits of Bicycle & Walking to reduce morbidity and mortality in the general population.

CAB has among its members experienced Medical Doctors and Exercise Physiologists. While all of these health professionals support the expansion of physical activity the "Public Health" aspect of Staff Proposed Transportation Planning related to High Density has a number of severe faults.

Mass transit (buses, vans, trains).

A natural result of increased physical contact is the spread infectious diseases. These diseases include dermatitis that may be vector as well as contact borne; and proximity passed respiratory infections (bacterial and viral). Increasing density in mass transit places individuals in ideal contagious conditions. There are many documented recent incidents of problems in this and other countries related to cramped human contact. This is so well known in health circles it needs no further discussion. It is fact.

Walking - Biking

Among the supposed increased activity resulting from this forced transit design is reduction in obesity and resultant orthopedic and hormonal benefits.

Advertised increased activity is one of the primary arguments supporting creation of high density urban living. e.g. Reduction in weight reduces wear and tear on joints (again common fact).

Unfortunately the majority of individuals who fall into risk categories will not benefit from a 15 or 20 minute walk (too little active time) and these types of activities are not osteogenic (building of bone). Weight loss needs a number of concurrent conditions that include reduction of calories and dietary fat levels (controlling binge and daily over eating) as well as increased exercise time.

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A recent subcellular discovery is the role of mitochondria density. These are the fueling organs at the cellular level. Individuals inclined to overweight or obesity appear to have fewer mitochondria than their more slender fellows. To properly stimulate health benefits in these individuals requires 45 minutes to 60 minutes of continual activity (ACSM 2006-7 national meeting & SWACSM district meeting 2007). "Increasing peak fitness or retarding its relative age-related declines, depends on short (30-40 min.) exercise sessions at threshold- intensity levels..."(MSSE Vol. 39, #12 2007 pg. 2231) This is not an option for most traveling to and from work since "short" exercise sessions are described as being 30-40 minutes.

Without the above mentioned dietary controls this clouds the benefit of these small elevated levels of activity. The argument of cumulative minutes of exercise is blunted as a result of this recent information.

The position stating beneficial cumulative effects of relatively short duration low intensity exercise are questionable. Walking to work most certainly is not a medium or high intensity exercise. The more fit the person the greater the time and effort needed for gain. Intensity has been understood for decades as important!

This clearly demonstrates the inefficiency of physical activity related to intercity high density population travel. It in fact makes the argument for less dense construction.

Below is a quote from the City of Santa Barbara advisory Circulation Element:

"In addition, the inability of small businesses to expand in locations at or near impacted intersections may result in the relocation of those businesses to lower density or outlying areas that may not be as suitable for alternative modes of transportation. This will, in turn, increase the reliance on the automobile in these areas and possibly contribute to a sprawling development pattern." Now how does forcing businesses out benefit the health of the population?

Staff and Council repeatedly have stated they must be in conformity with this advisory document that declares this intentional design will result in driving businesses away from the city. Middle class businesses will be hurt by this type of planning. Employees and shoppers will not have a reasonable option except to use automobile travel to work or shop. An obvious conclusion directly from a conceptual document the Council wants inserted into the General / Master Plan called Plan Santa Barbara. A result that has occurred in Portland Oregon.

This contradicts the stated intent for health and exercise propogandized by Council and Staff.

Misdirection and falsification of intent as well as fact has been allowed too long in building and traffic planning. It is resulting in the destruction of the city of Santa Barbara so long enjoyed, and protected by many.



High density excused with the supposed "mitigation" of "alternative transportation" and health(?) benefits is a failure.

Scott Wenz
President, CAB

