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Big changes on horizon for CEQA traffic impact analysis

Stephen E. Velyvis and Amy E. Hoyt

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Window detail, Cedar Gables Inn, Napa (built 1892)
Photo: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP
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NORTHERN NEWS



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OCTOBER 2014

Big changes on horizon for traffic impact analysis under CEQA

By Stephen E. Velyvis and Amy E. Hoyt

It's funny how things work out in the end. At the outset of the 2013–2014 legislative session, California lawmakers responded to years of complaints about CEQA and calls for legislative reform by introducing numerous bills containing various “reform” efforts. Most of those bills, however, did not even make it out of their Legislative houses of origin.

Only one significant CEQA bill made it to the Governor's desk and was signed into law in 2013: SB 743 (Steinberg, 2013). The political will to secure a new NBA basketball arena for the Sacramento Kings provided the impetus that secured SB 743's passage. Not surprisingly, then, the early focus since SB 743's passage has been on the law's CEQA-streamlining provisions and special procedures aimed at expediting construction of the Kings' new arena.

But SB 743 planted another less discussed CEQA-reform seed regarding traffic impacts that is about to germinate in the form of proposed new CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3. The new guideline provisions aim to drastically change how traffic impacts are analyzed and mitigated across California. The first two sections of this article explain how we got to this point and briefly summarize what is being proposed. The final section discusses the potential wide-ranging ramifications of the proposed new CEQA Guidelines.

SB 743: Sausage-making at its best

“Laws, like sausages, cease to inspire respect in proportion as we know how they are made.” Although variations on this well-known quote are often attributed to Otto von Bismark, it is now fairly settled that these are the original words of the American lawyer-poet John Godfrey Saxe (*Daily Cleveland Herald*, Mar. 29, 1869). The story behind SB 743 proves Saxe's comparison is still apt.

To understand how SB 743 came to include the provision calling for new CEQA Guidelines to change how traffic impacts are analyzed and mitigated, we have to go back to 2012 when then Democratic Senator Michael Rubio introduced a controversial gut-and-amend bill at the eleventh hour of the 2012 Legislative session. That bill, SB 317, initially proposed adding a section on fishery management to the state Fish and Game Code until Senator Rubio's last-minute change aimed at CEQA reform. And even though SB 317 did not propose actual changes to CEQA itself, it did propose a related law, called the “Sustainable Environmental Protection Act,” which mandated how CEQA was to be enforced, restricted certain types of CEQA lawsuits, and exempted many other projects from CEQA review altogether.

Rubio's introduction of SB 317 spurred immediate and forceful reactions. Some praised SB 317 as long overdue CEQA reform while others viewed the bill as a declaration of war on CEQA. The furor didn't last long, however, because the Senate quickly killed SB 317 based in part on lawmakers' promises, led by Senate Pro Tem Darryl Steinberg, to take up CEQA reform in a measured, earnest way the following year.

True to their word, legislators introduced more than 20 CEQA-related bills in February 2013, including Steinberg's SB 731, “CEQA Modernization Act of 2013.” SB 731, which touched on various CEQA-related issues and included concepts geared to support infill development, was amended several times and passed out of the Senate in May for hearings in the Assembly. Steinberg also introduced SB 743 in February 2013, which initially proposed amendments to the Public Utilities Code to address solar energy issues.

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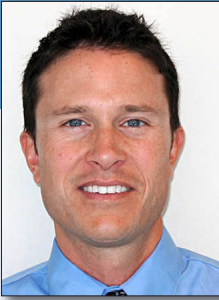
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Can Uber help? "Studies repeatedly show that the vast majority of people in their 50s and 60s want to remain in their current homes as they get older. Problem is, most older adults live in car-dependent suburbs and rural towns. Just one in five older households in rural areas has access to public transit. Those locales won't be suitable when they stop driving (about 24 percent of households 80+ are carless)." —Richard Eisenberg, <http://onforb.es/1q15qhJ>



Director's note

By Jeff Baker

Fall means APA

Autumn is an exciting time of year, with the return to school and a fresh host of planning-related professional events.

The annual APA California Conference always tops the list of fall events. This year's conference, hosted by the Orange Section in Anaheim, was a huge success. It gave us many unique opportunities to reconnect with our planning roots (including our colleges, past and present) and let us recharge our batteries and take in some new ideas.

The Northern Section is no slacker when it comes to offering local, low-cost, educational and networking events. Our calendar is full of certification maintenance and networking opportunities throughout the fall and winter. Check us out at <http://norcalapa.org/calendar/upcoming-events/>. New events are periodically added, so be sure to check back frequently.

Choose your leaders for the next four years

The terms of two elected Northern Section Board positions, **Administrative Director** and **Director-Elect**, expire at the end of this year. Elections for these two positions are scheduled for this November. Each director will serve a two-year term, commencing January 1, 2015, and the Director-Elect will automatically move up to Director on January 1, 2017. Keep an eye out for an email conveying your ballot, and cast your vote!

You, too, can join the Board

Turnover, sadly, is inevitable. Tania Sheyner, AICP, is stepping down from her position as the Northern Section's **Professional Development Director** at the end of this year. Tania has served in this position for more than five years, bringing our members an array of excellent learning and continuing education opportunities. Please contact me if you are interested in being our Professional Development Director. To review the detailed information on the duties for this position, see page 9 (§4.7.13) of the Northern Section Bylaws, <http://bit.ly/1mVz1BI>. ■

Where in the world?



Photo by Hugh Graham. (Answer on [page 11](#).)

<http://justicemap.org> • This highly interactive map lets you visualize race in the United States by census block, and income data by census block, tract, and county. It "includes tools for data journalists, bloggers, and community activists." The map is a product of and sponsored by Energy Justice Network (<http://bit.ly/1IAQOAr>) and Sunlight Foundation, <http://bit.ly/1IAQQrZ>

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Big changes on horizon for traffic impact analysis under CEQA (continued from page 1)

Then, based on growing political and public support behind efforts to retain the Sacramento Kings and thwart their relocation to Seattle, SB 743 was gutted and amended to include provisions easing CEQA review and streamlining CEQA litigation to facilitate the quick approval and construction of a new basketball arena in downtown Sacramento. SB 743 was approved by the Legislature in mid-September and signed into law by Governor Brown on September 27, 2013, but not before Steinberg transferred several of SB 731's concepts aimed at facilitating infill development over to SB 743.

Two of these concepts are notable and both were included in a new CEQA section codified at Public Resources Code section 21099. First, section 21099(d) immunizes infill site projects from aesthetics and parking impact challenges if the project is within a transit priority area. Second, section 21099(b) requires the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop CEQA Guidelines establishing new criteria for analyzing and determining the significance of transportation impacts of projects within transit priority areas that promote infill development, mass transit, and overall greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) emissions reductions. As further discussed below, OPR is currently preparing those new criteria and proposing drastic changes in the process.

LOS → VMT: Out with the old, in with the new

For decades, the focus of CEQA traffic analysis has been to analyze and mitigate traffic congestion. CEQA documents thus typically utilize the "level of service" (LOS) method. This method assigns a LOS grade to each intersection, roadway segment, or freeway interchange in the project area based on the average delay that a driver experiences at those locations due to traffic congestion caused by inadequate capacity. LOS is a qualitative measure used to describe the condition of traffic flow, ranging from uncongested conditions at LOS A to over-saturated, gridlock conditions at LOS F. Cities and counties usually look to their general plans to set the thresholds for determining significant traffic impacts based on this LOS methodology.

Mitigation for potentially significant impacts identified using the LOS methodology typically involves expanding the capacity of the impacted roads and intersections. Frequently imposed mitigation measures include widening roads and adding new turning lanes and traffic signals.

But critics complained that these typical LOS mitigation measures ultimately caused more traffic by inducing more vehicle trips. Critics also argued that the LOS approach ignored impacts to pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.

In response to these complaints, and in an effort to bring CEQA analysis more in line with the GHG emissions reduction goals contained in AB 32 (the state's climate change law), the proposed new

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Big changes on horizon for traffic impact analysis under CEQA *(continued from previous page)*

CEQA Guidelines state that primary consideration for traffic analysis is not the impact at a particular intersection, but instead the “amount and distance that a project might cause people to drive.” The proposed new Guidelines thus shift the CEQA analysis from LOS to trip generation and vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The proposed Guidelines clarify that a project’s impact on automobile delay does not constitute a significant environmental impact. Instead, under the proposal, if a project results in VMT greater than the regional average for that type of project, the impact on transportation may be significant and require mitigation. But instead of historically-common mitigation measures requiring the widening of roadways and intersections, the proposed new Guidelines suggest 14 “potential measures to reduce” a project’s VMT. These measures include:

- “a. Improving or increasing access to transit.
- “b. Increasing access to common goods and services, such as groceries, schools, and daycare.
- “c. Incorporating affordable housing into the project.
- “d. Improving the jobs/housing fit of a community.
- “e. Incorporating neighborhood electric vehicle network”

and various other measures addressing transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Conversely, the proposed Guidelines state that if a project is located adjacent to an existing major transit stop or may lead to reduced VMT, the transportation impacts may be considered less than significant.

In another significant change under the proposed Guidelines, when a project increases roadway capacity or adds new roadways, the project’s transportation analysis must consider whether the project induces additional vehicle trips. Under the LOS method, expanded roadways were often imposed as mitigation measures. But under VMT, they instead must be considered for possible growth-inducing impacts.

The proposed updates to the CEQA Guidelines implementing SB 743 will likely not apply retroactively to projects that have already been approved or that have already begun the environmental review process. Nor will they likely take effect all at once across the state. Instead, the proposal provides that once the new Guidelines are effective, the new procedures will apply immediately to projects located within one-half mile of major transit stops or high quality transit corridors. The Guidelines will then apply statewide on January 1, 2016. In the interim, the proposal allows local governments to opt-in to these new procedures, regardless of location, provided that they update their own CEQA procedures to reflect the choice (pursuant to existing CEQA Guidelines section 15022).

OPR released a preliminary discussion draft document, “Updating Transportation Impacts Analysis in the CEQA Guidelines,” on August 6, 2014, five weeks after the deadline set in SB 743, and is

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CORRECTION

Richard Yan was incorrectly identified as Richard Yen in the opening paragraphs of "Around the Bay in 500 miles" on page 1 of the September issue.

Big changes on horizon for traffic impact analysis under CEQA *(continued from previous page)*

accepting written comments on the draft through October 10, 2014. It is anticipated that the changes to the CEQA Guidelines implementing SB 743 will be finalized sometime in 2015. OPR's discussion draft document can be found at <http://bit.ly/1AAkiQ5>, and comments should be submitted to CEQA.Guidelines@ceres.ca.gov.

Likely result? Denser infill, less sprawl, and decreased greenfield development

Although it remains to be seen what the final version of the new CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3 will include, if the current draft's proposed switch to the VMT metric is retained, it is likely that developers will steer future projects toward urban infill and away from suburban greenfield sites. This is because the historical LOS metric disincentivized urban infill development in areas of existing traffic congestion due to the high cost and technical difficulty of the traditional mitigation measures that required widening roadways and intersections in built-out environments. Conversely, given the relative lack of congestion in outlying suburban areas, using the LOS metric minimized the number of impacts and cost of mitigation measures, thus incentivizing sprawl.

These incentives/disincentives appear set to be turned on their heads with the switch from LOS to VMT. Under the VMT metric, the shorter vehicle trips and the increased use of public transit, walking, and biking associated with infill development will result in fewer impacts and cheaper mitigation measures. And under the new metric, the long commutes and regional commercial supercenters associated with suburban sprawl will now trigger numerous impacts and costly mitigation measures. As we said at the outset, it's funny how things work out in the end.



Stephen E. Velyvis and Amy E. Hoyt are partners in Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP's Oakland and Inland Empire Offices, respectively. Stephen chairs Burke's Environmental and Land Use Practice Team and both regularly advise on and litigate

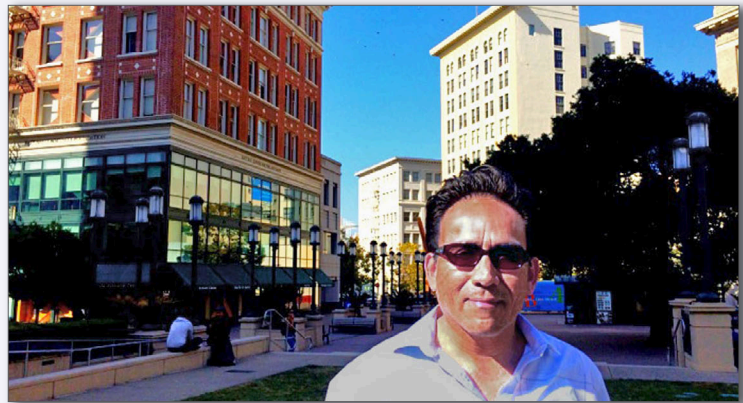
CEQA and other land use and environmental issues for the firm's wide array of public agency and private sector clients throughout California. ■

Kern County defends oil rail shipments. "The Plains All American crude-by-rail transfer station, about 25 miles southwest of Bakersfield, will open later this year without any formal environmental review. The site already had been zoned as an oil facility prior to the current plan to bring trains there. A crude oil transfer station at McClellan Business Park in Sacramento and another in the Bay Area city of Richmond are operating without environmental review because both previously had permits for other types of train transfers." —Tony Bizjak and Curtis Tate, <http://bit.ly/ZirAfV>



My Oakland

Erika J. Sawyer, AICP, interviews Mike Rivera



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Mike Rivera was born in Lima, Peru. As a boy he wandered around the Spanish-Colonial neighborhoods, and that led to his appreciation for historic architecture and living in a dense city. As a teenager, he moved with his family to San Francisco, a place he calls home. Continuing to live in a dense urban environment — and seeing and meeting people from all parts of the world — sparked his interest in urban planning, a profession he loves. Mike currently lives in Oakland and works there as a city planner.

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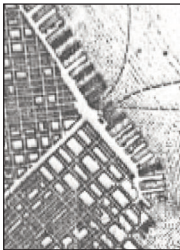
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Why did you choose to live and work in Oakland? Oakland has a great stock of historic homes, warmer weather than San Francisco, an urban environment, and the dynamics for change and growth. Growing up, I felt San Francisco had a lot to offer, but when you're in Oakland and you look across the bay, you feel you're having the best of both cities. I've been amazed by the variety of homes in Oakland — many built in the late 1800s and early 1900s — that give Oakland its character. The homes are charming, and every neighborhood has a story to tell. I don't miss the cold and foggy days across the bay. I look forward to Oakland's weather, which is almost 10 degrees warmer than San Francisco's. That makes it possible to explore the beauty of Oakland's parks, hillside trails, lakes, creeks, and the estuary, any time of year.

What surprises you most about Oakland? Change, and the fact that most people don't want it in their neighborhood. City planners know that this comes with the job, and Oakland is no exception. For the most part, Oaklanders do a good job of accepting change as long as it doesn't affect their well-being.

What do you see as Oakland's strengths? For one, people working together and having the goals and expectations to make Oakland a better place to live. There is a sense of neighborhood and community interest whether a change or a new development is proposed. After all, it's the neighborhood that will be carrying the weight of most changes. It's a win-win when people on all sides participate and work out issues together.

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TODs are gaining, but “don’t count out the appeal of suburbia just yet. Reports of suburbia’s demise as a draw for Millennials are extremely premature — if applicable at all. According to a recent *GlobeSt.com* online poll asking why Millennials are rediscovering the virtues of life outside big urban centers as they enter a different life stage, 47 percent of respondents said the suburbs still corner the market on better services [including] schools, and 42 percent said the cost of city living has made it harder to establish a family and career.”
—Carrie Rossenfeld, <http://bit.ly/X32Gj5>

My Oakland (continued from previous page)

What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the city? One challenge is downtown Oakland. It was a popular destination-shopping district until the mid 1950s when many residents and major retailers started to move out to newly developed suburbs around the Bay Area.

Another challenge is the absence of new quality retail and entertainment in neighborhood commercial areas. They generate tax revenues for the city and create job opportunities for the local residents. In the last few years, the City has worked with communities and developers to revitalize underserved neighborhoods by creating the Broadway-Valdez and the West Oakland Specific Plans. These plans are designed to attract major retail and high-density residential development to serve the needs of local and regional residents, so they won’t have to shop in Emeryville or San Francisco.

While these Specific Plans are underway, the city is getting positive publicity, such as the *New York Times* article listing Oakland as #5 in “The 45 places to go in 2012” (<http://nyti.ms/WRDrjA>), or from social-media bloggers talking about how cool Oakland is. The Oakland Art Murrmur, which takes place the first Friday of each month, has also improved the city’s image. 1st Fridays offer the best of the arts scene: Galleries in the Uptown District display the best work of creative-minds, with pop-up shops that sell custom-made goods. Also, the influx of trendy restaurants, bars, Internet cafes, and new start-up tech companies has created a vibe that attracts local and regional crowds, making Oakland a bustling city.

What is your favorite local neighborhood? Every neighborhood is distinctive in how it caters to different segments of the population, but I must say, downtown is becoming one of my favorite destinations. It wasn’t long after I started to work downtown, in the Oakland Planning Department, that I came to appreciate the urban setting. Like any other major city, Oakland has lots of history. We have mid-rise historic buildings, surrounding downtown districts, and hidden streets and alleys. Oakland is promising and has the “nuts and bolts” for new things to happen. But it takes time for development to occur, because everyone has an interest in how the city develops — which is a good thing.

What do you think most surprises others about Oakland? Well, I’m surprised by the mix of people drawn to Oakland and the new trend of arts and crafts people who are leading the maker movement. I’m also surprised by the large number of new restaurants and bars where you can have fun, eat well, and meet interesting people.

Where do you take out-of-town visitors and why? The Oakland hills are one of my favorite places to take visitors. There are amazing views from the streets — and from the trails you can see Oakland, San Francisco, and other parts of the Bay Area. The hills are a peaceful place to be. The smell of the open air, and being surrounded by nature, add to the tranquility.

Interviewer Erika J. Sawyer, AICP, is a senior planner at Marstel-Day, Oakland. As the firm’s Western Regional Manager, she oversees the Oakland and Oceanside offices and Marstel-Day’s client work in Twentynine Palms. ■

Japan's Bullet Train, the World's first (and still best) high-speed rail network, turns 50

By Cameron Allan McKean, NEXT CITY, August 19, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1tFiinz>

Half a century ago, Japan built the world's first high-speed rail network — a network that remains the gold standard in train travel today.

When it launched on October 1, 1964, the world's first high-speed rail network was known as *yume no chotokkyu* — literally, the “super-express of dreams.” The first line in Japan's now world-famous shinkansen network, which would come to be known as the “bullet train,” was built against all odds, in the face of fierce public opposition, technical difficulties and astronomical costs. The \$80 million loan secured from the World Bank for construction and engineering barely covered expenses, and the head of the project, Shinji Sogō, resigned amid the scandal of an out-of-control budget. People called the team who worked on the project “the crazy gang.”

But when it pulled out of Tokyo Station 50 years ago, the much-maligned bullet train accelerated a process of change that would transform Japan's cities, geography and identity. After the devastation of World War 2, “The shinkansen was the symbol that Japan had not only caught up, but, in terms of railway technology at least, in 1964 had overtaken the rest of the world,” writes Christopher P. Hood in *Shinkansen: From Bullet Train to Symbol of Modern Japan*. It was more than just a train. The 0 Series shinkansen, painted gleaming white with a blue stripe running its length, became an early symbol of the technological ascension Japan would display through the rest of the 20th century.

Today, over 350,000 annual trips transport tens of millions of passengers all over Japan with sublime efficiency — the average delay time is less than a minute. A research report titled “30 Years of High-Speed Railways: Features and Economic and Social Effects of The Shinkansen” by Hiroshi Okada, estimates that the economic impact from the shinkansen train network, based on the time saved from faster travel, is approximately ¥500 billion (\$4.8 billion USD) per year. Okada stresses that the cultural impact is also significant, a shinkansen offers people living far from urban centers “easy access to concerts, exhibitions, theaters, etc., enabling them to lead fuller lives.”



Bullet train for Tokyo stopping at Shin-Kobe station.

Credit: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP

Half a century ago, however, the system was far humbler. In 1964, the first track was the Tokaido Line, a 320-mile-long link between Tokyo and Osaka that reduced the trip from six-and-a-half hours (on conventional trains) to three hours and 10 minutes, traveling at a maximum speed of 200 miles per hour. Although a one-day round trip between the two major cities was possible before, the shinkansen made it useful. For the first time, workers could get to meetings in one city during the day and be back home drinking an Asahi in the local *izakaya* that night. (That Asahi likely wouldn't have been their first of the day — drinking beer and riding the shinkansen go hand-in-hand, to the point that Japanese beer companies produce special commemorative cans for the trains' anniversaries.)

The train expanded mobility profoundly, pulling people from rural areas to the Tokaido Line. Businesses converged around the major stops as a growing emphasis on productivity swept across Japan. Today, the shinkansen network has 1,487 miles of track, with more set to open in the coming years. All along the shinkansen tracks between Tokyo and the southern city of Fukuoka is now an almost unbroken stretch of cities and towns that didn't exist in 1964.

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It seems that everything the shinkansen touches turns to city, and regions that are off the beaten track, so to speak, benefit greatly from the economic jumpstart brought by the train. When the Hokuriku Shinkansen was opened, it halved the travel time between Tokyo and Nagano, and the number of rail passengers grew by 40 percent. When the shinkansen was introduced between Tokyo and Hachinohe, ridership increased by 60 percent. In one exceptional case the number of riders on a new segment of the Kyushu line increased by 240 percent. New shinkansen lines are often preceded by aggressive marketing campaigns promoting tourism in those areas, a strategy that seems to work.

But the changes that the first shinkansen heralded — a modern era built on innovative engineering and design — now, to some degree, feels like the distant past in Japan. In 2014, the Far East archipelago is saddled with a troubled economy, struggling rural areas, and an aging population. Can a high-speed train solve those problems, too?

The Council for Transport Policy has a plan, known as the One-Day Travel Initiative. It's goal: regardless of where you are in Japan, it should only take you three hours to get to the nearest major regional city (Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Sapporo, or Fukuoka). Thanks to the shinkansen, this goal has almost been achieved. The planned impact of this hyper-mobility is to stem the tide of migration toward hungry urban centers, like Tokyo, and encourage decentralization.

New trains are being developed, such as the Maglev, which could further reduce travel times between Tokyo and Osaka — the original shinkansen route — to a single hour. You can picture the marketing materials: “Why live in an expensive, crowded city when you could have a house in the country and commute to work each morning, then enjoy a beer all the way home on the super-express of dreams.”

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It costs more to fail in a big city. “Mid-size cities are wooing young, tech-savvy entrepreneurs and investors away from coastal cities. They’re unable to offer the Golden Gate Bridge or Fenway Park to a recent college graduate with the next great idea. But they can offer affordability and an increasingly attractive urban culture. As they see it, they just need to spread the word.”

—Sam Sturgis, <http://bit.ly/1uvjn8>

It can't happen here, right? “Because of a combination of urban policy and program failures, the flood zones surrounding the Kashmir region’s waterways are not clearly demarcated based on how much flood load the river can carry. Because of this, no clearly defined regulations exist about where it’s safe to build. The result is encroachment of the river bed with residential and government buildings (even hospitals). The river ‘embankments,’ meant to stop the flooding, only give a false sense of security, enabling more careless building.” —Tanvi Misra,

<http://bit.ly/ZirNje>

Who's where



Marco Arguelles has accepted a position as a Project Coordinator with CBRE, a global real estate services company. Making a career shift towards real estate development and services, Arguelles will serve under CBRE's Project Management Services. He previously was an intern in the Transportation Division, City of Menlo Park. Currently finishing his master's in urban planning

at San Jose State University, Arguelles also serves as Northern Section's Peninsula Regional Activity Coordinator (RAC). He holds a Bachelor's in Environmental Design from the University of Colorado, Boulder.



Claudia Cappio is now Director of California's Department of Housing and Community Development. She had been Executive Director of the California Housing Finance Agency since 2011. Cappio served as Oakland's director of planning, building, major projects, and the Oakland Base Reuse Authority, 2000–2007, and as planning and building director for Emeryville,

1995–2000. She holds a B.A. in Urban Studies from Ohio Wesleyan University.



Ralph Boone McLaughlin, PhD, is now Housing Economist at Trulia (San Jose), producing weekly housing market reports for *Trulia Trends*. He previously was Assistant Professor of Urban and Regional Planning and Director, Institute for Metropolitan Studies, at San Jose State University. McLaughlin holds a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from UC Irvine and a BS in

Geography and Regional Development from the University of Arizona. A native of Mountain View and San Jose, McLaughlin has been the District 4 Representative to San Jose's Housing and Community Development Commission since December 2012 and continues in that post.



Jonathan Schuppert, AICP, is now a Senior Planner for Alta Planning + Design. He currently serves as the Northern Section's South Bay Regional Activity Coordinator (RAC). Schuppert worked with RBF Consulting, a Company of Michael Baker International, as an Associate Planner/Designer for two years and an Assistant Planner/Designer for six

years. Before RBF Consulting, he was a Planning Intern with Crawford Multari & Clark Associates (San Luis Obispo) and a Rail Operations Intern with the San Mateo County Transit District. He holds a BS in City and Regional Planning from California Polytechnic State University–San Luis Obispo. ■

Answer to "Where in the world?" (Page 3)

Denver. Looking southeast from Little Raven Street in Confluence Park to the Four Seasons Hotel a mile away. Photo: Hugh Graham, May 2014.

No country does it better. "The Netherlands consistently leads the way when it comes to water management. Nowhere is that more obvious than the Dutch government's \$2.8 billion Room for the River project, <http://bit.ly/1qJ3TID>. Instead of fighting the water, Room for the River embraces the concept of seasonal and tidal flows. It re-imagines the existing landscape and provides better protection for the four million Dutch people living in areas prone to flooding."
—Rachel Keeton, <http://bit.ly/1qJ4hXI>

Further your career this fall

Get a 10 percent discount on UC Davis Extension courses

APA California members receive a 10 percent discount on most Land Use and Natural Resources courses at UC Davis Extension. You can earn **AICP | CM** credits, stay up to date on the new policies, laws, and practices, and learn from experts in the field.

Building a Career as an Environmental Planning

Professional: This two-day workshop provides an overview of skills important to a successful career in various fields of environmental planning in both the public and private sectors. Instructors: Paul Cylinder and Sydney Coatsworth.

AICP | CM 12.0

Climate Action Planning and Implementation: Learn a complete process for climate action planning — from getting started to implementation and monitoring, including many examples from local practice. Instructors: Michael Boswell and Tammy Seale. **AICP | CM 12.0**

Groundwater Law and Hydrology: Acquire a working knowledge of groundwater law and hydrology, and discover new developments in case law, legislation, and practice. Instructors: Kevin O'Brien and Tom Elson. **AICP | 6.0**

Habitat Conservation Plan Implementation: Examine the techniques and best practices for implementing Habitat Conservation Plans, Natural Community Conservation Plans, and other types of regional conservation plans for endangered species. Instructor: David Zippin. **AICP | 6.0**

Practical Guide to Updating the General Plan: Learn how to budget a project, hire consulting assistance as necessary, and finish the project in an efficient but comprehensive manner. Instructors: David Early and Richard Walter. **AICP | CM 6.0**

Subdivision Map Act Parts I and II: Learn about the Subdivision Map Act — the law that governs the dividing of land into smaller ownership units in California. Instructor: Michael Durkee. **AICP | CM 12.0**

The Intersection Between Transportation and Land Use: Explore the inextricable link between transportation and land use in the development of general plans, community plans, and site plans. Instructors: Heidi Tschudin and Ron Milam. **AICP | CM 14.0**

Understanding the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta: An Overview of Delta Governance and Regulation: Gain a comprehensive overview of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and an understanding of its significance to California. Instructor: David Sandino. **AICP | CM 6.0**

For course details and to enroll, visit www.extension.ucdavis.edu/land

The new urban cemetery. “Rather than taking a loved one to a cemetery or crematorium, architect Katrina Spade has designed a space where bodies are composted into reusable earth. [One motivation] is the environment, and the harsh toll that the funeral industry can take on it. We bury 30 million board feet of hardwood and 90,000 tons of steel each year, and use 750,000 gallons of embalming fluid. [And there’s] the issue of space — as cities get bigger and space gets more constrained, there simply won’t be room for the same kinds of cemeteries we’ve been using.”
—Rose Eveleth, <http://theatln.tc/1qKvpoC>

The numbers on climate change. “With every year that passes, we’re getting further away from averting a human-caused climate disaster. The world’s major economies are increasingly failing to do what’s needed to limit global warming to 3.6° F above preindustrial levels. That was the target agreed to by countries attending the United Nations’ 2009 climate summit. The global economy needs to ‘decarbonize’ by 6.2 percent every year until the end of the century to limit warming to 3.6° F. But carbon intensity fell by only 1.2 percent in 2013.” —James West, <http://bit.ly/ZirdSG>

The Napa quake — before and after

Precious pieces of Napa's past were badly damaged in the earthquake of August 24, 2014. As of Sept. 5th, 125 structures were red-tagged, and another 1,036 were on the yellow tag list. We all must hope that as many buildings as possible will be repaired and reopened.

These July 2011 photos show just a few of the red-tagged buildings in Napa's historic downtown. The "before" images are by Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP. The quoted portions of the captions are excerpted from *Napa, An Architectural Walking Tour*, by Anthony Raymond Kilgallin (Arcadia Publishing, 2001).

After looking at the "before" images, check out the "quadcopter test" ("after") HD video (6:30) at <http://youtu.be/LQhYbflzOn4>. Video credit: Evan Kilkus.



The Semorile Building (1886). Ground floor tenant Bounty Hunter reopened on Sept. 4. The building "is an outstanding example of Victorian commercial architecture."



Goodman Library (1902), 1219 First St. An "example of [H. H. Richardson] Romanesque combined with Beaux-Arts elements. This 'free public library' remained in use until 1974."



The Center Building (1904), 816 Brown St. Constructed of rough-cut native stone and brick, this is one of only a few stone buildings remaining in the city of Napa. "The decorative stone trim of the windows is a major feature with quoins and radiating stones at the window heads in a contrasting color accenting the windows."

(continued on next page)

New Division proposed for American Planning Association

If you are an APA member and concerned about fire hazards, earthquakes, hurricanes, or flash floods, you may be interested in a new Hazard Mitigation and Disaster Recovery Planning Division being proposed for APA. If approved, the Division will become APA's 21st.

In order to form a new division, 300 APA members must commit to being a member of the division (\$25 per year). You can read the proposal, proposed bylaws, and proposed work plan and budget, and sign the petition, at <http://bit.ly/1ok6jqL>. ■

Northern Section seeks Professional Development Director

Would you like to be more involved in APA and give back to your profession? Are you an AICP member in good standing, living or working in the Bay Area? Then you should apply to become Northern Section's **Professional Development Director**.

The Professional Development Director — with assistance from the AICP Director and the Regional Activity Coordinators — organizes and develops a Section professional development program for continuing education of practicing planners and makes arrangements for professional development meetings and events. This director is automatically a member of and serves on the Section Board.

If you qualify and are interested, please contact Section Director Jeff Baker at Jeff.Baker@dublin.ca.gov. To review the detailed information on the duties for this position, see page 9 (§4.7.13) of the Northern Section Bylaws, <http://bit.ly/1mVz1BI>. ■

The Napa quake — before and after (continued from previous page)



The U.S. Post Office, 1351 Second St. An Art Deco style “familiar throughout the country in post offices constructed during the 1930s. Grooved pilasters set apart the massive vertical windows; large eagles are sculpted into the frieze above the north facing doors.”



Alexandria Square (1910), Second and Brown Streets. Formerly the Alexandria Hotel, this is “Italian Villa style applied to a commercial building. The second and third levels — the most architecturally significant — have retained their original design.” ■



Norcal roundup

Assembled by Jennifer Piozet, associate editor

Transport is key to drawing people to Bay Area

GlobeSt.com, September 5, 2014

Natalie Dolce, <http://bit.ly/1sd4h1V> • “Bill Cumbelich, EVP with CBRE, said the Bay Area private sector is doing its job in terms of building and growing, but some of the biggest issues facing the region have to do with infrastructure and traffic. Mary Erchul, president of the American Council of Engineering Cos. of California, agreed that infrastructure is one of the biggest [challenges] facing California today. ‘We are looking at water shortage and a lack of funding in general for transportation,’ she said. To help the [traffic] situation, she explained, ‘We have to look at innovation, better ways to do what we are doing, and work together in our industry to come to more technical solutions.’”

“Erchul talked about looking at the efficiency and sustainability of the BART cars as an example. ‘They can’t go to infinity with the system they have. Transportation will keep up with the pace — it is only a matter of time — it has to. The future of transportation is key to getting people to want to live in the Bay Area,’ she said.

“As for the funding shortage, Erchul said, ‘We have to look at different ways of financing, and use the resources we have in engineering and work together with public and private partners to move forward.’”

San Jose BART extension gets State funding

San Jose Mercury News, August 21, 2014

Daily News Staff Writer, <http://bit.ly/1pCffhw> • In mid-August, “elected and appointed officials celebrated the final installment of more than \$760 million in state money for a planned 10-mile extension of BART to north San Jose, to be completed in 2018. The \$2.3 billion extension is being paid for by Santa Clara County using a \$900 million federal grant, state funds, and money raised from sales tax measures passed by county voters in 2000 and 2008. The expansion, to include the Milpitas and Berryessa stations, will be owned by the VTA and operated by BART through a contract agreement, expanding BART's rail lines to 120 miles and 47 stations in the Bay Area, according to the VTA.

“Trains on the extension will arrive every 7.5 minutes and are expected to carry an estimated 46,000 riders per day by 2030, with trips to San Francisco to take about 60 minutes from Berryessa, VTA officials said. When the Berryessa station is completed, it will have an open-air boarding platform 35 feet above ground and a 1,200-space parking building to go with ground-level car spaces. The VTA is also working on plans to develop a proposed second 6.1-mile phase for BART, with a 5.1-mile subway tunnel beneath downtown San Jose ending with a ground-level station near the Caltrain depot in Santa Clara. Funding for the second phase is not secured yet, according to VTA officials.” ■

Unsettling development for train terminal

Streetsblog SF, September 5, 2014

Aaron Bialick, <http://bit.ly/1pFMzyg> •

“Developers who are building towers around the Transbay Transit Center in SoMa are fighting to reduce a special property tax that will be levied on developments in the area. The biggest loser could be the downtown rail extension to bring Caltrain and California high-speed rail into the terminal, as funds for the regional rail hub and other long-term projects would disappear. The group of developers is backed by former mayor Willie Brown, who registered as an official lobbyist to work for them in July. Brown previously helped create the Transbay Joint Powers Authority to oversee the massive package of projects centered around what’s been called the ‘Grand Central of the West,’ expected to open in 2017.

“In exchange for the city allowing them to increase the height and density of their projects, the property owners agreed two years ago to be assessed up to \$400 million to help pay for a Transbay Transit Center rooftop park and other public improvements to the area. Only now, thanks to skyrocketing property values and changes in the city’s methodology for calculating the assessments, the developers — paying into what’s known as a Mello-Roos special district — could face up to \$1.4 billion in charges.

UPDATE. “On September 9, the Board of Supervisors agreed to delay its vote creating the Transbay Transit Community Benefits District for two weeks to allow time for the terms of the tax district to be tweaked.

“Developers said they would drop their plans for a lawsuit in return for the deal. The city will still collect up to \$1.4 billion in taxes from property owners around the new transit center for the Caltrain, and possibly high-speed rail, connection. But the revenue would come in over 37 years instead of 30 to extend the life of the tax district to make it more palatable for the property owners.” <http://bit.ly/1pYQExF>

(Norcal roundup continues on next page)

SPUR shelves road diet for Great Highway

Streetsblog SF, August 27, 2014

Aaron Bialick, <http://bit.ly/1vGvrRc> • “SPUR has set adrift its proposal to halve the size of the Great Highway along Ocean Beach, as the group strives to avoid distracting attention from implementing the other priorities in its Ocean Beach Master Plan. SPUR calls the OBMP ‘a comprehensive vision to address sea level rise, protect infrastructure, restore coastal ecosystems, and improve public access.’ It also includes proposals to remove other sections of the Great Highway that are threatened by severe erosion, in what’s called ‘managed retreat.’ But the ‘most controversial’ piece of the OBMP plan, said Grant, was the proposal to remove two of the four lanes on the main stretch of the Great Highway, as well as adding parking spaces along that stretch to replace those that would be removed south of Sloat.

“The OBMP traffic study found that the Great Highway typically carries about 18,000 cars a day, less than half its capacity of 40,000. The road diet would remove the two coast-side traffic lanes and create a buffer space for rebuilt dunes. That could reduce the roughly 60 times each year when the highway is closed due to sand blowing on to it. During sand closures and Sunday Streets events, drivers are detoured on to Lower Great Highway, a residential street. The opposition to the road diet primarily comes from Lower Great Highway residents, who fear that removing lanes will divert more car traffic to their street at all times.”

Expanding water taxi in central Bay Area

The Examiner, September 3, 2014

Chris Roberts, <http://bit.ly/1scYNEu> • “Taxis on the Bay could someday relieve congestion on The Embarcadero and on the crowded F-Market Muni line, and transit via the Bay could become a necessity rather than a luxury once the new neighborhoods planned for Treasure Island, Mission Bay, and Pier 70 are built.

“Currently, commuters take ferries to work in The City. In other major coastal cities in the world, people use boats for trips within city limits in the same way City residents would use a taxicab, Uber, or a Muni bus.

“So far, the Water Taxi has a small but dedicated following, captain Dave Thomas told *The San Francisco Examiner*. About 15 people a day pay \$10 to ride between Hyde Street pier and AT&T Park, with a stop at the Ferry Building. ‘And for that, you get the best view in The City.’ The boats should start making a fourth stop near the Exploratorium soon. The next water taxi stops are planned for Mission Bay in time for the grand opening of the Golden State Warriors’ new arena in 2018.

“The limited service is in stark contrast to places like Hong Kong, Boston, and Sydney, which offer dozens of boat-based transit options, including boat service to airports as well as tourist attractions and centers of commerce.”

America’s best small towns, right here

The New York Times, August 21, 2014

Jake Flanagan, <http://nyti.ms/1oWSBQF> • “What are the options for Americans in search of a quieter life, bigger backyards, or better public schools? Op-Talk (a new feature of NYT Opinion) assembled the best of the Internet’s small-town rankings. The Golden State, predictably, cleaned up.”

To visit (or live in, if you can afford it):

Carmel-by-the-Sea. “Tourists come to what was once a funky artist’s colony to shop, browse galleries, eat in quaint restaurants and cafés, attend the annual Bach Festival, or simply walk the beach.” —*Condé Nast Traveler*

Napa. “The rolling hills, vineyards, and gorgeous inns of Napa Valley draw anyone in search of a small slice of Europe in Northern California.” —*Condé Nast Traveler*

Santa Barbara. “The capital of the American Riviera: an unbeatable location, a balmy climate, wineries, museums, nature preserves, and beaches.” —*Condé Nast Traveler*

Healdsburg. “With damp morning fogs and blistering afternoon sunshine, the place is so fertile anything grows. The eat-local movement has fully flowered in Healdsburg.” —*Smithsonian*

Calistoga. “Western-style shops along Lincoln Avenue; the historic hot springs and Old Faithful Geyser of California — and fast-food franchises are outlawed.” —*Fodor’s*

To live in:

Danville. “This family friendly community has the highest health care coverage of the towns in our top 10. The Iron Horse Regional Trail runs through the downtown and is popular with hikers and runners.” —*Nerd Wallet*

San Ramon. “One of the highest-earning cities in the U.S., with a poverty level at 2.6 percent. Easy access to the outdoors, the nearby Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, and the Bishop Ranch Regional Preserve.” —*Nerd Wallet*

(Norcal roundup continues on next page)

Individual overseas investors saved SF Shipyards project

The World Post, August 21, 2014

Matt Sheehan, <http://huff.to/1AGgaQs> • “Candlestick’s demolition will kick off the next stage in San Francisco’s largest redevelopment project ever. Over the next 15 years, the San Francisco Shipyards project will create more than 12,000 housing units, hundreds of acres of parks, [and nearly 4 million] square feet of retail, office, and commercial.

“Money flowing into the project is part of a recent infusion of Chinese capital into long-dormant developments in the Bay Area. Chinese [investors,] through the federal EB-5 program, [hope] to obtain residency permits for themselves and their families in exchange for investments of \$1 million (\$500,000 in high unemployment areas like the Shipyards).

“[When] developer Lennar Urban’s plans [for] a \$1.7 billion loan from China Development Bank fell through in 2013, Lennar began to lean on money raised through its EB-5 partner organization, the San Francisco Bay Area Regional Center (SFBARC).

“Lennar Urban signed an extensive community benefits agreements in exchange for being gifted over 700 acres of public land. That agreement stipulates tens of millions of dollars for job training and sets high goals for local employment in all phases of the project. It also provides for 30 percent of the future housing to be priced below market rates.

“Local leaders have specifically pledged not to repeat what happened in the Fillmore, stressing that the Citizens Advisory Committee has spent nearly two decades shaping the project so that it benefits the community.”

Large offices seeking locations near transit have few alternatives to SF

GlobeSt.com, August 26, 2014

Natalie Dolce, <http://bit.ly/XQ2CEk> • “Tenants seeking alternatives to pricy large blocks of office space (100,000 sq. ft. or larger) in San Francisco have only six alternatives that are within a half-mile walking distance of a BART station and available for occupancy within 18 months. Five East Bay options — in Oakland, Concord, and Hayward — have asking rents averaging \$27 per square foot annually on a full service basis. The one San Francisco Peninsula option is in Daly City, with an asking rent of \$45.

“San Francisco has five large blocks of office space available for occupancy within 18 months, totaling 737,000 square feet (average rent \$70 per square foot annually). San Francisco continues to tighten with more large tenants than large blocks, says Bill Cumbelich, EVP of CBRE. The incredible urban ‘tech-cluster’ that has developed, with access to labor talent in San Francisco, is unmatched in the Bay Area.”

Historic ‘Measure J’ survives in Santa Cruz County

Santa Cruz Sentinel, August 19, 2014

Jason Hoppin, <http://bit.ly/1s0Rxst> • “Faced with the loss of millions in affordable housing money annually after redevelopment agencies across the state were nixed, the county hoped [to] bolster depleted coffers” by eliminating “a 36-year-old requirement to build affordable housing as part of large housing developments.” A second change would have applied “a fee of \$15 per square foot to all new home developments, including single-family residences.” But the board decided against both changes.

“Under Measure J, passed in 1978, developers of projects of five units or more are required to set aside 15 percent of the units for buyers who meet certain income limits. That provision has provided only about 14 affordable units annually since it went into effect. A county consultant suggested allowing developers to instead pay into an affordable housing fund in the hopes of freeing up the market.”

“To provide some incentive to keep projects that include Measure J’s affordable units, the board [instead]

- “lifted a cap on the price of those units to make them affordable to families making 110 percent of the area median income — a move that actually makes those units affordable to fewer people,”
- “made it easier for developers to build slightly denser housing projects,”
- “eliminated Measure J’s affordability requirements for rental housing projects,” and
- “lowered a requirement that residential projects rezoned from commercial districts make 40 percent of the units affordable.” ■

'Three feet for safety'

ABC 7 News, September 2, 2014

Rob Hayes, <http://bit.ly/1qgzZL8> • “They’ve got their helmets, they’ve got their lanes, and soon California bicyclists will have another form of protection from drivers: a buffer zone. ‘Motorists are required to give bicyclists three feet whenever they’re passing,’ CHP Officer Edgar Figueroa said. Starting Sept. 16, that’s how much room a driver must keep between his vehicle and a bicyclist. It’s called the ‘Three Feet for Safety’ law, something cycling advocates like Wes Reutimann, President of the Pasadena Athletic Association, were pushing hard for.

“In 2012, more than 150 bicyclists were killed in California in accidents involving motor vehicles, according to the CHP. So-called ghost bikes mark the spots where cyclists have died. Regardless of how fast or how slow a bicyclist is going, the CHP says there’s really no excuse for breaking the upcoming three-foot rule. The penalties for breaking the three-foot law vary from county to county, but the first offense could cost drivers anywhere from \$100 to \$200.”

Statewide plastic bag ban first in nation

Huffington Post, August 30, 2014

Aaron Mendelson, <http://huff.to/1udxcUd> • “The California state legislature enacted a ban on plastic grocery bags near the end of its two-year session, a measure that if signed into law would become the first of its kind in America. A number of cities and counties in California and other U.S. states, including Hawaii’s Maui County, have made it illegal for grocery stores to pack purchases in plastic. But at the state level, opposition from plastic bag makers has usually prevailed. The California Senate voted 22–15 for the bill, which must be signed into law by Sept. 30 by Governor Jerry Brown, who has not signaled a position on the measure.

“The measure would ban grocery stores from handing out single-use grocery bags with customers’ purchases, and provide money to local plastic bag companies to retool to make heavier, multiple-use bags that customers could buy. Environmentalists have pushed for banning plastic bags, which are cheaper for supermarkets to use than paper bags, but create mountains of trash that is difficult to recycle. In California, there is particular concern that the bags, when swept out to sea, could harm ocean life. Cathy Browne, general manager at Crown Poly, a plastic bag manufacturer in Huntington Park, California, said the bill would lead to layoffs at companies like hers.”

IFD legislation passes in Sacramento

CP&DR, August 31, 2014

Martha Bridegam, <http://bit.ly/1sf7zla> • “A bill expressing Governor Brown’s long-standing goals for Infrastructure Financing Districts (IFDs) passed the Legislature early Saturday morning, August 30, and was sent on to the Governor. If, as expected, the Governor signs it, SB 628 would expand the existing but underused mechanism of IFDs, with the idea that they could take up some former functions of the state’s abolished local redevelopment districts. The mechanism would be simpler, more focused on infrastructure, and more dependent on electoral approval, without the flexibility or protections for the existing urban public that were built into Redevelopment over the years. The IFD’s [final] legislative language picked up two major changes.

- “SB 628 removed a prior 55 percent popular vote requirement to create an Enhanced IFD, though it still requires a 55 percent vote for any such district to issue bonds.
- “SB 628 also softened a requirement on post-redevelopment disputes. [Instead of blocking] local governments and/or special districts from using the Enhanced IFD mechanism unless they first ‘resolved all litigation’ with the state over the redevelopment dissolution process, ‘it says that they can’t use any assets of a former redevelopment agency that are the subject of litigation [involving the state] to ‘benefit’ the new IFD entity.’

“[Nevertheless,] each would-be Enhanced IFD creator must first receive a Department of Finance ‘finding of completion’ regarding assets managed by the successor agency for its former redevelopment agency.” [Full text] at <http://bit.ly/Z38w1C>.

(California continues on next page)

Legislature passes groundwater package

Mercury News, August 30, 2014

Jessica Calefati and **Josh Richman**, <http://bit.ly/Z2Ou11>

• On the last day of the 2014 legislative session, California “lawmakers approved a package of bills designed to regulate the pumping of groundwater for the first time in California history.” Governor Brown has until Sept. 30 to sign the bills.

“Democrats acted on the measures over the strong objections of Central Valley lawmakers from both parties who represent farmers now struggling to survive the third year of a serious drought by pumping an increasing amount of groundwater to irrigate their crops.

“Said Assemblyman Roger Dickinson, D-Sacramento, the sponsor of one of the bills, “We’ve been overdrafting groundwater in this state — not just this year, not just since the drought started, but for decades.”

“Although landowners who seek to divert water from reservoirs and rivers have been required to get a permit to do so since 1914, farmers and cities who tap underground aquifers have always been allowed to pump as much as they want. Now water tables in places such as the San Joaquin Valley and Paso Robles have dropped dangerously low.

“Until now, California had been the only western state that didn’t regulate groundwater pumping.”

Central Valley housing market is hot

Central Valley Business Times, August 20, 2014

<http://bit.ly/1AzuqKF> • “Given the depletion of distressed homes on the market, investors are moving away from purchasing homes in more popular, urban areas in parts of the Central Valley, according to CAR’s ‘2014 California Investor Survey,’ conducted in May 2014.

“Forty-five percent of investors said they purchased properties in Sacramento, San Joaquin, Fresno, Kern, Merced, and Tulare counties, up from 27 percent in 2013. Fifteen percent purchased properties in Northern California in 2014, down from 27 percent in 2013, and 40 percent purchased properties in Southern California in 2014, down from 50 percent last year.

Additionally, with home prices on the rise, more investors are flipping properties instead of renting them. In 2014, 28 percent of investors flipped the property, up from 20 percent last year. Fifty-eight percent of investors rented their properties in 2014, down from 73 percent in 2013.

“The median sales price of an investment property in 2014 is \$320,000, up 9.6 percent from \$292,000 in 2013, reflecting increasing home prices and fewer available distressed properties over the past year.

“CAR’s “2014 California Investor Survey” was emailed to a random sample of Realtors throughout California who had worked with investors within the 12 months prior to May 2014.”

LA’s Emerald Necklace

Next City, August 19, 2014

Sarah Goodyear, <http://bit.ly/1tFkThi> • “The Emerald Necklace Expanded Vision plan, a multi-partner visionary project spearheaded by Amigos de los Rios and the Conservation Fund, aims to connect the forests of the San Gabriel mountain range with the waters of the Pacific through a network of public park space, bike and walking trails, and restored waterways. It’s an ambitious plan that will require coordination of the 88 cities and dozens of public agencies in the L.A. Basin to achieve.

“The Emerald Necklace was inspired by a plan developed nearly a century ago at the behest of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. In 1930, the Chamber commissioned Olmsted Brothers (the legacy firm of the great landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted) and Bartholomew Associates to design a network of parks

and green space that would provide recreational and health benefits to the residents of the rapidly growing city.

“Conflicts over jurisdiction and other power struggles meant that the Olmsted-Bartholomew plan was never executed, and Los Angeles today is a metropolitan area where many citizens lack access to such space. Only 36 percent of kids in Los Angeles live within a quarter-mile of a park. In San Francisco, that number is 85 percent, and in New York, it’s 91 percent.

“The Emerald Necklace would change all that. The new, expanded plan provides, according to the Conservation Fund, ‘a comprehensive and strategic guide to creating a network of parks and public open spaces connected by river greenways and trails.’” ■

Storefront retrofits help barren streetscapes

Streetsblog USA, September 5, 2014

Angie Schmitt, <http://bit.ly/1xwds1Z> • “Every city has places where the buildings present a blank face to the sidewalk: A dark, recessed arcade deadening the pedestrian environment, or a soulless concrete wall fronting a windswept plaza. Consultant Brent Toderian, formerly the planning director for the city of Vancouver, pointed out a cheap and easy solution. He calls them ‘blank wall retrofits,’ storefronts that can be inserted over blank walls to add sidewalk-facing retail. ‘It’s a great technique for dealing with fundamentally flawed architecture that presents blank walls to streets and public places,’ Toderian says. ‘Unlike murals, this fundamentally changes the street edge condition. It potentially changes un-urban to urban.’” The post includes photos submitted by readers from across North America.

Can Columbus control its sprawl?

A|N Blog, September 4, 2014

Chris Bentley, <http://bit.ly/YrxuLD> • Columbus, Ohio, is a growing city with no physical barriers to expansion. “The Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), Columbus 2020, and ULI Columbus hired Calthorpe Associates to assess the development impact of current trends and make recommendations aimed at curbing patterns that could balloon the region’s environmental problems and its residents transportation budgets.”

“From the current city land area of 223 square miles, said the study, Columbus and its suburban jurisdictions could swallow up an additional 480 square miles by 2050 if current trends continue. The culprits include large lots for single-family homes and traditional suburban-style development.

“If population growth continues — MORPC said the region will add more than half a million new residents by 2050 — the study warns Columbus will lose its ability to attract new residents and jobs.

“These trends raise important questions about the vitality and competitiveness of our communities and region,” reads MORPC’s website, <http://bit.ly/YryqPX>.

“The study is part of a larger effort (*insight2050*, <http://bit.ly/YryEa3>) that hopes to chart a course for sustainable development in central Ohio. Calthorpe sketched out four development scenarios for projected growth in the region, which found effective planning could reduce 480 square miles of new sprawl to just 15.”

The suburban poor

Slate, September 4, 2014

Reihan Salam, <http://slate.me/1uCZcyL> • “The suburbs have long been a welcome refuge for families looking for a safe, affordable place to live. But for many Americans, the suburbs have become a trap, ... fundamentally inhospitable to those who find themselves at the bottom of the economic ladder.

“Since the initial rise of the suburbs, families have changed. Married couples with children have fallen from 42.9 percent of all households in 1940 to 20.2 percent of all households in 2010... The most dramatic change has been the steep increase in one-person households, from 7.8 to 26.7 percent of the total. Families have also been

transformed by rising female labor force participation, with women now serving as the sole or primary wage earner in four in 10 U.S. households with children.

“The problem is clear: Much of our built environment still bears the imprint of the postwar era, despite the fact that the families that were characteristic of that era are no longer dominant. A single-family house built for a mother, a father, and a pair of kids is not a terribly attractive option for a single adult, nor is it affordable when we factor in the cost of upkeep. But the first step toward solving this suburban crisis is recognizing that it is in fact a crisis.”

(U.S. continues on next page)

Have Americans fallen out of love with driving?

Fortune, August 15, 2014

Chris Matthews, <http://bit.ly/1wcnNyt> • “The number of miles Americans are driving has remained stagnant over the past several years. Is this the end of American car culture?”

“The unemployment rate has fallen from a high of 10.1 percent to 6.1 percent, and consumer spending has continued to rise at a steady pace except for a small blip during the worst of the recession. Yet one statistic — miles driven — has been stagnant for almost seven years. The independent research firm Behind the Numbers argues that we’re entering a new era in which Americans simply prefer to drive less. They write:

- ‘Boomers are getting older and driving less.’
- ‘Millennials are less interested in driving, and are now the largest generation in the US.’
- ‘The trend toward living near the urban core reduces the need for driving.’
- ‘Higher gas prices discourage driving.’
- ‘Mass transportation is winning over more consumers.’

[On the other hand,] “fuel prices per hour worked is far lower than in the mid-1990s, the trend of Americans moving to the ‘urban core’ seems to be slowing, [and] as Millennials start to settle down, get married, and have children, it’s quite possible that their relative aversion to suburban life and cars will soften a bit.”

“There’s plenty of reason to believe that America’s love affair with the car is beginning to cool, but it’s probably a bit early to declare this case closed.”

Beachfront vs. climate change

CityLab, August 29, 2014

Anthony Flint, <http://bit.ly/1rDoVnF> • “It’s the end of summer, and I bicycled one last time past a beach house named ‘High and Dry.’ Maybe today, I thought. But in 30 or 40 years? Probably not.

“This year, there’s something sinister about being near the water. It’s the grim reality that, because of climate change, these places are going to be very different in 30 to 50 years. Many of the most sought-after houses on the coastline will be erased from the landscape.

“The insurance companies are well aware of what’s happening. The message is clear. The ‘For Sale’ signs with ‘Waterfront’ across the top might as well be the black mark used for condemned buildings.

“The urban planning world has also shifted, from aspirations of ways the built environment can contribute to reduced emissions, to the necessary steps that need to be taken to protect human settlement. This move from mitigation to adaptation, the focus on resilience, is based on acceptance of rising seas and related disruptions, from wetter wets to drier dries, regardless of what the planet agrees to do about burning fossil fuels over the next decade or two.

“It’s the end of another summer, and we’re making plans for a year from now. And that’s the exceptional quality of climate-induced sea level rise. Next year, for the most part, everything will be mostly the same. We can come back and won’t notice any discernible change at all.”

Smartphone — transport’s most important innovation

CityLab, September 4, 2014

Eric Goldwyn, <http://bit.ly/WIBsnc> • “Almost all movement in a major city now begins with a phone. Mobile apps and interfaces help people do everything from sort through route options to locate an approaching bus or hail a taxi or for-hire vehicle. While cities and transportation regulators have released data and encouraged innovation through contests and hackathons, no U.S. city has aggressively pursued development of an integrated app that enables users to plan, book, and pay for trips across multiple travel modes. Instead, the likes of Uber, Google Maps, CityMapper, and RideScout have demonstrated what is possible, and controlled the movement market to date.

“The result is a huge missed opportunity to upgrade urban transportation networks by making them more unified. As more and more of the transport system falls into private hands and becomes fragmented, multi-modalism risks declining, and cities will lose out on valuable data on where people want to go, how they travel, what’s slowing them down, and how the network is operating. A publicly operated unified mobility app has enormous potential to eliminate barriers between modes, use existing infrastructure more efficiently, and bring the entire transport network to the smartphone.”

Related article about Apple Pay at <http://bit.ly/11YTI7m> ■

Boom reaches China's exurbs

NEXT CITY, September 4, 2014

Will Doig, <http://bit.ly/Wlx4EO> • “It took the U.S. centuries to grow from urban centers to suburbs to exurbs, but China seems to be doing it in one fell swoop. A 2004 study found that these peri-urban areas are projected to add 250 million people over the next three decades. And just like in the U.S., the sprawl is encouraged by the government — mandated, actually, since the government controls all urban land use. What essentially happens is this: The Chinese government requisitions cheap rural land and converts it to ‘urban use,’ which makes it government property. This new designation also makes it more valuable, which allows Beijing to sell it to developers at a profit. (Since there’s no private ownership of urban land, it’s just selling the right to use it.)

“This creates vast tracts of underused urban sprawl on land far, far away from city centers — land that has only been classified as urban because doing so generates revenue for the authorities. It’s hard not to wonder what will become of these places. In the U.S., we’ve seen in the last few years what happens to ill-conceived exurbs that were built in irrational locations. Should China’s urban boom stop short for whatever reason, these far-flung tracts of its urban geography may look less like an economic miracle and more like a bureaucratic boondoggle.”

Russia warming faster than rest of planet

Quartz, August 27, 2014

Gwynn Guilford, <http://bit.ly/1rBkFuN> • “Changes in wind and ocean currents caused by global warming shift heat around unevenly, causing some areas to heat up dramatically even as other regions cool. Russia is in the unusually hot category. Between 1976 and 2012, average Russian temperatures rose 0.43°C (0.8°F) per decade — more than twice the global average of 0.17°C — according to a new report out by Russia’s climate and environment agency. This is a big problem for a variety of reasons, say Russia’s climate scientists. Hotter temperatures appear to be driving a spike in episodes of dangerous extreme weather.

“The frequency of forest fires in the Siberian taiga, Evenki, and Khabarovsk regions and in the far northeast have surged between 30 percent and 50 percent in the past two to three decades. The forest fires that often accompany summer heat waves give off noxious fumes. In 2010, this smog caused Moscow mortality rates to double.

“One of the arguments that Putin and others have advanced in favor of global warming is that it will make more of Russia’s land arable. That is happening, as agriculture shifts to central and northern parts of the country. However, drought is hurting output in Russia’s breadbasket region. The melting of permafrost could galvanize Russia’s mining and oil industries by making nickel, copper, diamonds, oil, and natural gas more accessible.”

‘Europe is burning our forests for renewable energy’

Grist, August 25, 2014

Ben Adler, <http://bit.ly/VRgXhM> • “If you’re driving through the South and you see a denuded field filled with stubby new plantings where lush forest once stood, the blame might lie with the European Union’s clean energy rules. E.U. countries with smaller renewable sectors turned to wood to replace coal. But most European countries don’t have a lot of available forest. So they’re importing our forests, especially from the South.

“Wood accounts for a majority of renewable energy generation in Poland and Finland, and nearly 40 percent in Germany. It is especially appealing to British energy utilities, because the government offers generous subsidies for renewable energy, and its solar industry is not nearly as advanced as Germany’s.

“The E.U.’s initial rationale suggested that young trees consume more CO₂ than older trees. Policymakers figured that burning a tree for energy could be carbon neutral if you planted a replacement tree.

“Wood shipped to Europe from the West Coast has much higher fuel emissions from transportation than if it is from the East Coast. The process of chopping trees into wood pellets and shipping it across the Atlantic, and the energy involved in burning it, all add to the total carbon intensity. While in certain scenarios, burning wood pellets can have a ‘very low’ greenhouse gas footprint, other scenarios result in greenhouse gas intensities greater than electricity from fossil fuels, even after 100 years.”

(World continues on next page)

'Climate response goes local'

Brookings, August 28, 2014

Devashree Saha and **Mark Muro**, <http://bit.ly/1vGhNxq> •

"Without more forceful action to curb emissions world-wide, the impacts of climate change in the coming decades will be 'severe, pervasive, and irreversible,' says a leaked draft report from the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It's a grim story except for one thing: According to the IPCC, while national action remains weak, regions and localities all over are taking up some of the slack by taking truly substantive actions to reduce the effects of climate change.

"Nowhere is this trend more visible than in the United States. Currently 32 states and scores of local governments have plans to address climate change while a few others enacted binding carbon pollution restrictions. The nine-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and the California-led Western Climate Initiative highlight how U.S. sub-national actors have been successfully experimenting with caps on carbon pollution from electric power plants in the absence of a national framework. California's emission reduction targets are some of the boldest in the nation, and its cap and trade program has been widely considered a success, raising \$1.4 billion in its first year.

"With that said, states and regions can't do it all. Not only does [our] federal government need to enact policies to significantly decrease greenhouse gas emissions nationally, but it also needs to partner effectively with states and regions by providing aid and technical assistance."

Green spaces from gray boxes

PopUpCity, August 29, 2014

Lucy Steeds, <http://bit.ly/1sfDeR> • "Parklets have been popping up all over North America, with San Francisco piloting the very first public parklet scheme in 2009. Montreal's parklets [summer only, because of the weather] are especially visually stimulating, with some being painted in bright colors and striking patterns by local artists.

"The innovative parklets are made from old shipping containers and take up no more than three parking spaces. The containers, which are adapted with large open windows, are filled with benches and flower boxes, giving residents and passers-by a place to stop and take in the activities of the street.

"Temporary parklets such as those in Montreal are an economical intervention as they provide much needed urban space but still function as parking spaces for the rest of the year. Until October, Montreal pedestrians are invited to relax or picnic in the sunlight, in this old recycled container cool island."

No slums: Hanoi's policy of legalizing unplanned structures

The Guardian, August 11, 2014

Lauren Quinn in Hanoi, <http://bit.ly/1t4Pppl> • "On a typical Hanoi wall, crisscrossing layers of plaster, paint, and mildew, you will see a multitude of stenciled adverts, all with similar fonts and a string of numbers beginning with 09, and all including the letters KCBT. It's an abbreviation for khoan cắt bê tông — concrete cutting and drilling. These are illegal adverts for demolition services, and they tattoo the walls of the city, as if to say, 'See this building? It could be gone tomorrow.'

"The stenciled numbers have become ubiquitous. They tell of the illegal construction that has shaped much of Hanoi's rapid growth. Haphazard it may be, but the city's expansion has one feature that makes it stand out among peers of its size and level of development — its relative lack of slums." ■



Recently constructed buildings along the highway from Hanoi to the coast, 2011. Photo: Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP

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