

FIGHT TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND OVER-DEVELOPMENT

The character of our community includes the ease with which we travel, the safety of our streets and the jobs at which we work. As a gateway city with a strong industrial and commercial base, Torrance is buffeted by traffic from all directions. Despite this, action can be taken to mitigate traffic.

- **Take responsibility for PCH and Hawthorne.** These highways are under the jurisdiction of Caltrans, and consequently, overall synchronization and coordination within the city is impaired. AB 2326 will enable the city to take responsibility for the highways, enhancing refurbishment and repair.¹
- **Establish a Traffic Management Center.** Other localities, such as the city of Los Angeles and county of Los Angeles, have a traffic management center, enabling optimization and city-wide synchronization of traffic signals. According to a UCLA report, “the Automated Traffic Surveillance and Control ATSAC is a powerful tool for reducing delay and minimizing traffic congestion. For recurrent traffic, ATSAC reduces travel time by 12%, intersection delay by 32% and intersection stops by 30%, when compared to traditional traffic signal timing optimization practices.”² Federal funding should be sought to implement a similar system in Torrance.³
- **Optimize Torrance Transit.** Few localities have bus lines – and we need to optimize our system, to reduce traffic congestion overall. More than 4.5 million passengers ride Torrance Transit each year, with daily riders approximating 12,500. The fleet’s 53 buses run on 8 routes, throughout the South Bay, with three lines providing service within Torrance and five routes providing connections to Long Beach, Los Angeles, LAX and the Metro Blue Line.⁴ A market study should be conducted to tailor bus schedules to residential commuting patterns, especially accounting for senior citizens and school children, so the bus goes where you want to go. Furthermore, we need to continue to coordinate with other bus systems, to avoid duplication and maximize integration.⁵ Finally, seeking federal funds to refurbish the fleet could help improve ridership. Santa Monica’s Big Blue Bus was refurbished in 1999 and from 2003 – 2008, ridership increased by 2.8%, higher than the national average.⁶
- **Potholes and Problem Signals.** Torrance residents should be able to use easily accessible online forms, complementing phone communication, to identify problem signals and potholes.
- **Bike Lanes and Pedestrian Travel.** As noted in the city’s general plan, which is being revised, “bicycles provide an excellent, pollution-free mode of travel for many trips.”⁷ As the plan notes, bicycle racks at public facilities and major commercial centers, with bicycle routes that do not impede traffic, can complement other transportation options. Although Torrance is a suburban city, many amenities are within a few blocks of homes. See <http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Planning/PlanPedBike.aspx>.

¹ <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a53/press.htm>

² <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/geog/gessler/topics/traffic.htm>

³ http://www.ladpw.org/apps/news/pdf/2_2600.pdf

⁴ The Planning Center, Community Profile: Assessing Torrance Progress, 2008, p. 37.

⁵ http://www.brookings.edu/metro/speeches/20060403_localmetrogovernance.htm.

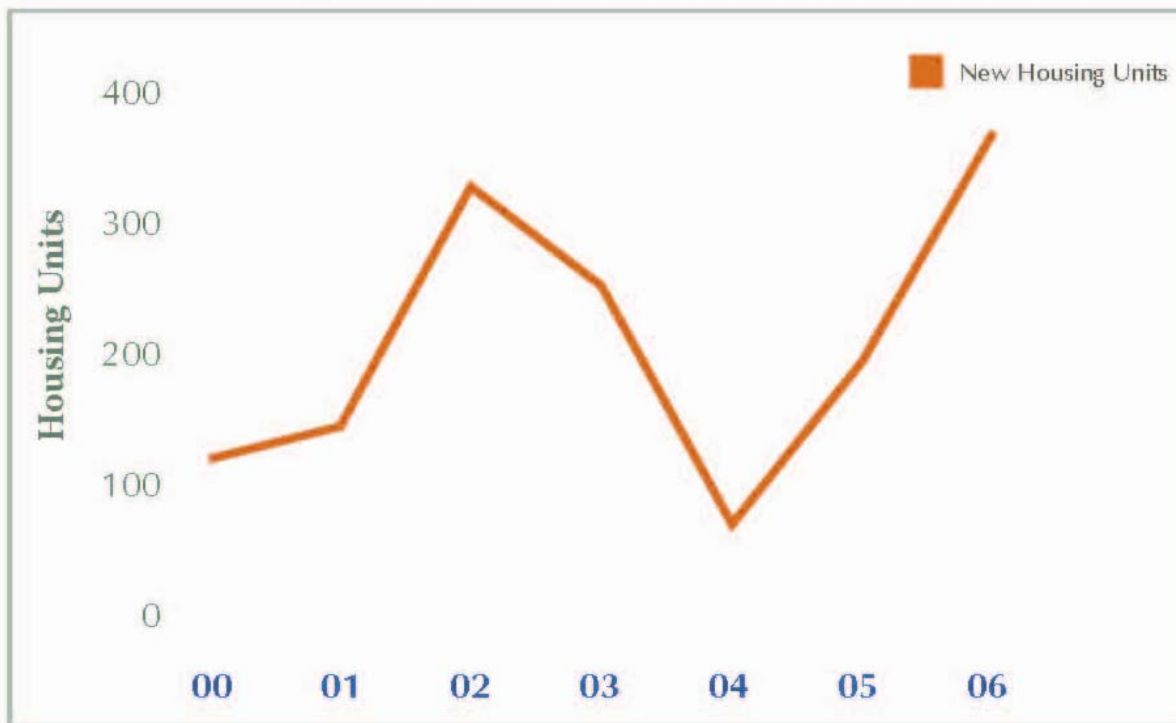
⁶ <http://www.smdp.com/article/articles/4844/1/Big-Blue-Bus-reports-big-gains-in-ridership/Page1.html>

⁷ General Plan for the City of Torrance, 1992, p. 117.

- **Over-Development.** Development must be consistent with our community’s character. Furthermore, development, overall, must maintain the city’s balanced commercial, industrial and residential character, consistent with the city’s founding and governed overall by the general plan, which is being revised. Our balanced city enables a vibrant commercial sector that provides opportunities for residents and funds important city services through sales tax revenues; a strong industrial sector provides good jobs.

Over the past few years, as shown in the chart below⁸, a number of housing developments have been constructed in Torrance, during the housing boom. Although property should not idle – blight is a ruin on any community – residents moved to Torrance for a particular quality of life, for a particular community, and 54% of the housing stock in Torrance is composed of single family homes.⁹ We need to continue to maintain Torrance’s balance. Analyzing a development project is case specific, accounting for compatibility with the surrounding community, the project’s density as it relates to the community, the impact on traffic, the impact on open space (in particular, light and air), adequacy of parking and ensuring adequate setbacks.

Figure 12 - Housing Construction in Torrance, 2000–2007



Source: The Planning Center, 2007, using data from the CA Department of Finance, 2000-2007

- **Jet Fuel at Torrance Airport.** Jet fuel currently cannot be sold at Torrance airport. Although the Airport Commission has reviewed the policy in April, a recommended change in policy has not been forwarded to the City Council. Changing the current policy would require a thorough analysis of potential impacts on residents’ quality of life, in particular, related to noise, growth in airport traffic (with potential increased safety risks, relative to current safety risks), and environmental impact. The analysis should include an assessment by the Torrance Fire Department. Until such an analysis demonstrates current conditions would remain, or improve, the existing policy should stand, which allows for the fuel under emergency situations only.

⁸ The Planning Center, Community Profile: Assessing Torrance Progress, 2008, p. 31.

⁹ The Planning Center, Community Profile: Assessing Torrance Progress, 2008, p. 32.