

COAST is a Santa Barbara County regional organization promoting environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable transportation and reduced dependency on automobiles.

#### How to reach us

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#### E-mail discussion list

Participate in discussions of local and regional transportation issues; receive notices of meetings and events. Subscribing is free and easy. Just send a message to:

[Coast-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:Coast-subscribe@lists.riseup.net).

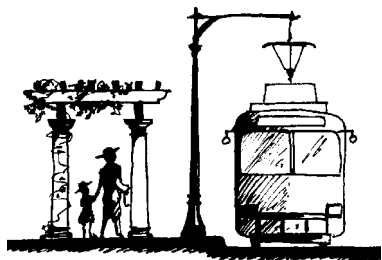
Leave the subject line and the body of the message blank.

#### COAST Happy Hour

Please join us the second Thursday of each month from 5-7 PM at the El Paseo Restaurant in Santa Barbara.

#### Join COAST

Support COAST by becoming a member. Just use the enclosed envelope. Thank you!



# COAST NEWS

COALITION FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

SPRING 2008

[WWW.COAST-SANTABARBARA.ORG](http://WWW.COAST-SANTABARBARA.ORG)

## The Steel Interstate *By Grant House*

Michael Dukakis speaks about rail at a recent forum sponsored by COAST and CAUSE.

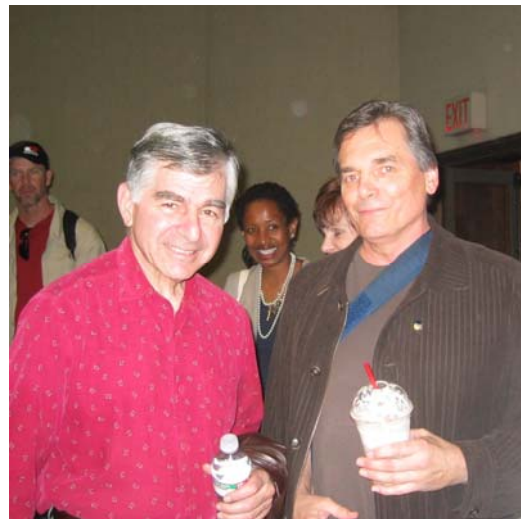
Why the folks inside the beltway don't get it is beyond me, said the former Governor of Massachusetts, 1988 Democratic Presidential candidate, recent Amtrak board member and current UCLA professor, Michael Dukakis. He was speaking to a packed Faulkner Gallery gathered to consider the future of transportation on the Central Coast. The event was sponsored by ASERT, Alliance for Sustainable and Equitable Regional Transportation, a McCune Foundation-funded joint project of Santa Barbara-based COAST and Ventura-based CAUSE.

Making a case for telling Washington to end the war and build a viable passenger and commuter rail network, Dukakis decried the current administration's lack of support for rail and proclaimed it's time to get started on the "Steel Interstate." ASERT project director, Carmen Ramirez, welcomed the crowd assembled in Faulkner Gallery and urged people to take action at the local level.

Rail Passenger Association of California ([www.railpac.org](http://www.railpac.org)) president, Paul Dyson, began the session with a vivid description of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead on the way to beginning a commuter rail system.

Ventura County Supervisor, Linda Parks spoke for a renewed commitment to transit and rail in a time when reliance on the single occupant vehicle is breaking the family bank. Citing the pitfalls of continuing the status quo, Parks launched into a passionate and well-informed pitch for Maglev trains to revolutionize interregional transportation in the longer run.

On-TRAC, the Transit and Rail Action for Commuters program initiated by the City of Santa Barbara was next on the agenda. Councilmember Grant House outlined the widely endorsed plan. On-TRAC begins with Amtrak trains between Oxnard and Goleta rescheduled for com-



Dukakis and Dennis Story (CoastalRailNow)

muter-friendly service during the morning and evening peak periods. The service will grow to include three dedicated commuter trains, Surfliners, Vista buses, feeder service in Ventura and Oxnard, and distribution service by MTD and private employers.

A fully integrated transit/rail system benefiting Ventura County residents working in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, and Goleta could provide an alternative to many years of construction-related congestion.

House urged those in attendance to support the extension of Santa Barbara County's ½ cent transportation sales tax. Measure A (formerly Measure D) is set to include \$25 million for commuter rail and dedicated funding for MTD.

Governor Dukakis acknowledged COAST, CAUSE, and ASERT for taking their commitment to alternative transportation, the environment, and social equity into action.

Later, over refreshments at Stateside, Kitty Dukakis revealed that she often brings a book to read while Michael lectures. Today, she exclaimed with a smile, the program was so interesting, she left the book in her bag.

# Letter from India

By Mark Bradley

I am writing from the city of Guwahati, in the Northeastern corner of India in the State of Assam, tucked in between Bangladesh, Bhutan and Burma. I am here as an invited speaker at the “First Indo-US Symposium on Advances in Mass Transit and Travel Behavior Research”, a technology transfer conference sponsored by the American and Indian governments. It is being held at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). Guwahati is the newest of the seven IIT campuses scattered around India, and there are researchers here from all of the IIT campuses and other institutions from both countries. Professor Kostas Goulias of UCSB is also an invited speaker.



Colorful Bus in Guwahati

Traveling around this part of India has been an eye-opening and sometimes nerve-wracking experience. The roads are shared by vehicles of all sizes and speeds—bicycles, bicycle rickshaws, scooters, motorcycles, auto rickshaws, autos, buses and trucks. The buses and trucks are covered with beautiful custom painting, even though many of them barely function. At night, many of the trucks have colored flashing lights in the windshields, depicting gods such as Ganesh the elephant god, remover of obstacles. The public buses are ubiquitous and are filled to capacity, with passengers hanging off the back and sides and sometimes even riding on the roof. There is no clear evidence of any traffic laws or designated traffic lanes. In fact, the only two rules of the road appear to be that (a) the larger vehicle has the right of way, and (b) the drivers must sound their horns at all times. Each vehicle seems to have its own distinctive horn, sort of like a cell phone ring tone, the noise adding to the constant sense of chaos. Forget about anything like traffic lights or crosswalks or other pedestrian signals—pedestrians and cyclists are on their own. (I did see one traffic light, which most of the drivers ignored.) There are over 100,000 reported traffic fatalities each year in India, and two thirds of those are pedestrians or two-wheelers. It seems a miracle that there aren't many more besides.



His bicycle can carry a heavy load!

With a population of 1.4 billion and the urban population growing at almost 5 percent per year, India is facing transportation problems that we in America cannot even imagine. For example, the metro in the city of Mumbai (Bombay) carries loads of 14 passengers per square meter—literally packed like sardines. The Mumbai government is planning to relocate over 200,000 people out of slum areas to build a new airport and rail station. The number of Indians owning autos is growing by leaps and bounds, and the new Tata Nano coming on the market at a price of only about \$2,500 is expected to sell millions right away. With the roads already facing massive congestion, it is a mystery where these vehicles will fit in. Facing these seemingly insurmountable problems, the Indian government at least seems willing to take bold steps to deal with them. Our own transportation problems in the US seem very manageable in comparison, if only we and our elected leaders are willing to face up to them.



The ferry is a common mode of travel, with men and bikes filling most of the deck and others sitting down underneath.

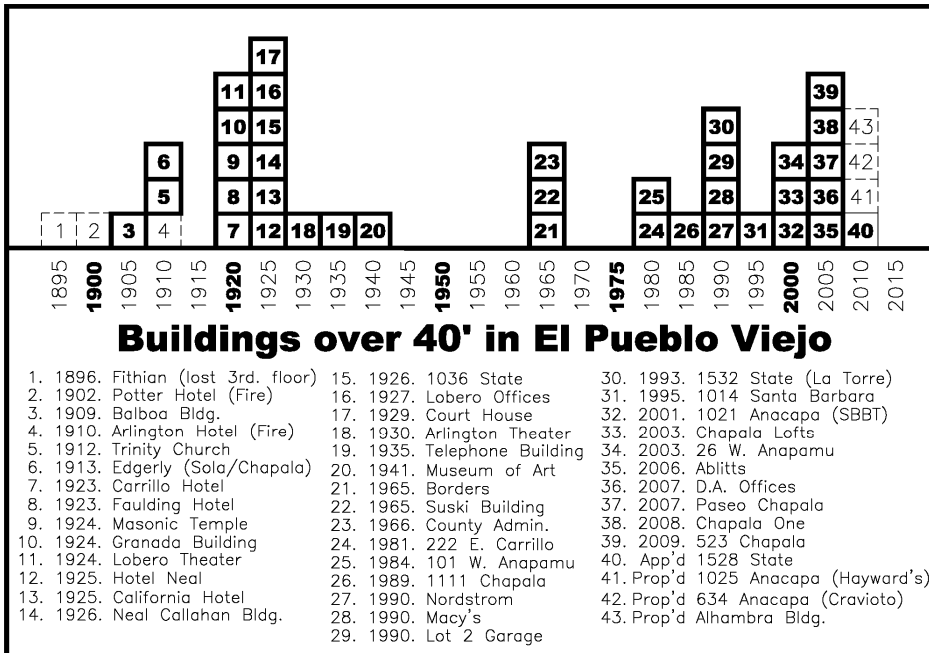
# Saving Downtown or Ruining our City?

By Alex Pujo

A ballot initiative is currently being proposed to reduce the allowable height of buildings in commercial zones within Santa Barbara city limits. Proponents forecast “an avalanche of tall buildings if nothing is done” and urge us “to do something before it is too late”.

Construction of “tall buildings” in the historic center of town (“El Pueblo

Viejo”) during the past 120 years followed familiar boom-and-bust cycles. Graphs recently published in The Independent and The Daily Sound created a false sense of urgency by: 1) failing to show half of the “tall buildings” constructed before WWII; 2) including proposals that have been withdrawn or reduced in height; and 3) listing projects in the planning stage as built by 2009. Here is a more accurate picture:



Two buildings on Chapala Street (#37 & 38) generate passionate discussions by the way they have altered a familiar, urban backwater. Rundown structures and parking lots suddenly became elegant buildings with towers, balconies and ornate details. They have stores on the ground and housing above and... they are taller than they were before! Many wonder: “Is this trend spreading?”

Although we like to think of Santa Barbara’s origins as a score of adobes by a Presidio, in truth our forefathers worked long and hard to transform the old Pueblo into a mythical New Spain at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. They were not shy about tall buildings: St. Anthony’s, the High School, both Junior Highs, Our Lady of Sorrows, Lyons and many other buildings not in the chart (outside the historic district) are testimony of their vision.

Seen from the historic perspective, the

current building boom is not so threatening, and certainly not “an impending avalanche”. The ballot initiative seeks to reduce the development potential of over 1,500 properties in the historic district, twice that city-wide. From the standpoint of transportation, sustainability, “green” practices and social equity –the goals of our Coalition- this proposal is untimely, unwise, and full of consequences.

“Sustainability” means “meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. A great deal of empirical evidence demonstrates the sustainable aspects of infill development downtown and along transit corridors as currently called for in Santa Barbara’s General Plan. Environmental, economic and social impacts of automobiles are reduced by protecting existing residential stock and focusing mixed-use development along commercial corridors. To

## Seascapes and COAST



Painter, environmentalist and COAST member Larry Iwerks will show his newest series of paintings, themed “Seascapes and COAST,” every weekend in March, Saturday and Sunday 1-4 PM. If you mention COAST when you buy a painting, 50% of the sale price will be donated to COAST.

Larry Iwerks’ studio is located on the Mesa at 958 Weldon Road. Please see directions above.

argue against this universally-recognized cornerstone of sustainability is akin to arguing against global warming because “there is not enough evidence”.

The ability to provide housing in the city core is jeopardized when the development potential of downtown properties is reduced. Most of the new “mixed-use” buildings include a substantial amount of “workforce housing”. For a builder to subsidize units selling in the \$300-400,000 range, sufficient market-rate units must be included. Thus some larger structures are needed to provide at least some housing for our shrinking middle-class.

We should regard downtown density as a resource to be used wisely and sparingly for the common good. “Measure twice and cut once.” Think twice when someone asks you to endorse a moratorium on sustainable principles.



Coalition for Sustainable Transportation  
 P.O. Box 2495  
 Santa Barbara, CA 93120

### Transitions at COAST

Kate Bechtel, who served as our Executive Director for the past two years, has moved on to new challenges. We wish her well. We welcome Courtney Dietz as our new Project Director/Administrator. Courtney holds a Masters of Environmental Science from the Bren School at UCSB.



#### COAST Board of Directors

- Mark Bradley, President
- Eva Inbar, Vice President
- Alex Pujo, Secretary
- Dick Axilrod, Treasurer
- Dennis Story, CoastalRailNow
- Grant House
- Lee Moldaver

#### Advisory Board

- Ed France
- Rick Margolin
- Steve Maas
- Helene Schneider
- Jan Atkins
- Matt Dobberteen

## COAST participates in Family Fitness Fair

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, COAST had a table at the Family Fitness Fair, organized by Cottage Health Systems to coincide with the start of Stage 6 of the Amgen Tour of California at Chase Palm Park. The atmosphere was festive, with music, balloons and all the excitement surrounding the race. We sold low-cost bicycle helmets for children with the help of COAST member Gary Gray, and gave out information on Safe Routes to School and Walk Santa Barbara. Our sincere appreciation goes to all the volunteers who braved the blustery weather to make our venture a success: Kim Stanley, Dennis Jaffe, Nancy Mulholland, Mark Knapp, Sarah Grant, Kali Green, Wayne Beckman, Diane Krohn, Jamey Wagner, Bob Zimels.



## Be a COAST Member

Our newsletter appears quarterly and is mailed to our members. To continue to receive this newsletter, and to support sustainable transportation, please keep your membership current by returning the enclosed envelope. We couldn't do our work without our members. Thank you.

## We thank our Supporters

We thank the **Green Park Foundation**, the **McCune Foundation**, the **Fund for Santa Barbara** and the **Towbes Foundation** for their generous grants. Most important, we thank all the individuals who made contributions large and small this year.