

**From:** [Public Comment](#)  
**To:** [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](mailto:cacsecretary [@smcta.com]); [Board \(@smcta.com\)](mailto:Board (@smcta.com))  
**Subject:** FW: Comments to CAC and TA Board  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 3, 2024 1:53:44 PM

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**From:** Giuliano <giuliano@carlini.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, August 31, 2024 11:53 PM  
**To:** Public Comment <publiccomment@smcta.com>  
**Subject:** Comments to CAC and TA Board

You don't often get email from [giuliano@carlini.com](mailto:giuliano@carlini.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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Please check out this report, <https://t4america.org/maps-tools/congestion-con/>.  
Emphasis mine.

In an expensive effort to curb congestion in urban regions, we have overwhelmingly prioritized one strategy: we have spent decades and hundreds of billions of dollars widening and building new highways. **We added 30,511 new freeway lane-miles** of road in the largest 100 urbanized areas **between 1993 and 2017, an increase of 42 percent**. That rate of freeway expansion **significantly outstripped the 32 percent growth in population** in those regions over the same time period. Yet **this strategy has utterly failed to “solve” the problem at hand—delay is up in those urbanized areas by a staggering 144 percent**.

Our most common "fix" for congestion is one of the dominant causes of congestion. Adding capacity makes congestion worse, not better.

giuliano

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Drive a bike a bit more often and cars a bit less. You'll be healthier and happier, and so will our world.

**From:** [Mike Swire](#)  
**To:** [Board \(@smcta.com\)](#); [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](#); [Mima Crume](#); [jlacap@smcgov.org](#); [Audrey Shiramizu](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment - new Vox article  
**Date:** Friday, August 30, 2024 4:46:44 PM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)  
[image.png](#)

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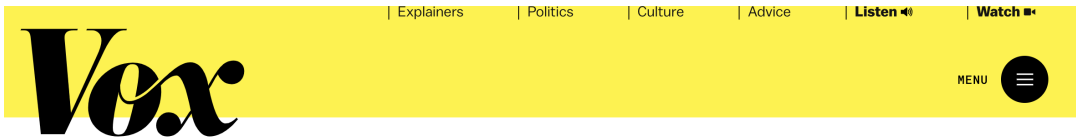
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Dear SMCTA and C/CAG leaders,

Thank you for your service to the transportation needs of San Mateo County residents. I encourage you to take five minutes to read [this excellent article that just appeared in Vox](#). It provides a great summary of highway widenings, why they don't reduce congestion, and the erroneous assumptions that are used in justifying them.

Thank you,

Mike Swire  
Hillsborough, CA

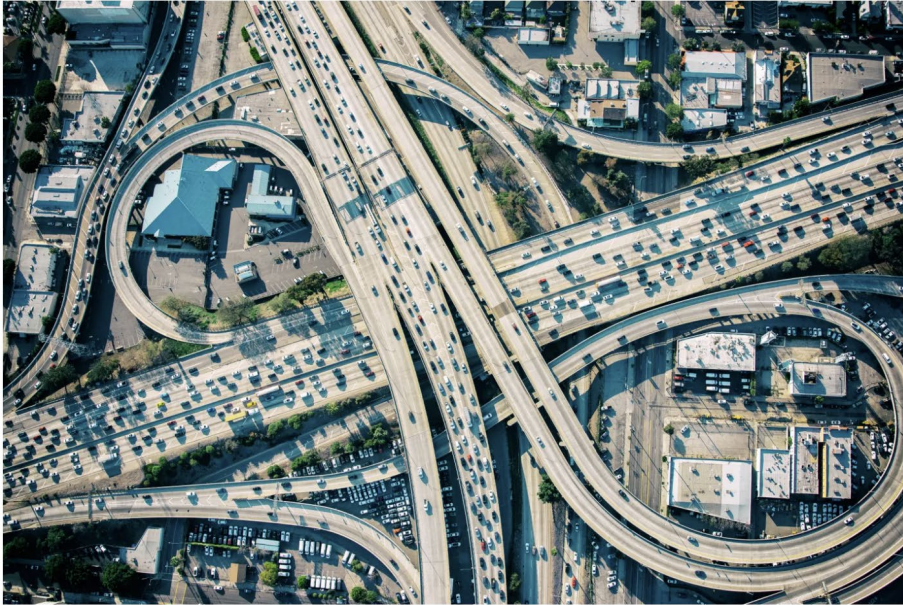


# Do bigger highways actually help reduce traffic?

How America's ever-widening highways are built on a lie.

by **David Zipper**

Jul 29, 2024, 4:30 AM PDT



Intersection of interstates 10 and 101 in Los Angeles. Getty Images



*David Zipper is a senior fellow at the MIT Mobility Initiative, where he examines the interplay between transportation policy and technology. His work has been published in the **Atlantic**, **Slate**, **Bloomberg**, the **Washington Post**, and elsewhere.*

From [Massachusetts](#) to [California](#), transportation departments are pursuing controversial plans to widen highways, expansions that are sure to compel more people to drive, thus increasing greenhouse gas emissions. Yet state and federal officials are, absurdly, justifying such projects by claiming that they can help fight climate change.

Consider a [report issued last fall](#), in which the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) outlined its strategy to reduce pollution attributable to its road network, which a 2018 department report [found](#) generated 0.48 percent of all global — not national — CO2 emissions. Along with improving public transit, installing energy-efficient streetlights, and building electric vehicle charging stations, TxDOT suggests expanding highways.

According to TxDOT's report, projects like adding turnaround lanes on frontage roads will reduce emissions because they "[reduce] vehicle idling due to delay." State DOTs from [Utah](#) to [New York](#) have likewise claimed that adding lanes to congested highways will lower emissions because fewer cars will be stuck in traffic.

Framing highway widening as a cure for climate change has allowed state DOTs to justify spending [billions of dollars](#) in their ongoing war on gridlock. Businesses and residents alike complain about traffic, and widening the road is an easy way to placate them because it

feels like progress. But decades of research — along with common sense — show that [congestion will inevitably](#) return. New roadway lanes invite more cars, which generate more emissions, trapping us in a cycle of ever-increasing driving that only makes it harder to slow the increase in global temperatures.

## How could they possibly be saying bigger highways are good for the climate?

It's worth pausing to consider how state DOTs justify conclusions that seem so far off-base. When considering potential highway projects, staff use computer models to forecast their impact on future traffic. These models [project](#) that driving will grow at a rate reflecting past trends, often with a bump for population expansion. Any gas-powered car will create emissions when driven, but one stuck in gridlock will produce more since its journey takes longer.

## How cars and highways shape America

One overlooked, often hidden factor has profound consequences for American life: cars. Read more of Vox's deep reporting on how building a nation around driving has impacted our health, safety, and culture.

- [Business owners are buying into a bogus myth about driving](#)
- [The reckless policies that filled our streets with ridiculously large cars](#)
- [The deadliest road in America](#)
- [Why pedestrian deaths in the US are at a 40-year high](#)

When people see cars traveling freely over a recently expanded highway, [they will recalibrate their travel decisions](#). Some will choose to drive at rush hour when they would have otherwise driven at a non-peak time, taken public transit, or perhaps not traveled at all. When a roadway is widened, Marshall said, "You might have less congestion at first, but it quickly goes away."

Such behavioral adjustments will continue until traffic is as thick as it was before, when the roadway was narrower. The only difference is now there will be more cars stuck in traffic,

State DOTs' rigid assumptions about driving growth lead them to predict that traffic will eventually overwhelm the existing highway network. "Their thinking is, 'if we don't do anything, these cars are going to be sitting on this highway and not moving,'" Wes Marshall, a licensed traffic engineer, urban planning professor at the University of Colorado-Denver, and author of the new book [Killed by a Traffic Engineer](#), told me. "If that's the baseline condition, any [expansion] is going to be better."

It's a nice, tidy story — but it's totally wrong.

These projections have a fatal blind spot: They fail to consider how humans respond to changing conditions like new vehicle lanes.

emitting even more pollution.

This phenomenon is known as [induced demand](#). In his book *Fighting Traffic*, historian Peter Norton notes that as early as the 1920s, a New York City engineer warned that new roadways “would be filled immediately by traffic which is now repressed because of congestion.” In the 1960s, the economist Anthony Downs wrote a seminal economics paper that codified the concept, which has been called the [Iron Law of Congestion](#). As one researcher [put it](#), “If you build it, they will drive.”

Induced demand is the bane of highway expansion projects. In Houston, average rush-hour journey times on the Katy Freeway [lengthened](#) by 15 to 20 minutes three years after TxDOT spent \$2.8 billion widening it to as many as 26 lanes (including frontage lanes) in 2011. In England, researchers examining the expansion of the M1 motorway north of London found that [“traffic moved more slowly than before the scheme opened.”](#) The blunt conclusion of a 2011 [study](#) in the American Economic Review: Adding road lanes “is unlikely to relieve congestion.”

If highway expansions don't relieve gridlock, they cannot reduce emissions. To the contrary, they worsen them. As a [2012 study](#) put it: "In the long run, capacity-based congestion improvements ... can reasonably be expected to increase emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>e, CO, and NO<sub>x</sub> through increased vehicle travel volume."

The total environmental toll of roadway expansions looks even worse when considering the second-order effects. Wider highways convince more people to drive, which may increase car purchases — and once people own a car, they tend to use it. Expanded roadways could compel some to [relocate](#) to bigger homes that sprawl further from the urban core, elongating commutes. The billions of dollars that state DOTs are allocating toward a Sisyphean war on congestion could instead be spent on projects that can credibly reduce driving, such as mass transit and [dense development](#).

"By adding more lanes to a highway, you're inducing more car-oriented land uses," Marshall said. "Zooming out, you're creating a much more auto-oriented environment, not just for that one roadway, but for the whole area."

## The faulty logic is hard to dislodge

Nevertheless, the idea that wider highways are good for the planet remains widespread within state DOTs, including in blue states where officials cultivate an image of environmental stewardship. [Oregon's DOT used it](#) to justify its proposal to widen I-5 in Portland in 2019, and California's transportation department continues to argue that widening I-80 between Sacramento and Davis [would reduce emissions](#), an assertion that environmental groups are [challenging in California state court](#).

To be fair to state DOTs, this misconception is enshrined in federal policy. In the early 1990s, Congress created the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program, whose very name implies a linkage that does not necessarily exist. Its funding, now totaling [\\$2.6 billion](#) per year, has gone toward climate-friendly investments in [bikeshare](#) in the District of Columbia and [the MBTA Green Line in Boston](#) — but also toward [highway widening](#) projects such as [adding lanes to I-10](#) in Los Angeles County. (Over email, an FHWA spokesperson did not answer directly when asked whether the

agency believes that roadway expansions reduce total emissions, responding that the agency “provide[s] an array of tools and programs to help mitigate congestion impacts.”)

To this day, federal policymakers struggle to acknowledge the linkages between highway construction and pollution. [Speaking in May](#) at an event celebrating new lanes being added to I-25 north of Denver, FHWA administrator Shailen Bhatt said, “By eliminating the bottleneck between Mead and Berthoud ... we’re advancing safety, trip reliability, freight efficiency, and reducing emissions.”

Clear thinking on such matters is difficult due to powerful political pressures behind highway construction, which generates thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in business for contracting firms. In May, the head of a California alliance of labor and business groups [declared](#) it a “false equivalency” to claim “we cannot meet our climate change goals and not continue to invest in our roads, bridges and highways.”

In reality, striving to reduce emissions while expanding roadways is like trying to become healthier while continuing to gorge on junk food.

The good news is that a small but growing number of state legislatures recognize the trade-off between environmental progress and roadway growth. [Colorado](#) and [Minnesota](#), for instance, recently passed bills requiring state DOTs to minimize the climate impact of their investments. New projects that enable drivers to take shorter trips — or better yet, travel by riding transit or a bike instead of driving a car — ought to be able to easily pass muster, but highway widenings should not. In Colorado, several planned expansions have already been canceled because of the new rules. [Maryland](#) is considering similar legislation demanding “methods for evaluating induced demand in assessments that measure greenhouse gas emissions.”

Marshall told me that he doesn’t know whether transportation officials claiming that roadway projects will curtail emissions are simply parroting what their faulty models tell

them or whether they are knowingly spreading misinformation in order to keep building the projects that business and labor groups demand. Flawed though their models are, state DOTs have a political incentive to keep using them.

Regardless, the facts are clear: Rather than mitigating climate change, highway expansions exacerbate it. "There's enough research out there showing again and again that it doesn't work," Marshall said. "You would think they would know better."



**From:** [Richard Hedges](#)  
**To:** [Alex Khojikian](#); [Jean Brook](#); [twmcmillan1063@gmail.com](mailto:twmcmillan1063@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Caltrain, L.A. Metro and Metrolink roll out rail safety initiatives for Rail Safety Month  
**Date:** Friday, September 6, 2024 2:28:47 PM

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## Caltrain, L.A. Metro and Metrolink roll out rail safety initiatives for Rail Safety Month

Sept. 6, 2024



Caltrain, L.A. Metro and Metrolink roll out rail safety initiatives for Rail Safety Month.

September is Rail Safety Month and transit agencies are working to promote best practices and safety tips for riders and community members to use in and around rail stations and tracks to maintain a safe and welcoming transit environment. Caltrain, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (L.A. Metro) and Metrolink are ramping up efforts to promote their rail safety campaigns this month.

### Caltrain

To bring attention to the importance of safety around train tracks and the high rate of intentional deaths on rail systems nation-wide, the Caltrain Board of Directors have passed an initiative to roll out a rail safety initiative during the next couple weeks. The agency will focus on ads, events and media with rail safety tips and suicide prevention resources through its various social media platforms.

Its ongoing program focuses on the “Three E’s” of railroad safety – Education, Engineering and Enforcement. For the past 20 years, Caltrain has planned or participated in an annual rail safety event in conjunction with California Operation Lifesaver.

“Safety is paramount at Caltrain and ensuring our daily train service is safe from San Francisco to Gilroy is our highest priority,” said Caltrain Executive Director Michelle Bouchard. “At Caltrain, safety is a core value that we practice every day and while we use this month to get the word out about how to stay safe around our trains, we stay committed to making this railroad safe year-round.”

The agency is focusing its safety message to include tips and warnings like:

- If riders encounter an emergency on Caltrain or see something suspicious, call the transit police
- A typical Caltrain train can take nearly a mile to stop, even when emergency brakes are applied
- It is never safe to stop closer than 15 feet from the rails and a train is at least three feet wider than tracks on both sides
- Only cross Caltrain tracks at designated crossings when it is safe to do so. While it might not be the quickest route, it is the safest

- Caltrain's new electric infrastructure carries up to 25,000 volts so riders should never interfere with the overhead wires and avoid any downed wires they see.

Caltrain also will be hosting a rail safety table at the agency's [electric service](#) launch party Sept. 21 at Palo Alto Station and Sept. 22 at San Mateo Station. In addition, on Sept. 24, Caltrain and the Transit Police unit will be doing a Rail Safety Blitz event to educate drivers and pedestrians at specified grade crossings with rail safety educational brochures.

## L.A. Metro

L.A. Metro's Rail Safety Program team will be hosting multiple community events throughout the month of September to educate pedestrians, riders and drivers on train safety. Metro Safety Kid videos will be shared across social media platforms, including YouTube, TV Connect, Spotify, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok. Rail safety messages in English and Spanish will be displayed and wrapped on light-rail trains traveling on the A and K Lines through Los Angeles, Calif. L.A. Metro will also hold station events at Union Station and 7th and L.A. Metro and at community events, to remind everyone of these essential safety tips:

- Always stay behind the yellow line
- Look both ways
- Never walk on train tracks
- No bike riding on the platform
- Never go around lowered gates
- Don't jump from the platform

L.A. Metro's Rail Safety Programs focus on increasing awareness of rail safety through educational programs, workshops and travel trainings held year-round in the communities along L.A. Metro's light-rail lines (A, E and K Lines).

## Metrolink

Throughout September, Metrolink will be highlighting its year-round efforts to promote rail safety throughout its system by launching a comprehensive public awareness campaign aimed at helping community members recognize and counteract the dangers of active train systems. Some essential safety tips include:

- Stay alert around railroad tracks. Don't use your phone or wear headphones. Avoid any other distractions that would prevent you from hearing or seeing an approaching train.
- Trains can come from either direction so always look both ways at crossings. Never walk around or behind lowered gates at a crossing and do not cross the tracks until the lights have stopped flashing
- Never take photos or videos on or near railroad tracks. It's not only dangerous but it's also illegal to be on the railroad right of way – this includes tracks, bridges, tunnels, signal towers and other facilities
- Always wait behind the line while standing on the platform. Do not cross the line until the train is stopped and the doors open. Use handholds when boarding and detrainning

"At Metrolink, we actively choose safety every day," said Metrolink Interim Chief Safety, Security and Compliance Officer Tim Morehead. "During Rail Safety Month, we want to help community members who interact with our system adopt a similar mindset and develop good habits to keep them safe near railroad tracks. Throughout the month, we'll be educating passengers, as well as drivers, pedestrians and cyclists about critical safety practices. We want people to stay off phones, listen attentively and adhere to posted signage. By making it easier for others to choose safety, we can prevent tragedies and save lives."

Metrolink will also be partnering with schools, community groups, law enforcement and other transportation agencies on a variety of initiatives designed to deter unsafe activity and promote good decision-making.

This will include:

- **School partnerships:** Metrolink is working with middle schools and high schools located within 500 feet of railroad tracks to deliver critical educational experiences for local youth.
- **Targeted enforcements:** The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), Metrolink Bureau and local law enforcement agencies will conduct weekly enforcement operations to correct unsafe behaviors, such as bypassing activated crossing gates and educate the public on the importance of safe conduct near railroad tracks.
- On Sept. 21 through Sept. 22, Metrolink will join the San Bernardino Railroad Historical Society, Amtrak and L.A. Metro at Union Station for a railroad safety event in downtown Los Angeles. The free event will feature the historic Santa Fe 3751 steam locomotive and modern Metrolink equipment, including a rail car with a safety-inspired vinyl wrap, providing a fun and educational opportunity for attendees to learn about the dos and don'ts of rail safety
- **Operation Clear Track:** On Sept. 24, members of the LASD, Metrolink Bureau and San Bernardino

County Sherriff's Department will participate in the U.S. educational campaign that brings hundreds of first responders together with community members virtually and in-person.

- **Red Out for Rail Safety:** To raise awareness and promote solidarity, Metrolink encourages staff, member agency partners and customers to wear red on Sept. 27 in support of Red Out for Rail Safety Day and post to social media using the hashtag #RedOutforRailSafety.