



TA Community Advisory Committee
Meeting of April 29, 2025

Correspondence as of April 11, 2025

Subject

1. Fwd: Reduced demand
2. Please forward to TA Board and CAC.

From: [Mike Swire](#)
To: [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](mailto:cacsecretary [@smcta.com]); [Board \(@smcta.com\)](mailto:Board (@smcta.com))
Subject: Fwd: Reduced demand
Date: Saturday, April 5, 2025 10:41:41 AM
Attachments: [Roads and the Case for Reduced Demand.pdf](#)

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Dear TA Board and CAC Members,

Thank you for your service to the transportation needs of area residents.

I wanted to direct your attention to a [recent Governing magazine article on reduced demand](#).

You have likely heard of induced demand - i.e., when we increase road capacity we increase vehicle miles traveled and there is no long-term improvement in congestion. Reduced demand is the opposite - when you reduce road capacity. - e.g., through a road diet - fewer people will drive, especially for lower value trips, which can be consolidated, avoided, or changed to alternative modes of transport like transit, biking, or walking. One of the best examples cited is the removal of the Embarcadero freeway in SF after the Loma Prieta earthquake, with no adverse impact on congestion and an improvement in quality of life in that neighborhood.

I'd encourage the Authority to consider reduced demand in its future decisions. Just because we have a lot of auto traffic in an area doesn't mean that we have to.

Thanks for listening,

Mike Swire
Vice Chair, SMCTA Community Advisory Committee
Chair, C/CAG Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
(writing on my own behalf)

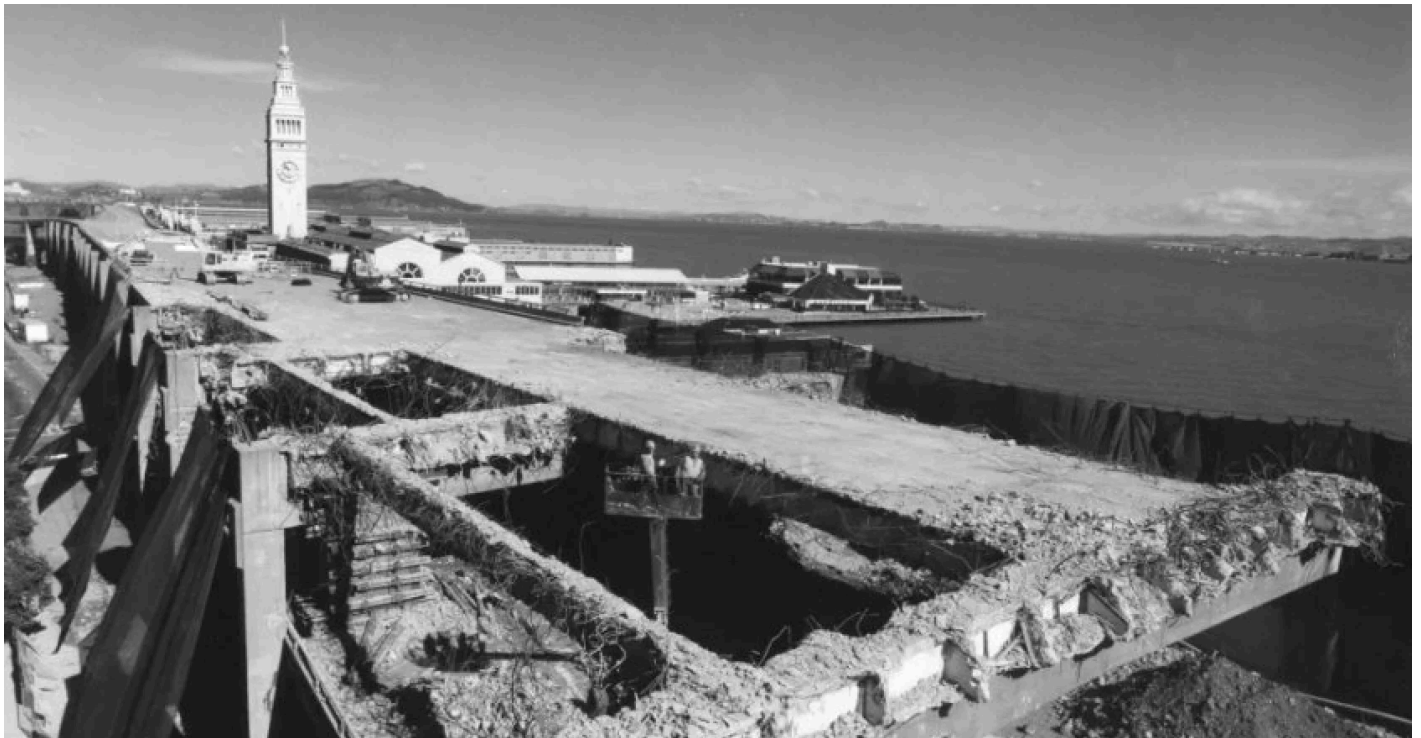


TRANSPORTATION

Roads and the Case for Reduced Demand

Building new highways doesn't ultimately ease congestion. By changing behavior, reducing capacity is a better solution.

OPINION | March 28, 2025 • **Wes Guckert**



Demolition of San Francisco's Embarcadero Freeway after it was damaged in a 1989 earthquake. Its traffic was absorbed into the city's street grid with little impact on congestion. (Metropolitan Transportation Commission)

America remains addicted to road construction. Since 1980, more than 183,000 miles of public roads **have been constructed in the**

U.S. — an average of 6,500 miles per year. Last year alone, the cost of public highway and street construction **was expected to surpass \$126 billion**, a 16 percent increase over 2023.

There are, of course, lots of reasons for this love affair with roads, beginning with the fact that elected officials often prioritize building new ones and expanding existing ones because these projects are highly visible, provide immediate benefits and align with public demand for reducing traffic congestion, no matter how short-lived that benefit might be. Federal and state funding structures also tend to prioritize highway spending over investments in transit or other modes of travel.

The focus traditional transportation planning places on increasing capacity fails to adequately take into account not only alternative solutions such as public transit, biking or walking but also **induced demand**, the concept that building or expanding roads to make driving more convenient encourages more people to drive, which translates into more vehicles on the road.

It's encouraging that federal guidelines increasingly are prioritizing existing highway maintenance and repairs over new construction (as they should be!). But states and municipalities need to focus more on the concept of *reduced* demand. Also known as disappearing traffic or traffic suppression, reduced demand refers to a phenomenon where decreasing road capacity leads to a decrease in traffic volume. As with induced demand, reduced demand necessitates a change in behavior — people adjust by skipping some trips, condensing multiple trips into a single one, traveling at different times of the day or opting for alternative options such as walking, biking or public transport.

While reduced demand flies in the face of traditional transportation planning, multiple examples from throughout the U.S. prove that it works. Two frequently cited examples occurred in **San Francisco** and New York, where parts of **the Embarcadero Freeway** and **the elevated West Side Highway**, respectively, were torn down after sections of them collapsed. Instead of overwhelming local streets, the traffic originally on these roadways largely disappeared, absorbed into each city's grid with little impact.

More recent examples can be found in the federal funding flowing into multiple U.S. cities for highway removal, replacing them with boulevards, street grids or in some cases large swaths of land for projects designed to meet top community needs, from open space to affordable housing. Much of this work has been focused on the removal of urban highways, such as New Orleans' **Claiborne Expressway** and Baltimore's **Highway to Nowhere**, that segregated communities.

Reduced demand is not a hard sell for the public. Awareness of the negative social impacts highway construction has caused, including displacement of communities and increased pollution, has led to renewed public opposition to new highway projects and increased calls for highway removals. This change in mindset can help to lay the groundwork for consideration of alternative transportation methods and land use planning that supports both open space and mixed-use developments designed to lessen the volume of traffic and the need for long car trips.

While expansion of environmentally friendly, multimodal solutions can and should play a prominent role in reduced-demand

planning, such initiatives should be augmented with other demand management strategies, such as implementing congestion pricing and incentivizing carpooling — strategies that optimize traffic flow, minimize congestion and improve overall transportation efficiency. Perhaps more importantly, these actions change behavior. And behavior change is essential if we are ever to end our love affair with road construction and adopt a new way of thinking about connecting people to jobs and services.

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Wes Guckert

President and CEO of The Traffic Group

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From: [Giuliano](#)
To: [cacsecretary \[@smcta.com\]](#); [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Please forward to TA Board and CAC.
Date: Friday, April 11, 2025 6:41:53 AM

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An excellent video on why adding lanes/capacity only makes congestion worse.

<https://youtu.be/CVq7XOXkg1U?si=jHjgN5tSeYCxBIpX>

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.