

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL MOVE

The Los Angeles Freeway System and the Displacement of Mexican East Los Angeles,

1944–1972

By Gilbert Estrada

"[W]hile in the course of my peaceful duties of attempting to persuade the people . . . to sell their properties, I looked down across the street and watched a Mexican . . . efficiently and gracefully manhandling his wife, this performance being typical of the more poetical nuances of Fickett Gully [East L.A]."

*California Division of Highways Right-of-Way Agent, 1943*¹

"Alan Hughes eased out of the car . . . and walked up the steps to a small frame house in East Los Angeles. His job was to tell a middle-aged couple that the state was going to take their home, level it to the ground, and pour eight inches of concrete over the front lawn for a freeway."

*"A Day with a Right-of-Way Agent," 1966*²

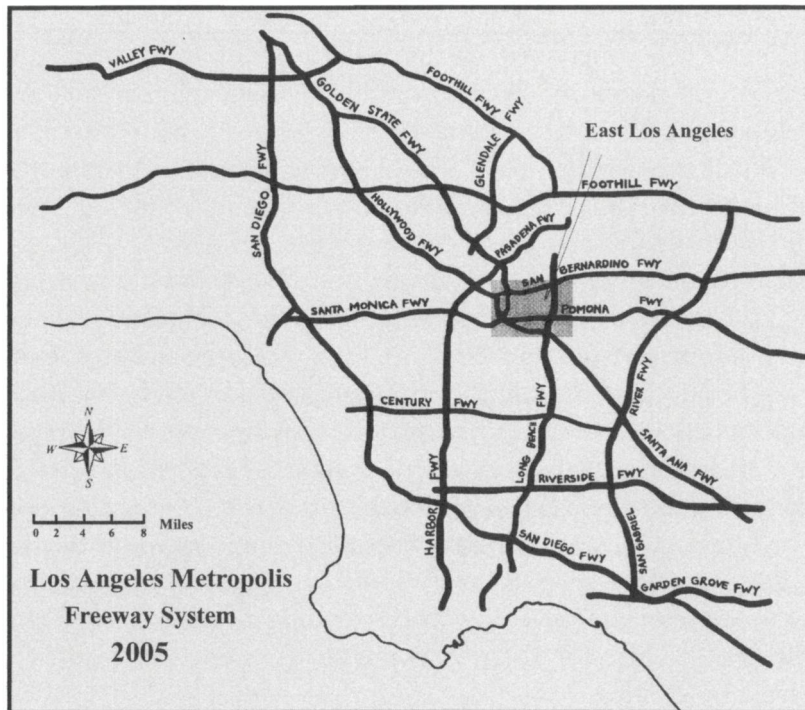
When sheriff deputies dragged the Arechiga family from their home on May 8, 1959, it marked the end of a ten-year struggle against the City of Los Angeles.³ That Friday, television cameras recorded four male deputies carrying Mrs. Arechiga's daughter kicking and screaming from her home; she was later arrested for assaulting the officers.⁴ Her mother served thirty days in jail. Other neighbors resisted with stones, some with shotguns. Still others tried an even more tactless idea: fighting city hall.⁵

For thirty-six years, the Arechigas had been residents of Chavez Ravine, a close-knit Mexican community less than one and a half miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. They were also part of a coalition of twenty households who resisted the city's plan to displace residents in order to make room for a federally funded housing project of 3,360 units.⁶ For decades before their final resistance, hundreds of families, living in six hundred houses, called Chavez Ravine home for decades. Three communities—Palo Verde, La Loma, and Bishop—existed at the ravine growing some of their own food. Public schools and retail shops had been built to serve these established neighborhoods. Under a policy of slum clearance, however, efforts were made to relocate the residents in 1950. Most were reluctant to leave their homes but were coerced to vacate and were promised, in writing, first choice of the new low-rent housing that was to be built on the site. Trusting the City of Los Angeles, most left without incident and waited for the city to provide the new housing.⁷

In 1953, however, Los Angeles officials flip-flopped on their position and now opposed the federal housing project because of a new patriotic fervor to resist anything “socialistic”; they now saw federally funded housing as a form of communism. With leverage from Los Angeles Mayor Norris Poulson, the City Housing Authority agreed to sell back the deed to the City of Los Angeles under the condition that the land “be used for public purposes only.”⁸

But in 1959, when the city turned around and sold 300 acres of the ravine to Walter O'Malley to build a baseball stadium for his Brooklyn Dodgers, ravine residents knew they were victims of the Los Angeles bureaucratic process. Residents soon comprehended Los Angeles officials' neglect, a pattern that plagued Los Angeles Mexicans before their displacement at Chavez Ravine and that would continue after their displacement. City officials found ways to evict even bona fide landowners and homeowners in an established community in order to sell private property from “Citizen A to Citizen B” at a profit, according to Chicano historian Rodolfo Acuña. Although they had been promised, in writing, their pick of new dwellings, the resisting residents were dragged from their houses and arrested as they watched their homes bulldozed in order to accommodate a higher bidder: the Brooklyn Dodgers.⁹

The Chavez Ravine evictions serve as a lesson in the history of the Mexican experience in Los Angeles: coercion for profit and the appropriation of land for Anglo use. This history lesson of Mexican Angeleno displacement sheds light on another, lesser-known chapter of Mexican displacement within the City of Angels: right-of-way displacement and the East Los Angeles free-



THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY FREEWAY SYSTEM. Notice the huge gaps of freeways on the Westside between the Santa Monica 10 Freeway and the Hollywood 101 Freeway. The central community circled by freeways, with the Long Beach 710 Freeway on the right, is East Los Angeles. *Illustration by Gilbert Estrada and Gloria Guerrero. Copyright 2002 by author.*

way system. Like ravine residents, East Los Angeles homeowners had their property seized in order to accommodate urban-renewal projects. While the Chavez Ravine incident has been framed as the “story of a helpless minority whose rights were indifferently brushed aside by a city administration responding to a lobby,” East Los Angeles residents would share a similar fate.¹⁰ Although they were legitimate property owners in a well-established community, Eastsiders could not halt the freeways. Many community members protested but ultimately shared the same fate as ravine residents. Both communities were manipulated in order to appropriate land to serve other interests. Ravine residents were displaced to accommodate the Dodgers; East Los Angeles residents were expelled to build freeways.

As early as 1944, the year the first portion of the Santa Ana 5 Freeway opened, bulldozers sanctioned by the Los Angeles City Council, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and the California Division of Highways beleaguered the community of East Los Angeles. Four years later, the completion of the section from Soto Street to Eastman Avenue in Boyle Heights meant the evacuation of two hundred residential buildings. Five hundred and seventy thousand yards of roadway was laid down as planners tried to "locate the route with very little disturbance to existing industrial properties."¹¹ The East Los Angeles portion of the Hollywood Freeway first opened between Aliso Street and Soto Street in 1948 when the state recognized "it would not be good public policy for the State Division of Highways to ruthlessly evict tenants for freeway construction."¹² But right-of-way displacement did occur in East Los Angeles at alarming rates. The Division of Highways attempted to rationalize the loss of Eastside properties by claiming residents would be content exchanging their homes for the time saved on the freeway, stating that "motorists in East Los Angeles now appreciate the value of the freeway [because of the] several valuable minutes of time saved."¹³ But the rationale failed to mention their commute was now farther because they no longer lived in the area.

For more than two decades, freeway construction flourished in East Los Angeles. Following the Santa Ana 5 Freeway opening in 1944 and the Hollywood 101 opening in 1948, the San Bernardino 10 Freeway opened in 1953 and was widened in 1972; the Golden State 5 Freeway opened in 1955; the Santa Monica 10 Freeway connected to the East Los Angeles Interchange in 1961; the Long Beach 710 Freeway was completed in 1961; and the Pomona 60 Freeway, built in 1965, was the last freeway constructed in East Los Angeles.¹⁴ Freeway encroachments account for 19 percent of East Los Angeles' land use.¹⁵

Using Los Angeles City records, Division of Highway reports, local newspapers, and personal interviews, my research examines the rampant growth of Los Angeles' freeway system and analyzes why more freeways entangle the community of East Los Angeles than other Los Angeles neighborhoods. I explore specific East Los Angeles freeway case studies, where encroachment was excessive in Mexican-Eastside communities, and compare them to freeway examples in white suburbia, where proposed freeways were altered or entirely erased from planning maps.

Specifically, I will examine how the Santa Ana and Golden State 5 Freeways were originally planned then re-routed through East Los Angeles. What

were the events that led to the construction of the enormous 135-acre East Los Angeles Interchange? Why were certain industrial sites and specific sections of white suburbia not fragmented like East Los Angeles? What kinds of accommodations were made for other communities? Finally, with so many freeways in East Los Angeles, what are the environmental and public health perspectives?¹⁶

Some scholarship focusing on Los Angeles' transportation history, although valuable in detailing Los Angeles' growth in automotive use and subsequent sprawl, has tended to overlook freeway displacement, especially the disproportionate number of homes lost in East Los Angeles. The displacement of East Los Angeles residents is relegated principally to minor mentions in general Los Angeles transportation history or in Chicano history studies. Scott Bottles' 1987 book, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City*, lays out a descriptive narrative of Los Angeles transportation from Los Angeles railways of the late nineteenth century to the major legislative policy responsible for designing and financing of freeways. His detailing of how Los Angeles transformed from a city of railways into a city dominated by the automobile has become a standard in Los Angeles' growing historiography. Bottles also disputes Bradford Snell's testimony during the 1974 U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly hearing that accused General Motors, Standard Oil of California, and Firestone Tires (among others) of violating the Sherman Anti-Trust Act by dismantling transit lines to replace them with buses and automobiles. Bottles also spends ample time describing the public demand for a free-flowing automobile system and the safety and traffic problems involved with the predecessor of the automobile: the Pacific Electric and Los Angeles Railway systems.¹⁷

While adequately detailing Los Angeles' automotive rise, Bottles' work focuses on the rise of the automobile as personal choice, stating the public clamored for a friendly automobile alternative in lieu of the horrid railways. Automobiles were simply a natural progression of Los Angeles' transportation evolution. Bottles writes, "The automobile as a democratic piece of industrial technology encouraged many Angelenos to adopt the car" as their personal transportation choice.¹⁸ While Bottles' research was first rate and has become an essential component of Los Angeles' transportation history, an inclusion of some lesser-known and negative effects of highway and freeway construction, like excessive displacements or public health consequences, could have made a well-written book better. Although slightly outside the period he studied, these elements could provide greater understanding of the development of Los Angeles and the automobile.

When transportation writer David Brodsky wrote, "It required no conspiracy to destroy the electric railways; it would however, have required a conspiracy to save them," the reader recognizes that Brodsky's automobile-by-choice theory closely mirrors Bottles' work.¹⁹ Brodsky's important 1970 work, *L.A. Freeway: An Appreciative Essay*, is a literary parade for the complexity and magnitude of the freeway system delivered in a public-consensus style or automobile- (and therefore, freeways-) by-choice theme. Clearly, Brodsky appreciates the intricacies of the freeway, commends its engineering worth, and acknowledges that if asked to make an assessment of Los Angeles' freeways, he would simply say, "they make sense." Nonetheless, Brodsky covers an important aspect of the transportation history of Los Angeles others have not: freeway displacement. Although Brodsky only touches upon it in a few pages of his 160-page essay with his acknowledgment that freeways sometimes act as "Chinese Walls [that] divide communities" and that freeways were more an "exercise in civil engineering" than a means to minimize community damage, Brodsky becomes one of the first historians to discuss the negative impact of freeways on Los Angeles.²⁰

Concentrating more on the Mexican experience in East Los Angeles, Rodolfo Acuña's 1984 book, *Community Under Siege: A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River, 1945-1975*, argues that Chicanos were manipulated by the city's power elite for the benefit of Euro-Angelenos. "The [L.A.] downtown ruling class controlled state, city and county politics, manipulating elected and appointed officials to determine land use in [East] Los Angeles," writes Acuña. On the subject of freeway encroachment, Acuña adamantly declares "the [Los Angeles] Times promoted commercial and industrial expansion in East Los Angeles. Under Harry Chandler, the newspaper became a major downtown power and was at the forefront of development of real estate speculation," supporting the major urban-renewal projects that were popular at the time.²¹

Although Acuña analyzes aspects of Eastside freeway encroachment much more extensively than previous scholarship, it would take Eric Avila's 1997 dissertation, "Reinventing Los Angeles: Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight, 1940-1965," to provide an extensive look into Los Angeles' freeway and displacement history. Specifically, Avila's chapter, "The Great Wall of Los Angeles: Los Angeles in the Age of the Freeway," places East Los Angeles' freeway system under the historical microscope. "Freeways have accelerated the historic tendency towards geographic and economic fragmentation, dividing communities," writes Avila. His argument that "freeways left deep scars"

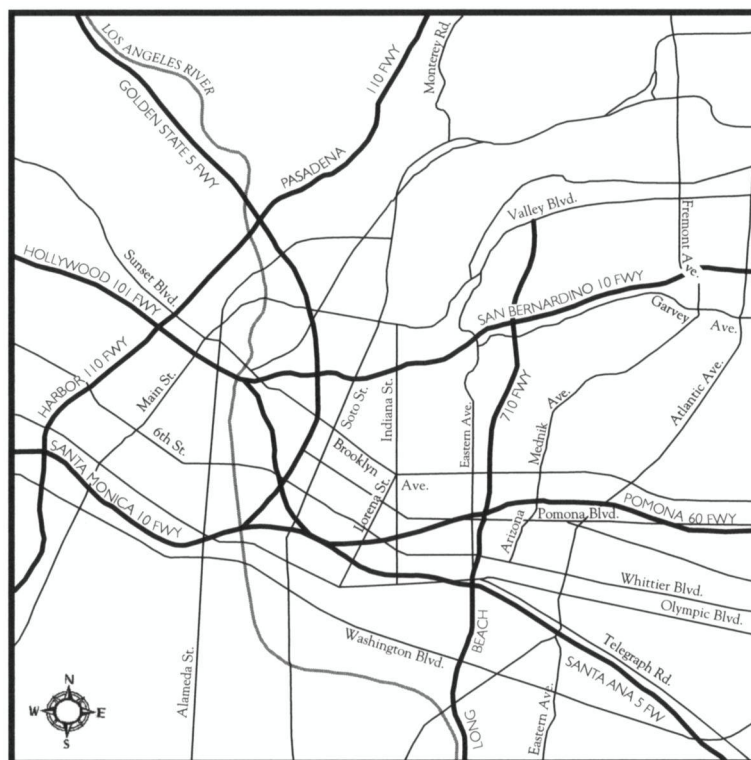
upon Los Angeles complements his description of community attempts to fight freeways and his perception that freeways were Anglo monuments of progress at the expense of Mexicans and other minorities.²² In only fifty-three pages, Avila provides the most thorough analysis of Eastside displacement to date and sparks new questions in the historiography of Los Angeles' freeways.²³

Taking over where the debate has left off, this examination of freeway encroachment attempts to shed light on specific case studies of freeway displacement of Mexicans. Although other ethnic groups were also represented in East Los Angeles communities, Mexicans were quickly becoming the majority in the period following the Second World War; consequently, this article largely focuses on Mexican Angelenos' freeway experience in East Los Angeles. Examining Los Angeles County's freeway development but concentrating on the approximately sixteen square miles of East Los Angeles, "If You Build It, They Will Move" examines several key examples of freeway encroachment by the California Division of Highways. It is a small segment in a larger narrative of Los Angeles' urban, transportation, and Chicano History.²⁴

THE SANTA ANA 5 FREEWAY

In 1947, an early section of the Santa Ana 5 Freeway was opened between Soto Street and Eastman Avenue in East Los Angeles. In what would typify the East Los Angeles-freeway experience, California Division of Highway planners specifically avoided "large establishments" of the area, mainly the Los Angeles Union Stock Yards railroad tracks, during the design of this section of freeway. To further safeguard industrial zoning, a concrete pipe was placed "under three tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad Company's main line and under a warehouse." As noted in their bi-monthly magazine, *California Highways and Public Works*, the state cleared what they considered "substandard" East Los Angeles housing, skirting around the local railroad tracks while, ironically, hundreds of miles of public-transit railway tracks were being dismantled, sometimes for freeway rights-of-way. To further ensure that the freeways would not interfere with their railroad tracks, the Union Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Companies contributed to the cost of constructing the Aliso Street Bridge.²⁵

Five hundred seventy thousand yards of roadway were constructed for this portion of the Santa Ana Freeway. As the Division of Highways often repeated in freeway right-of-way procedures, the state recognized a serious housing shortage in the area, even claiming that the shortage was so severe



DETAILED MAP OF THE EAST LOS ANGELES FREEWAY SYSTEM.
The territory highlighted is the area considered East Los Angeles for this study and by the United States Census Bureau. It includes portions of Boyle Heights, City Terrace, Lincoln Heights, and unincorporated East Los Angeles. It is an area of approximately sixteen square miles surrounded by seven freeways. *Illustration by Gilbert Estrada and Gloria Guerrero. Copyright 2002 by author.*

that any attempt “to carry out wholesale evictions in order to get a freeway project started would make still worse the critical housing shortage.”²⁶

Due to the immense demand for manufacturing workers during World War II, migration to the West Coast, especially the Southland, flourished, creating an enormous housing shortage for native Angelenos, newly arrived workers (both from within and outside of California), and Mexican immigrants. During the postwar period, the return to Los Angeles of thousands of servicemen and women from the European and Pacific theaters exacer-

bated the problem. In 1940, the Los Angeles metropolitan region had a mere 961,531 housing units; by 1950, that number had only reached 1.4 million. But within the same ten-year period, Los Angeles County absorbed an additional 1,366,044 people.²⁷ Between 1940 and 1970, seven million people were added to the county. When the G.I. Bill and Federal Housing Authority loans made it possible for returning G.I.s to buy new housing, Mexicans bore a brunt of the housing shortage because of the lingering effects of restrictive covenants and homeowner associations that upheld racial segregation and prevented minorities from buying into white communities. Groups like the Los Feliz Improvement Association and the University District Property Owners Association helped establish zoning restrictions that barred Mexicans and other minorities from entering Caucasian communities. As a result, East Los Angeles Mexicans were especially impacted by the housing shortage, socially barred from moving out of the Eastside at the same time East Los Angeles properties were being dismantled for freeways.²⁸

Despite internal reports warning of a potential post-World War II housing scarcity, constructing freeways took precedence over salvaging homes. When additional homes were taken for freeway right-of-way in 1948, the state, in conjunction with the City of Los Angeles and federal housing authorities, moved residents into federally owned trailers or relocated their homes. Two hundred ten families were cleared in what the state claimed was their best effort to route the freeway with the least amount of disturbance, but the least amount of disturbance to whom?²⁹

In 1951, 32.4 miles of freeway were opened to the public at a total cost of \$45 million. By 1953, the Santa Ana Freeway stretched from Aliso Street to Lakewood Boulevard in the City of Downey, again utilizing thrifty policies of purchasing much of the route before the “full impact of the real estate inflationary trend” hampered their urban freeway building. In total, 1,171 buildings were removed in East Los Angeles’ portion of the Santa Ana Freeway; the cost was over \$60 million.³⁰

The construction of the Santa Ana Freeway exemplifies several negative effects of Eastside freeway construction. First, sections of land necessary to build the Santa Ana Freeway called for the destruction of a portion of Soto Street Elementary School, one of the few schools in the area. After negotiations with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the Division of Highways would not preserve intact the Soto Street Elementary school site. The Division of Highways proceeded with the exchange of a portion of the

school's property for freeways without exercising sufficient mechanisms to abate subsequent overcrowding, excessive noise, or environmental health implications resulting from the high amounts of vehicular emissions the freeway would bring about to the children attending the freeway-adjacent school.

In a letter from Edward T. Telford, assistant state highway engineer, to Los Angeles City Engineer Lyle A. Pardee, Telford made clear that the building of the "Santa Ana Freeway [would] necessitate the acquisition of an additional portion of the Soto Street school site, including portions of Atlantic and Matthews Streets." Stressing that it "was the state's desire that the vacation of these streets be completed," action was taken to ensure the progress of the freeway.³¹ In October 1946, the LAUSD Board of Education relinquished their portion of East Los Angeles territory to the state. Later, acquisition of the property was amended in 1951, wherein the LAUSD agreed to "do all things necessary" to secure the vacation of said streets, including the preparation and filing of subdivision maps as required by the City of Los Angeles. As a result, the state procured more land, including portions of lots 221-223 and 262-267 of East Los Angeles' La Mesa Tract.³²

The appropriation of East Los Angeles land continued with Los Angeles City Ordinance No. 99,474, passed in December 1956, which vacated "portions of Atlantic Street and Matthews Street" directly adjoining the Soto Street school site.³³ Division of Highways Engineer H.S. Throckmorton asserted the state would "use its best effort to obtain the vacation of a portion of Atlantic Street and Matthews" Street. Several months later, an off-ramp required the relocation of several homes at the Soto Street exit. Homes were demolished; construction costs for the off-ramp totaled \$22,000.³⁴

The state's acquisition of property in the vicinity of the Santa Ana Freeway's southern Soto Street exit also deserves close examination. In a letter dated July 23, 1958, the California Highway Commission attempted to persuade Los Angeles City officials to allow the state to take additional control over this portion of the Santa Ana Freeway and surrounding Soto Street area, including street property that would not be utilized for freeway development. Their reasoning for the state's acquisition of additional Eastside property was that it would better serve "public interest." But it was unclear why the state needed to acquire more East Los Angeles land; it was also unclear how the "public interest" would benefit. Nonetheless, a portion of the report states:

WHEREAS, the California Highway Commission has found and determined that Soto Street from Olympic Boulevard to the Santa Ana Freeway is a tra-



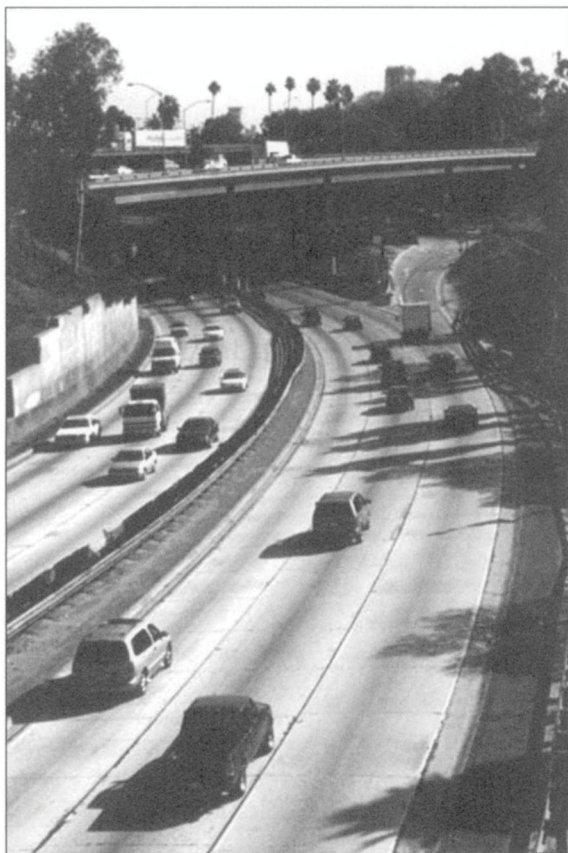
Part of Soto Street Elementary School encroached by the Santa Ana 5 Freeway and nearby East Los Angeles Interchange. A 2003 study by the California Air Resource Board revealed that school children are inhaling some of the nation's highest levels of particulate matter, a microscopic pollutant causing severe respiratory, cardiac, and other life-threatening illnesses. The main source of local particulate matter is the emissions of diesel trucks on the nearby East Los Angeles Interchange. *Photo by Gilbert Estrada. Copyright 2002 by author.*

versable highway which should, in the public interest, be taken over and maintained as a State highway,

BE IT RESOLVED by the California Highway Commission . . . it adopts and designates as a State highway and a part of said Route . . . the existing traversable highway in the City of Los Angeles, described as follows:

Soto Street from Olympic Boulevard to the Santa Ana Freeway.³⁵

In fact, the state's effort to protect the "public interest" actually supported business interests. The state legitimized control over more Eastside property under the pretense that it was for society's benefit, even though that land would not be utilized for freeway right-of-way. To better serve the public interest, improved methods could have been utilized, including better accommodations in freeway designs, the creation of buffer zones to minimize noise and ambient air pollution, and, of course, fewer freeways. Nevertheless, the measure to appropriate additional Eastside sections was passed on July 28, 1958,



The old Santa Ana 5 Freeway, now the Hollywood 101 Freeway, nearing the East Los Angeles Interchange (southbound). Notice how the freeway arcs southeast in order to avoid the Sears building in the upper right-hand corner. The re-routing of freeways to avoid expensive structures and affluent communities was a frequent occurrence in the development of Los Angeles freeways. *Photo by Gilbert Estrada. Copyright 2002 by author.*

only five days after it was announced at a meeting, leaving little time for the public to respond.³⁶

Thorough examination into the state's desire to serve "public interest" raises concerns due to the geographic focus of its supposedly "philanthropic" work between "Soto Street and Olympic Boulevard [and] the Santa Ana Freeway." Soto Street at Olympic

Boulevard is the site of the ten-story, 1.6-million-square-foot Sears, Roebuck & Co. building, whose owners were ardent proponents of freeway construction. Sears representatives sat on a redevelopment committee that lobbied local interests to support urban renewal projects, including freeway construction. The retail company also distributed an "ABCs" booklet on urban renewal, encouraging local leaders to redevelop the area, strengthening the paradigm that commercial success could be improved through slum clearance. Sears argued for their commercial interests in the city, claiming they were part of the \$600 billion of commercial investments in American cities that were vital to the nation's economic stability. While encouraging freeway-urban-renewal projects, Sears argued that blighted communities like East Los Angeles "take 45% of the local budget and [only] contribute 6% of local income." Moreover, the company maintained that an underdeveloped community was a liability that could be redeemed with symbols of progress: freeways.³⁷

Sears' connections to freeway development went beyond the ABCs of urban renewal. It supported urban renewal projects because urban renewal meant freeways, which meant more commuters, which, in turn, meant more customers. By claiming that their financial future depended on healthy urban projects like freeways, Sears was able to influence city and state planning into altering the original route of the Santa Ana Freeway one block north of the store site, the exact area where the state appropriated the area for the good of "public interest," or "Soto Street from Olympic Boulevard to the Santa Ana Freeway," as described in the state's letter. Initial freeway plans had called for running through Sears' 1.6-million-square-foot store and warehouse complex, first opened in 1927. This was the most cost-effective and practical routing solution. The location was also a suitable routing option for the East Los Angeles Interchange. But by utilizing their political prowess, a strength East Los Angeles residents encompassed but could not equal, Sears was able to save its profitable retail store and catalog warehouse.³⁸

THE GOLDEN STATE 5 FREEWAY

Continuing north, the Santa Ana Freeway becomes the Golden State Freeway as it passes the East Los Angeles Interchange at Seventh Street and Boyle Avenue. In 1951, only 12.3 miles of the Golden State Freeway were accessible by automobile. Within five years, 32.4 miles were inaugurated at a cost of \$61 million.³⁹ The first portion of the East Los Angeles section opened to the public was a 2.5-mile section from Sixth Street and Boyle Avenue to Pasadena Avenue in 1960; the cost was \$7.78 million. That same year, the freeway carried 90,000 vehicles a day. Now completed, the Golden State Freeway zigzags 677 miles from the East Los Angeles Interchange to Oregon, stretching an additional 480 miles to the United States–Canadian border. It was an amazing engineering feat—if one can view the genius inherent in the structure itself as separate from the harmful human consequences.⁴⁰

The first formal protests against freeway encroachment in East Los Angeles occurred in response to the 1953 plans for this \$32 million freeway. Groups like the Brooklyn Avenue Business Men's Association, the Eastside Citizen Committee Against the Freeway, and the Anti-Golden State Freeway Committee were the most structured groups unifying multicultural and working-class Eastside community members against freeway encroachment.⁴¹ Mass rallies, protests, and meetings were held throughout the community; an official anti-freeway petition was also circulated. Local small-business groups even hired private engineers to design alternative routes less destructive to the com-

munity. Politically, the community gained support from a small, but formidable, group including Los Angeles County Supervisor John Anson Ford, California Assemblyman Edward Elliott, and community stalwart, Los Angeles City Councilman Edward Roybal, the first Mexican to serve on the council since 1881. Nonetheless, local protests had no substantial successes; every freeway in East Los Angeles was constructed as planned.

Personally affected by the freeway were Hortensia Delgado and Joe Coral. Living in their parents' homes at 1941 and 1961 Jetson Street, respectively, had allowed them to play together for years. Both attended Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church. Hortensia attended catechism; Joe was an altar boy. At times, they would run errands at Joe's Grocery Store (no relation) or at the local cleaners. But a few months after a representative from the Division of Highways knocked on their parents' doors, that ended. Both households were forced to relocate because of the proposed freeway, which was difficult for everyone. Joe's parents enjoyed the low mortgages of Boyle Heights and had extreme difficulty purchasing new property equal in both size and affordability, issues Joe and Hortensia were too young to understand. Joe and Hortensia, however, understood the loneliness of moving away from home. "It's kind of sad. We lost all our friends and had to move into an area which was gang infested," according to Joe; he rarely played outside again. It was equally disturbing for Hortensia who "really missed [her] cousins and aunts" after her family was displaced by the freeway. When the freeway was built, it ended their church attachments, their family homes, and their childhood experiences in Boyle Heights.⁴²

THE EAST LOS ANGELES INTERCHANGE

The significance of the East Los Angeles Interchange in the total Eastside freeway experience is difficult to underestimate. Consuming 135 acres, the interchange is so big that if built in separate locations, it would actually comprise three separate interchanges. In the vicinity of Soto Street, Boyle Avenue, and Marietta Street, twenty-three lanes of freeways traverse the interchange. Near the Fickett Street exit, its width expands to twenty-seven lanes. To construct such a mammoth structure, engineers used thirty-two bridges, twenty walls, excavated 1,500,000 cubic yards of earth, laid 23,545 feet of concrete pipe, used 4,200,000 yards of structural steel and 13,200,000 pounds of reinforced steel to complete the largest single contract ever awarded by the Division of Highways.⁴³ It helps connect one of the biggest tangle of freeways in the nation.

As daunting as the interchange's size is its importance to regional transportation. In the entire Los Angeles freeway system, the East Los Angeles Interchange serves as an important hub in the county's freeway network, connecting the Santa Ana Freeway to the Golden State Freeway, the Santa Monica Freeway to the San Bernardino Freeway, and the Pomona Freeway and the Hollywood Freeway to the surrounding suburbs.

It has received repeated praise and has frequently been referred to as the "critical key" by downtown business groups, engineers, heads of state, local and state politicians, and the California Division of Highways. American post-World War II freeway development has commonly been referred to as the greatest public works project since the undertakings of the Roman Empire. Recognized as the saviors of Los Angeles traffic, state engineers claimed the "East loop [would] offer alternate routes for traffic in the downtown area so badly over loaded [and] relieve traffic pressure" in the general downtown area.⁴⁴ Adding scores of lanes to the Los Angeles freeway system, the East Los Angeles Interchange completed the multi-million-dollar downtown freeway loop, which, in 1961, became the first freeway system to surround any U.S. downtown area. Expected to handle more than 450,000 vehicles per day, the East Los Angeles Interchange carried 566,000 vehicles per day by the early 1980s, earning the title as the busiest freeway interchange in the world.⁴⁵ Today, the interchange carries approximately 1.7 million vehicles a day, which may seem to indicate that the public interest has been well served. However, this transportation system has produced the most traffic-congested region for nearly twenty years, replacing what was once the world's largest inter-urban transit system. It has also produced one of the most concentrated pockets of air pollution in America, violating state and federal air-quality standards in excess of 260 days per year during the 1970s. The interchange itself produces one of California's largest bottlenecks, exacerbating traffic congestion, stress, and a slew of social ills. It is fair to say that the general public may not be as much benefited as it has been harmed by this freeway interchange with its scores of problems.⁴⁶

The dynamics of the interchange have also been compared to the complexity of a myriad-leveled structure: a bowl of spaghetti. In jest, contractors have referred to the East Los Angeles Interchange as the "Spaghetti Bowl," which is the "most amazing tangle of highway ever constructed. Gee-whiz," a *Southwest Builder Contractor* author jokingly wrote, claiming that the Division of Highways would offer an award for any motorists not getting lost in the freeway mess.⁴⁷ In fact, the interchange is so intricate that some officials who sanc-

tioned it did not understand how the interchange plans would play out. In order for decision makers to fully grasp what the “Spaghetti Bowl” would look like, the Department of Bridges constructed a \$17,000 model of the eventual interchange. The model was hailed as a grand achievement and was located at the work site for builders to duplicate. The replica was so elaborate, it took fifteen months to construct; the interchange itself took only twenty-four.⁴⁸ On May 23, 1961, as part of the National Highway Week designated by President John F. Kennedy, portions of the interchange were opened to the public.⁴⁹

But the faint humor of the entire “Spaghetti Bowl” article minimizes the fragmentation imposed upon the community. Moreover, the political sway that Sears Roebuck & Co, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and others exercised during the design phase of the interchange reflects further inequities in the East Los Angeles freeway process. Their political might helped determine the final course of the freeway, producing a route best suited to their interests. Design engineer of the East Los Angeles Interchange, Heinz Heckerroth, acknowledged that business “obviously [had] significant influence on the political side, [and would have] required lots of money to purchase and relocate” certain industries during the construction of the interchange, including the *Times-Mirror Press* telephone directory plant, which lay untouched in the center of the interchange.⁵⁰ Although Heckerroth’s engineering team designed many alternative routes, the final route selection was based on right-of-way costs. “The design was the end product of numberless line diagrams; the final selection was based on right of way considerations,” wrote Heckerroth in a Division of Highway publication.⁵¹

As a result of the cost-effective design, the East Los Angeles Interchange displaced various community landmarks instead of industrial ones. The most prominent was Saint Isabella, a Catholic place of worship attended by many Boyle Heights residents. Saint Isabella extended many services to the community, including a Catholic elementary school. Among their sizable congregation were Alicia and Sidronio Perez, who would walk to church on Sundays and listen to Father Sheen’s Spanish sermons. The church and many of the congregation members’ homes were destroyed for the interchange as were several locally owned businesses.⁵² Ironically, Saint Isabella’s parish rectory was used as an on-site engineering headquarters during the construction of the interchange.⁵³ Although the quarters were actually outside the direct route of the freeway, the building was torn down after the interchange was completed.⁵⁴

Mario Calderon had approximately half of his property taken by the state's eminent domain policy in what he described as the state's "sell or we'll take it attitude." Mr. Calderon, a recent immigrant from Mexico, was enraged that he was forced to sell a portion of his first home purchased in the U.S., especially because he never used the freeways. In lieu of his back-yard and rear-domicile property, the state furnished him with a chain-link fence that separated his home from the hundreds of thousands of vehicles that tracked across property that was once his. The state also furnished landscape shrubbery, hoping to make the transition from private property to "spaghetti bowl" more amicable.⁵⁵

Other parts of Boyle Heights were infringed upon to make way for the East Los Angeles Interchange, including Hollenbeck Park. Lying near the heart of Boyle Heights, the park had a large grassy area, play sections, and a man-made lake. It was important to the community and its children and was frequently utilized for picnics, outings, and community functions. The design of the interchange meant that Hollenbeck Park's popular lake would be bisected with a ten-lane freeway, exacerbating a shortage of parks in the East side, where the largest remaining open space would be Evergreen Cemetery.⁵⁶

The placement of the interchange raises many questions. What was so advantageous, from an engineering point of view, in placing Los Angeles' crucial interchange in East Los Angeles instead of an alternate location? Why were other suburbs and downtown spared? Why would designers choose to place the hub of the city's freeways east of downtown in lieu of other locations?

For example, if designers were trying to accommodate traffic flow between far-flung suburbs and the central business district, it made more sense placing the interchange in a location preferable to suburban residents. With the San Fernando Valley already the city's first major suburban district, why not place the interchange northwest of downtown? This might have made more sense in the overall traffic development of Los Angeles freeways because Valley suburbanites could facilitate the use of the interchange in their commute to and from their destinations. But property in this area was considerably more expensive than east of the Los Angeles River. In 1940, the average home northwest of downtown Los Angeles was valued at \$4,912 compared to East Los Angeles' \$2,250 median value. Placing the interchange northwest of downtown would have meant dissecting Echo Park, Silver Lake, or Hollywood, a decision that could have caused political troubles, more community

backlash than planners would have preferred, and could have significantly impacted the state's freeway budget.⁵⁷

Moving the interchange west of downtown would have caused the same dilemma, fragmenting Euro-Angeleno communities near Wilshire and Pico Boulevard whose political interests were better represented than Mexican Angelenos. Similar effects would have occurred by moving the interchange southeast of downtown, infringing on sections of the central manufacturing district, Hubbard Yard, and the industrial areas of Vernon and Maywood. Moving the interchange east of downtown only caused the fragmentation of ethnic communities and working-class Mexicans whose histories frequently exemplified displacement and whose homes were referred to as "the greatest concentration of poor housing in the country." Their lack of equal political representation was exemplified by a shortage of politicians who shared their ethnic background. In the two decades following World War II, with the exception of Roybal, no Mexican served on the Los Angeles City Council until Richard Alatore gained a seat in 1985 (the last Mexican served in 1881), and no Mexican served on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors until Gloria Molina joined it in 1991 (the last Mexican served in the late 1800s). Therefore, in terms of costs and fewer overall problems, building in East Los Angeles was the uncomplicated choice.⁵⁸

ACCOMMODATING THE FREEWAY FOR INDUSTRY AND WHITE SUBURBIA

During the completion of the East Los Angeles freeway system, there were notable accommodations to other Los Angeles communities in the planning, designing, and re-routing of freeways. Many examples illustrate how freeway routing in East Los Angeles was less favorable relative to an established neighborhood. It was possible, however, for designers to re-route and adjust freeways in order to salvage homes, parks, churches, and other valuable sites. But using the examples of Saint Isabella and Hollenbeck Park, favorable right-of-way adjustments seldom occurred in East Los Angeles.

This was not always the experience in other communities. Division of Highway planners occasionally worked meticulously to re-route freeways around local community and industrial landmarks. For example, during the construction of the Hollywood 101 Freeway, planners shifted a planned freeway route at Sunset Boulevard to spare the KTTV television station. Near the Hollywood Bowl, additional landscaping was installed as a buffer zone between Hollywood Bowl concertgoers and excessive freeway noise; the Divi-

sion of Highways did not want to disturb the Bowl's idyllic ambience with automotive din. To further accommodate the Hollywood Hills community, freeway planners re-routed additional sections to safely bypass a local place of worship, Hollywood Presbyterian Church, a sharp contrast to the bulldozing of Saint Isabella Catholic Church and rectory in order to accommodate the East Los Angeles Interchange.⁵⁹ The re-routing of freeways to accommodate the Hollywood community was so blatant, including knowingly skirting around the homes of famous movie stars, that the entire process erupted into a scandal. Accused of conspiring with real estate firms to sell parcels at inflated prices, several right-of-way agents were charged with conspiracy; two agents were found guilty, tainting the process of eminent domain and raising legitimate questions about the contrast between excessive Eastside encroachment and the accommodations to white suburbia.⁶⁰

Accommodations continued during the construction of other Los Angeles freeways. Along the Harbor 110 Freeway near downtown Los Angeles, the route was re-aligned to "miss large costly installations," according to the Division of Highways. For example, the freeway was re-routed to avoid Methodist Hospital's nurses' home. Even though additional expenses were necessary to re-route the freeway, alterations were made, including the construction of an "extensive" retaining wall.⁶¹

With the Division of Highways' capricious adherence to its "parks should be avoided wherever possible" rule of thumb, the re-routing of freeways in suburbia was evident. State Route 4 was originally planned to cut through Calaveras Big Trees State Park near Stockton, California, because it was the most economical route. Feeling sympathetic to the area, planners decided against it, re-routing the freeway to save the park but costing the state an additional \$3.1 million. State Route 210, near San Dimas, was also re-routed to salvage a local landmark, Puddingstone Reservoir Park, costing the state an additional \$2.2 million. Again, original routes were chosen because they were the most cost effective but could be re-directed to save landmarks as the State of California deemed necessary. In Chico, California, U.S. Route 99's original freeway path drew some controversy due to right-of-way encroachment but was altered enough that the Division of Highways earned a national award for freeway preservation and beautification design.⁶² But in East Los Angeles, a racial minority area with little political clout, Hollenbeck Park was sacrificed for a freeway. Needless to say, the Division of Highways did not win any awards for preservation and beautification freeway designs in East Los Angeles.

The re-routing of freeways to accommodate industry and white suburbia also showed signs of political pressure, a pressure which freeway planners readily admitted. With influence sometimes coming from outside forces, designers acknowledged that freeway routing was sometimes based on a "right of way costs stand point and control [where] you begin to pattern places in geometric locations which you can't hit [because] we can't afford to buy them," according to a Division of Highways engineer. Still worse is the political influence in freeway design where some designers admitted, "I always found where the City Councilmen lived" and routed around them, sparing the homes of the very people who sanctioned the freeways.⁶³

CONCLUSION: THE 1958 MASTER PLAN AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH EFFECTS FROM FREEWAYS

An exploration into the history of the East Los Angeles freeway system makes it apparent that a disproportionate amount of freeways were sanctioned east of the Los Angeles River in contrast to other portions of Los Angeles, especially neighboring industrial sites and white suburbia. In effect, East Los Angeles would become a sort of archetype, where the early stages of California's urban freeway building would be tested without established mechanisms to reduce noise, air pollution, and the negative social effects of freeways. Moreover, specific freeway designs in East Los Angeles were less kind to the established community while many examples near industrial sites and white suburbia were readjusted to spare local neighborhood properties.

When the last East Los Angeles freeway was slated for widening in 1972, the area easily surpassed other Los Angeles communities in containing the highest percentage of freeways. The disparity between how much East Los Angeles land and other community property is devoted to freeways is alarming. For example, within the City of Los Angeles, freeways account for about 4 percent of the total land surface of streets and highways. Overall, freeways utilize some 19 percent of Eastside property. In unincorporated East Los Angeles, 32 percent of the land use is covered with streets and freeways. In Boyle Heights, over 50 percent of the area is utilized for freeways and industrial zoning. At a neighborhood level, Eastside residents walking to work or school must pass under, over, or adjacent to a web of freeways. For example, a resident walking from Cesar Chavez Avenue in Boyle Heights to Los Angeles County General Hospital, less than half a mile away, would have to cross forty-one lanes of freeways.⁶⁴

An examination of the original freeway plans for the Los Angeles metropolitan region makes it clear that East Los Angeles hosts a disproportionate amount of freeways as compared with other areas. For example, the staple of Los Angeles' freeway blueprint is the 1958 *Master Plan of Freeways and Expressways* by the Metropolitan Transportation Engineering board, a consortium of state, county, and city planners. The 1958 *Master Plan* lays out the skeleton of the freeway system Angelenos currently drive. It called for a 1,575-mile freeway grid blanketing the county so that every Angeleno could be within 4.5 miles of a freeway. But only about 61 percent, or 918 miles, of the master plan was ever implemented. Freeways like the Beverly Hills Freeway, the Whitnall Freeway, the Pacific Coast Freeway, and the Laurel Canyon Freeway—freeways in predominantly white neighborhoods—were never built. Although carefully planned and officially marked on state freeway proposals, freeway displacement never occurred in those neighborhoods.⁶⁵

The Beverly Hills Freeway, a product of the 1958 *Master Plan*, was a 9.5-mile extension that would have run through Beverly Hills in an east-west direction from Vermont Avenue, between Melrose Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard, stretching west to the San Diego Freeway. A *Los Angeles Times* reporter covering the Beverly Hills Freeway in the mid 1960s claimed that “barring a miracle,” nothing would stop construction of the freeway. But Beverly Hills, along with many other Westside communities, got their “miracle,” and none of the aforementioned freeways were ever built.⁶⁶

But while only about 61 percent of Los Angeles' freeways were constructed, over 100 percent of East Los Angeles' initially planned freeways were built. The East Los Angeles Interchange is actually three times as big as first planned and the Pomona 60 Freeway does not even show up on various early planning maps. Moreover, freeway lanes were expanded and widened on East Los Angeles' portion of the San Bernardino 10 Freeway during the 1960s.⁶⁷

Worse yet are the environmental and health consequences involved in locating a large number of freeways within a dense community. East Los Angeles, with seven freeways in approximately sixteen square miles, is a hub of automotive activity and thus a center for intense automotive pollution, earning the title of one of the most polluted communities in California. A 2000 study by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) confirmed what community members had suspected for years: the 1.7 million automobiles and diesel trucks that pass through the East Los Angeles Interchange create a tremendous amount of ambient air pollution. According to

AQMD's ground-breaking *Multiple Air Toxics Exposure Study (MATES II)*, about 80 percent of the area's air pollution is caused by mobile sources, which include cars, trucks, and other vehicles.⁶⁸ Approximately 90 percent of the region's carcinogenic risk "is attributed to diesel particulate emissions . . . and other toxics associated with mobile sources." Researchers basically find a "higher [carcinogenic] risk . . . near freeways." Recent evidence from the Children's Health Study being conducted at the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine, as well as from studies by investigators at the University of California, Los Angeles, and at the University of Wageningen (in the Netherlands), concur that living or going to school within 100 to 300 meters of a busy roadway or freeway increases risk of respiratory problems, cancer, and both premature birth and low birth weight. Many East Los Angeles residents live, work, and/or attend school within 100–300 meters of several freeways, which raises questions of environmental justice by community and public health groups.⁶⁹

In 2003, the California Air Resource Board published the *Children's Environmental Health Air Quality Study in Boyle Heights*. Studying over fifty pollutants, including ozone, carbon monoxide, benzene, and particulate matter (PM₁₀) through monitors placed at three local schools, air quality standards were found to be worse than regulators first assumed. Only accounting for PM₁₀ (a fine particulate found in diesel soot, which can penetrate the lungs and human cells), monitoring concluded that levels at Soto Street Elementary School, which was a key subject in this study immediately adjacent to the East Los Angeles Interchange, exceeds state PM₁₀ standards twenty-eight out of thirty-seven days, or 75 percent of the time. Schools slightly farther from the East Los Angeles Interchange, such as Hollenbeck Middle School, are only moderately cleaner, exceeding state PM₁₀ standards ten out of thirty-four days, or 31 percent of the time, and ten out of thirty-two days, or 29 percent of the time, at the East Los Angeles Science Center. In short, children in Boyle Heights breathe some of the most polluted air in California because they live, play, and/or go to school in the immediate vicinity of intense vehicular pollution.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, it is likely that air quality in East Los Angeles may get worse. The area is already a mecca for diesel-truck activity, largely due to the 710 Long Beach Freeway, which currently carries 47,000 diesel truck trips a day, moves approximately 50 percent of California's goods, and brings in 15 percent of the nation's international trade.⁷¹ Plans are currently underway to accommodate the forecasted tripling of international cargo by widening



The 1958 Master Plan of Freeways and Expressways would have blanketed the Los Angeles metropolitan region with a freeway grid. While only 61 percent of the plan was ever implemented, over 100 percent of East Los Angeles' freeways came to fruition. Also, notice the Westside freeways, such as the Beverly Hills Freeway and the Laurel Canyon Freeway, that were never constructed. Map by Gilbert Estrada and Gloria Guerrero. Courtesy of the author.

and/or double-decking parts of the congested 710 Freeway. In January of 2005, the freeway was approved for 252-lane miles of freeway improvements, adding four truck-only lanes and bringing the total of lanes from as few as six to fourteen in order to accommodate the expected 200 percent increase in diesel-truck trips by 2030. Plans are also developing to expand the Santa Ana 5 and the San Bernardino 10 Freeways, which could also increase diesel emissions. Diesel exhaust, a known carcinogen under California's Proposition 65 and listed by the California Air Resources Board as a toxic air contaminant in 1998, already accounts for 71 percent of the cancer risk in the Greater Los Angeles area. East Los Angeles already bears an unfair burden in Los Angeles' transportation systems; an increase in freeway lanes would worsen the situation. Yet key interests and planners have failed to respond adequately to the problem.⁷²

It will be interesting to see how Los Angeles' freeway system will cope with the projected rise in automobile usage. Already an overburdened system, ranking last in mobility for the sixteenth consecutive year, Los Angeles City and County have their work cut out for them. From 1967 to 1997, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has increased 187 percent, costing individual Angelenos approximately \$2,500 in wasted time and 136 hours a year stuck in traffic. By 2025, freeway speeds are expected to fall from thirty-seven miles per hour to nineteen miles per hour. With California Governor Schwarzenegger proposing a \$3.4 billion reduction in transportation funding from 2004 through 2010, diminishing mobility and air quality can cause problems as Los Angeles struggles to meet National Ambient Air Quality standards by 2006 and 2010. Failure to meet these Clean Air Act standards could result in the loss of billions of dollars for Los Angeles transportation projects, which, in turn, could lead to a stifling of mobility and further deterioration of air quality.⁷³

I began this research as youth in graduate school, hoping to add to one of the most poignant stories in Los Angeles' Chicano, urban planning, and transportation history. It has been my hope, as it still is, that the research outlined in "If You Build It, They Will Move" will spark a greater interest not only in the history of the freeways in Los Angeles and East Los Angeles but also will be used as a catalyst for fusing past, present, and future Los Angeles transportation studies. Although this study is only a glimpse into the complex scope of freeway development in Los Angeles and East Los Angeles, other issues can be examined and perhaps related to the environmental and public-health effects that threaten the sustainability of the Los Angeles Basin.

New research could incorporate elements beyond the scope of this article while examining the past experiences of communities and the necessity of increased public-health dialogues in future transportation planning.

NOTES

- ¹ Louis R. Ardouin, R/W Agent, to Mr. E.N. Whittemore, R/W Agent, October 1, 1943 in Right of Way General Correspondence, Department of Public Works. Division of Highways Records, F3790, California State Archives.
- ² Duane L. Cronk, "A Day with a Right-of-Way Agent," *Westways*, November 1966, 36–37.
- ³ *Los Angeles Times*, sec. I, May 9, 1959.
- ⁴ Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles A to Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and County* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 87.
- ⁵ Bob Pool, "Chavez Ravine Residents Make Peace with Dodgers," *Los Angeles Times*, sec. B, October 29, 2000, 6.
- ⁶ "Public Housing and the Brooklyn Dodgers; Los Angeles: Double Play by City Hall in the Ravine," *Frontier: The Voice of the New West*, June 1957, 7. For this article, the term Mexican denotes Mexican nationals who reside in Los Angeles and/or U.S. born naturalized citizens of Mexican descent. This person needs only to be of Mexican descent and experience life in Los Angeles as a Mexican to be classified as a Mexican. Although this classification may be too broad for a book-length study of Mexican Angelenos, for the purpose of this succinct article, it should suffice.
- ⁷ *Ibid.* For a thorough and unique understanding of the Chavez Ravine story, visit <http://www.toonist.com/flash/ravine.html>.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ⁹ Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Community Under Siege: A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River, 1945–1975* (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, 1984), 69.
- ¹⁰ "Public Housing and the Brooklyn Dodgers," 7.
- ¹¹ "Santa Ana Freeway Paving Starts Oct. 1; Two Overcrossings Scheduled in Project," *Southwest Builder and Contractors* 108 (July 1946): 23–24; "Santa Ana Freeway," *California Highways and Public Works* (September–October 1948): 41. The California Division of Highways became the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in 1972.
- ¹² "New Freeway: East Los Angeles Motorists Are Saved Driving Time," *California Highways and Public Works* (July–August 1948): 17.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ¹⁴ "Pomona Freeway Section To Be Finished In Fall," *Eastside Sun*, January 14, 1965; "A look at the Freeway Program, District VII," California Divisions of Highways, September 18, 1964; *California Highways and Public Works* (March–April 1964): 10, 12, 17; "New Freeway," *California Highways and Public Works* 27 (July–August, 1948): 13–17.
- ¹⁵ "Boyle Heights Community Plan Background Report," (Los Angeles: Department of City Planning, 1974), 47. The total of 19 percent comes from adding Boyle Heights' total and East Los Angeles' total as found in Barrio Planners, Inc., *Nuestro Ambiente: East Los Angeles Visual Survey and Analysis* (Los Angeles: Barrio Planners Incorporated, 1973), 80.
- ¹⁶ For the purpose of this study, white suburbia represents Los Angeles County communities where whites were the majority. In the 1920s, restrictive covenants, or deed restrictions, began to gain popularity in Los Angeles. Homeowners associations guaranteed racial segregation by forbidding minorities, in this case Mexicans, from purchasing homes outside of Mexican communities, or more importantly, from buying into white communities. The federal government also helped maintain housing segregation through federal lending programs such as the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). These organizations openly exercised the practice of redlining. Redlining designated housing areas by calculating risks involved in lending money to certain neighborhoods. The higher the rating, the better the opportunity for receiving a loan; the lower the rating, the less of a chance for loan approval. Out of the their four-grade rating system—the highest rating was green (A), the second was blue (B), yellow (C) was third, and red was last (D)—areas such as East Los Angeles were diagnosed "hazardous," barely earning a C or D score.

Therefore, "white suburbia" refers to the Caucasian communities outside of East Los Angeles where Anglo Angelenos were the majority and/or Mexicans were not welcomed. For more information on redlining, see also Eric R. Avila, *Reinventing Los Angeles: Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight, 1940-1965* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 23-25. Seven years later, Avila's dissertation matured to a book length study: Eric R. Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁷ Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 1-30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁹ David Brodsky, *L.A. Freeway: An Appreciative Essay* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 95.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2, 29-31.

²¹ Acuña, *Community Under Siege*, xi, 8.

²² Avila, *Reinventing Los Angeles* (PhD diss.), 20, 176.

²³ An obvious omission is H. Marshall Goodwin Jr.'s, "Right of Way Controversies in Recent California Highway-Freeway Construction," *Southern California Quarterly* (Spring 1974): 61-105. Another great book length study not discussed in the historiography is Raul Homero Villa's *Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). For other books that do not specifically deal with Los Angeles Freeway development but can offer insight into Los Angeles and/or transportation history, see also Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja ed., *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Greg Hise and William Deverell, *Eden by Design: The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan for the Los Angeles Region* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000); and Jane Holtz Kay, *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

²⁴ This article cannot delve into the specific and lengthy reasons why lower property values, less political clout, and intermittently historical racism towards Mexican Angelenos constituted the decisive reasons why East Los Angeles suffers from excessive freeway encroachment compared to other parts of the city. Even the precise demographics of the East side, which shows that the area was clearly a heavily Jewish, multicultural, and working-class community (eventually transformed by a growing Mexican demographic) must be studied in greater depth. This article can only cover a few key examples of the Los Angeles freeway system and the displacement of Mexican East Los Angeles.

In terms of freeway construction, notable numbers of Boyle Heights' Jewish community had steadily moved to other sections of Los Angeles (including Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and West Los Angeles) by the 1920s. Although Boyle Heights remained a predominantly Jewish community through the 1920s, a steady rise in a Jewish migration out of Boyle Heights had been initiated. Although they still maintained numerical dominance through the next decade, the Jewish demographic concentration slowly diminished. By the early 1940s, the Jewish exodus from Boyle Heights had increased. Symbolizing the Jewish trek to the West side and the increasing number of Mexicans, the Eastside Jewish Community Center of Boyle Heights now began to serve Mexicans, passing the torch to the new occupants of Boyle Heights.

By the onset of the Second World War, the browning of East Los Angeles grew quickly, which was unfortunately aided by the internment of Japanese Americans. A study by the Haynes Foundation acknowledged that 43.4 percent of all Mexican Angelenos lived within the Belvedere, Boyle Heights, and Lincoln Heights areas, a significant number considering that Boyle Heights maintained a population of 76,390. By 1950, Boyle Heights' 82,294 residents were rivaling the Belvedere-Maravilla (still in East Los Angeles) area as the highest concentration of Mexicans within Los Angeles County, which is significant because it became the area with the highest amount of freeway concentration. Historian George Sanchez has also described the multicultural and Jewish-to-Mexican transition of the area. A former Boyle Heights resident, Leo Frumkin, recalled that by 1945, 60 percent of his neighbors were Mexican. A 1950 U.S. Census also showed much of East Los Angeles as "Significantly Spanish," reaffirming that when the bulk of East Los Angeles freeways were being implemented in the 1950s, Mexicans were noticeably the majority in East Los Angeles, although Boyle Heights remained home to a multicultural and Jewish community that was quickly becoming surpassed by a Mexican influx. See also, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1950 Ethnic Census*; George Sanchez, "What's Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews': Creating Multiracialism on the Eastside during the 1950s," *American Quarterly* 56 (September 2004).

In terms of lower property values in the Eastside, the average home in East Los Angeles in 1940 was \$2,520 while the average price in Los Angeles was \$4,625. Houses in communities like Pasadena and Beverly Hills, where freeways were wiped off proposed maps, commanded prices of \$5,842 and \$5,690, respectively. Additionally, sections of East Los Angeles had the highest concentration of dilapidated housing in the country. See also, "Los Angeles County Population and Housing Data: Statistical Data from the 1940 Census," produced by the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation (Los Angeles, 1944), 28.

Another issue for further study is the racism harbored by some City of Los Angeles, County Board of Supervisors, and, to a lesser degree, the California Division of Highways personnel, who in 1949 referred to sections of East Los Angeles as a community "infiltrated by minority groups mostly [of] Latin derivation" that were considered to be negatively affecting the City of Los Angeles. Other examples, including the repatriation of Mexicans in the 1930s, the extreme racism exemplified in the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon Case, and the 1943 Zoot Suit Race Riots, illustrate the racist environment in which planners and politicians who sanctioned the freeway grew up and the racist ideology they may have harbored. These issues require in-depth explanations and must be saved for another study. See also, Gilbert Estrada, "How the East Was Lost: Mexican Fragmentation, Displacement, and the East Los Angeles Freeway System, 1947-1972," (master's thesis, California State University, Long Beach, 2002), 35-59; Acuña, *Community Under Siege*; George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002). For more information on the Mexican experience in Los Angeles, see also Mauricio Mazon's, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984); Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; and Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez's, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

²⁵ "Work on New Santa Ana Freeway in Los Angeles Is Well Under Way," *California Highways and Public Works* (March-April 1946): 25-26.

²⁶ "New Freeway; East Los Angeles Motorists Are Saved Driving Time," *California Highways and Public Works* (July-August 1948): 17.

²⁷ Pitt and Pitt, 579.

²⁸ Avila, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 7; Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 161-162.

²⁹ "Santa Ana Freeway Paving Starts Oct. 1; Two Overcrossings Scheduled in Project," *Southwest Builder and Contractors* 108 (July 1946): 23-24; *California Highways and Public Works* 27 (July-August 1948): 17.

³⁰ *California Highways and Public Works* 35 (January-February 1955): 60.

³¹ Los Angeles City Archives Piper Center. Letter to the City of Los Angeles from P.O. Harding, Assistant State Highway Engineer, September 13, 1950. Letter to Mr. R. B. Halstad from Edward T. Telford, Assistant State Highway Engineer. [1956?]

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Los Angeles City Archives, Council File 30224.

³⁵ Los Angeles City Archives, "Resolution Adopting Traversable Highway in the City of Los Angeles, road VII-LA-173-LA," July 19, 1958. The California Highway Commission (CHC) has the responsibility of adopting freeway/highway routes. It is a non-salaried "board of business and professional men representing the people of the State at large, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State senate." The CHC is a "seven man body with the State Director of Public Works as ex officio chairman." In spite of the CHC's responsibility for route adaptation, the Division of Highways is responsible for planning, recommending, financing, designing, implementing, constructing, and maintaining state freeways and highways. See also *Freeway Facts: A digest of answers to your questions about California Freeways and what they mean to you and your community* (Sacramento: California Department of Public Works pamphlet, Division of Highways, 1965?).

³⁶ Los Angeles City Archives, "Resolution Adopting Traversable Highway in the City of Los Angeles, road VII-LA-173-LA," July 19, 1958.

³⁷ Acuña, *Community Under Siege*, 73.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *California Highways and Public Works* (January-February 1955): 60.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

- ⁴¹ "Eastside Up in Arms over Proposed \$32,000,000 Golden State Freeway," sec. 1, *Eastside Sun*, October 1, 1953.
- ⁴² Mr. and Mrs. Joe Coral, interview with the author, July 2001. Joe and Hortensia married and currently live in Covina, California.
- ⁴³ "Design of Interchange Was a Team Effort," *California Highways and Public Works* 37 (November–December 1958): 20–21. The largest contract issued by the Division of Highways (for the East Los Angeles Interchange) was overshadowed when construction costs skyrocketed in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s.
- ⁴⁴ *California Highways and Public Works* 37 (January–February 1955): 30.
- ⁴⁵ "Road Kill Diaries: Yep, It's a Jam Out There," as published at <http://www.dccomix.com/roadkilldiaries/traficjams.htm> (Accessed May 2001); *California Highways and Public Works* 37 (January–February 1955): 30.
- ⁴⁶ California Department of Transportation website, <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/saferestr/trafdata/2002all.html>; http://www.scvresources.com/highways/east_los_angeles_interchange.htm. (Accessed May 2001).
- According to a report published by the American Highway Users Alliance, the most congested freeway interchange is the U.S. 101 Ventura Freeway at the I-405 Interchange with 318,000 vehicles. However, because the East Los Angeles Interchange routes six separate freeways, its traffic numbers easily exceed 1.7 million vehicles a day.
- ⁴⁷ "The Case of the 'Spaghetti Bowl,'" *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, October 1959, 18.
- ⁴⁸ *Highway News Bulletin*, Newsletter for Division of Highways District VII.
- ⁴⁹ *California Highways and Public Works* (May–June, 1961).
- ⁵⁰ Heinz Heckerroth, interview by the author, July 2001.
- ⁵¹ *California Highways and Public Works* (November–December 1958): 20.
- ⁵² Sidronio Perez and Alicia Perez, interview by the author, June 2001; Heinz Heckerroth interview by the author, July 2001.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ Heinz Heckerroth interview by the author, July 2001.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; Sidronio Perez and Alicia Perez interview.
- ⁵⁶ *California Highways and Public Works* (March–April 1964): 24; <http://www.clipi.org/ourwork/heritageparkscape.html>. (Accessed May 2001.)
- ⁵⁷ Los Angeles County Population and Housing Data: Statistical Data from the 1940 Census," produced by the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation (Los Angeles: Haynes Foundation, 1944), 28.
- ⁵⁸ Joan W. Moore, *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 14. See also, Gilbert G. Gonzalez, "Factors Relating to Property Ownership of Chicanos in Lincoln Heights Los Angeles," *Aztlan: Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and the Arts* (Fall 1971). East Los Angeles is politically weak, partly because of jurisdictional fragmentation. Los Angeles City Council representatives were concerned only with freeways planned through sectors within Los Angeles City limits, such as Boyle Heights, while the County Board of Supervisors gave attention to plans involving the unincorporated community of East Los Angeles proper. State officials have likewise been divided. The Belvedere section of East Los Angeles was divided into three assembly districts and three congressional districts during the key freeway-planning era, ensuring that although Mexican residents were the highest percentage of the population, they remained the lowest percentage within their voting districts. The 9th assembly district was gerrymandered. Although Mexican Angelenos accounted for a clear majority of the population, the 9th district became an African American voting district in 1961 due to a city council reapportionment.
- ⁵⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, sec. A, December 19, 1994.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ "Rapid Progress on the Harbor Freeway," *California Highways and Public Works* 33 (May–June 1954): 7.
- ⁶² "The Changing Role of your Highway Agency in relation to: People, Automobiles, Highways, Environment, Ecology," prepared by the California Division of Highways, n.d., 5.
- ⁶³ Heckerroth interview.
- ⁶⁴ "Boyle Heights Community Plan," 47; "East Los Angeles Visual Survey," 50; Brodsky, L.A. Freeway, 9.
- ⁶⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 2001; Heckerroth interview.
- ⁶⁶ "Highways From Hell: Meet the Beverly Hills Freeway and Other Visions of a Future We Almost Got," *Los Angeles Magazine*, December 1999, 46; "Can't Stay, but Can't Sell, Beverly Hills Freeway: to Limbo," *Los Angeles Times*, sec. 2, December 7, 1970.

- ⁶⁷ David W. Jones, California's Freeway Era in Historical Perspective, Research Report, Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1989, 227.
- ⁶⁸ South Coast Air Quality Management, "Multiple Air Toxics Exposure Study in the South Coast Air Basin," 2000, ES-3.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., ES-3, ES-5; Patricia van Vliet, Mirjan Knape, Jeroen de Harog, et al., "Motor Vehicle Exhaust and Chronic Respiratory Symptoms in Children Living Near Freeways," Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Department of Air Pollution, University of Wageningen, P.O. Box 238, 6700 AE Wageningen, The Netherlands, July 9, 1996. See also, Nino Kunzli, MD, PhD., et al., "Breathless in Los Angeles: The Exhausting Search for Clean Air," *American Journal of Public Health* (2003): 1494-1499; Michelle Wilhelm and Beate Ritz, "Residential Proximity to Traffic and Adverse Birth Outcomes in Los Angeles County, California, 1994-1996," *Environmental Health Perspectives* (2003): 207-216; Yifang Zhu, William C. Hinds, Seongheon Kim, and Constantinos Sioutas, "Concentration and Size Distribution of Ultra Fine Particles Near a Major Highway," *Journal of the Air & Waste Management Association* (2002): 1032-1042.
- ⁷⁰ California Environmental Protection Agency: Air Resource Board, "Community Air Quality Monitoring: Special Studies; Boyle Heights," November 2003.
- ⁷¹ "More 710 Freeway Fatalities:" *Eastern Group Publications* 58 (October 16, 2003): 32.
- ⁷² "Train Derailment Just One of Many Hazards: With the criticism railroads have gained since the Commerce derailment, Community uproar insists derailment is only the tip of the iceberg." *Eastern Group Publications* 58 (July 10, 2003): 18; "Destination 2030: 2004 Regional Transportation Plan," (Los Angeles: Southern California Association of Governments, 2004), 9.
- ⁷³ Gilbert Estrada, "Transportation and Health in Head-On Collision!," *Southern Sierran* (February, 2004). Also available at <http://angeles.sierraclub.org/news/SouthernSierran.asp>.