

# Northern News

NORTHERN SECTION, CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

## Ruminations on Rail-Volution

by Robert R. (Bob) Piper, Ph.D.

FEBRUARY 1999

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MUNICIPAL ENGINEER

Last September's Rail-Volution Conference in Portland, Oregon, was focused on the theme, "Building Livable Communities." This reflected a maturing of this annual coming together of rail transit buffs; not just transportation planning, not just land use planning, but community planning. Over one thousand attended, from an astonishing variety of places. Some 75 American cities, from Alaska to Puerto Rico, are seeking Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for LRT or commuter rail or both. Under existing legislation, the FTA has funds for only a few of these projects. The highways-oriented Chairman of the House Transportation Committee wanted to give rail nothing but bowed to pressure by Representatives from all across the country. Rail has become politically fashionable.

Most attendees were aglow over the success of Portland. Oregon voters recognized early, over 25 years ago, that transportation and land use are linked, and they moved to integrate the planning of both. The Portland core has rebounded since the 1960's. It is healthy and vibrant. Private developers vie for the opportunity to build transit oriented development (TOD) around suburban stations of the LRT line that now extends both east and west.

While high density development, or "compact development", is accepted for Portland infill, it still faces opposition in the suburbs. We visitors focused admiringly on the TODs but the majority of new development takes place in open country, beyond walking distance of any LRT station.

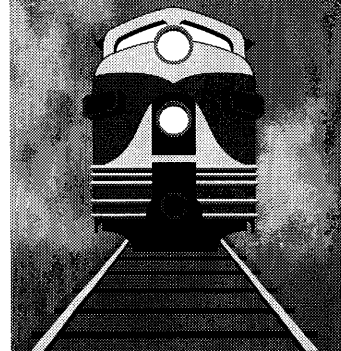
This should come as no surprise. Few passengers walk as far as half a mile to a rail station, and even less to bus stops. Most walk less

than a quarter mile. Market penetration in the outer rings is minuscule. Result? The effective walk-in catchment area is around 0.2 square mile, 130 acres. Not all of these can be developed. Some are needed for parking and public spaces. Some are occupied by employment generators. How many acres are left to house an expanding population?

Enthusiasts tout TODs as a way to reduce automobile dependency. To do so TODs must absorb significant fractions of our growing population. We have to re-think how dense they must be. Rocket science it ain't. You have, perhaps, 100 acres to work with. At an average of 10 units per acre—three people per unit—you lodge only 3,000. You need 333 stations to absorb 1,000,000 new residents. For 30,000 people per TOD (33 stations), you need buildings tall enough to require elevators, and development of the air rights over the tracks. Townhouses and small lot sizes won't cut it. The environmentalist dilemma is that you cannot combat the automobile without embracing high rise, and vice versa.

Among the interesting Rail-Volution presentations was one by Professor Greg Thompson. He is a veteran of the original UC Davis student-operated transit operation and instigator of San Diego's Tijuana Trolley, this country's first (and successful) post World War II LRT. He suggests that LRT ridership would much greater with TODs based on employment rather than on residences. In integrating land use and transportation, we must look at both ends of the journey. To increase transit market share, employment must be clustered within walking distance of stations, not separated by

(continued on page 4)



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## DIRECTORS CORNER

by Mark A. Rhoades

Happy New Year everyone. I hope this issue of the Northern News finds you in good spirits. This is my first Director's Corner and I look forward to serving the section for the next couple of years. I would like to thank Wendy Cosin for her leadership the last several years, and I look forward to continuing to work with her. This next year will prove to be an interesting one, and the Northern Section board is greeting it with enthusiasm. I expect that it will be a challenging year for me after being recently appointed as acting Current Planning Manager for the City of Berkeley.

On January 30th, the board held its annual retreat. The energy with which the meeting was conducted, and the sense of excitement that carried us through the day impressed me. This year the board decided to simplify its goals and concentrate on three things: presence, outreach, and cost effectiveness. We are planning a number of events that will be smaller, and conducted on a regular basis. We have a board subcommittee, and several other section members who will develop a web site. We will be working more closely with other Bay Area organizations to bring you access to a range of events and activities.

On February 20th there will be a State Chapter meeting in Burlingame. If anyone is interested in attending, please contact me for information. The next Northern Section board meeting will be at 6:30 on March 4, at the City of Berkeley Permit Services Center. In April nominations are due for the Northern Section Awards program. Finally, we currently have 2 positions open on the board including Director Pro Tem, and Legislative Liaison. Please call me, or another board member if you are interested. Thank you.

## May 1999 AICP Exam Registration Deadline

If you received exam eligibility approval from AICP, you must now follow through and register for the next comprehensive exam to be held Saturday, May 8, 1999. The registration deadline is March 15, 1999.

The registration form and \$240 exam fee arrive in the AICP Washington, D.C. office on or before the deadline. For more information, contact AICP at 202-872-0611 (E-mail AICP@planning.org)

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The deadline for submitting materials for inclusion in the **Northern News** is the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month prior to publication.



## An evening of inspiration....

An Architecture and Design Forum at SFMOMA (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art); *Bay Area Dreaming*  
Thursday, February 25, 7:00 p.m.

This will be a panel discussion with discussants to include Willie Brown and Jerry Brown.

Tickets are \$9 (\$5 for museum members). For ticket information, call SFMOMA at 415-357-4027. Call soon—this will be a popular event.

A few of our members are planning to get together at The Thirsty Bear, 661 Howard St., at 6:00, and walking together to MOMA. Please come join us. Be sure to buy your tickets in advance!

RSVP to Sowmya at 415-546-0400, ext. 49, or email:  
sowmya@smwm.com

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts co-sponsor *The Edifice Complex: Building Museums in San Francisco*

Trustee's Auditorium, de Young Museum  
Wednesday, April 7, 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

This panel, moderated by San Francisco architect Hans Bauldauf, addresses the building and relocating of museums in San Francisco, engaging issues of city planning, public policy, design, visual display, and architecture. The panelists will discuss the new roles of the museum as a "community resource center," "secularized church" and "social club," as well as the shift in emphasis from collections and acquisitions to education, visitor amenities, and new technologies.

Tickets are \$8 general (\$5 FAM and YBCA members, \$3 students and seniors.) For information and tickets, call 415-750-3624

## APA Transportation Division workshop: Saturday, April 24 in Seattle

In response to members' calls for more substantive transportation discussion at the national conference, APA's Transportation Division announces a one-day workshop, "Quality Transportation Planning: Critical Issues," to be held in the SeaTac International Airport Auditorium in Seattle on the Saturday before the Annual Conference. The workshop runs from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and will be followed by a reception.

National discussants will be Jim Gosnell (SCAG), Chris Sinclair (Transcore), Reid Ewing (LDR Assoc. and Rutgers), Jim Bunch (Mitretek), and several others — including you if you attend. Gloria Jeff, past division chair and current deputy administrator of FHWA will provide a review of national policy directions, focused on implications and issues for planners rising from TEA-21 and FHWA's strategic planning effort.

Registration is a deal at \$45 for division members (\$50 at the door) and \$80 for others (join the division for \$30 and

save!). Capacity is limited; pre-registration is strongly encouraged. Breakfast, lunch, and reception are included in the workshop fee.

This workshop will not be advertised in regular APA conference materials, so you must send name, address, phone, fax, e-mail and check (to "APA Transportation Division") to the Division Treasurer, Joe Marking, PB Booker Associates, 1831 Chestnut Street, St. Louis, Mo. 63103-2225; Tel: 314-206-4312; E-mail: marking@pbworld.com. On-site hotel information will be included in your registration confirmation package.

Note: Division leaders will go from this workshop directly to TRB's second invitational workshop on April 25-28 in Irvine to help set the national research agenda for "Refocusing Transportation Planning in the 21st Century." Be part of this discussion. Contact: Linda Howe, AICP, Transportation Division Chair, Tel: 510-231-5678, E-mail: lhowe@its.berkeley.edu  
[Electronic version available]

The Bulletin Board section of the Northern News is intended to provide a forum for individuals to provide the membership with information about events or current topics. If you would like to submit an item for the Bulletin Board section, contact the Newsletter Editor at (510) 642-3258.

# Rail-Volution ...

wide thoroughfares, parking lots, or fancy landscaping. Think about it, Silicon Valley executives.

The Portland concept is a hierarchy of TODs: compact development around rail stations linked by bus to less compact transit villages. In this way, population growth can be absorbed at lower fiscal, economic, and environmental cost than the typical, California sprawl. There is still sprawl outside the TODs but less of it.

Even with their aggressive plans, Portland will probably not achieve their goal of reducing Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) per capita by ten per cent over 20 years. They may come close. Transit market share will greatly increase. Under our Bay Area Regional Transportation Plan, by contrast, VMT are to balloon by 46 per cent over 20 years, while transit modal share tumbles.

Downtown Portland enjoys a complementary mix of bus and rail transit, as do truly urban cities like San Francisco, New York, London, Paris, etc. In the suburbs, rail attracts development. Buses feed that development and serve the less heavily traveled corridors.

The rush to invest in rail stems in part from its productivity advantage over buses, as well as the superior ability of rail stations to support development. The long term problem of buses (aside from image) is productivity. A conventional city bus seats around 40, suburban and articulated buses a few more. Rail cars, LRT or train, can be buckled together so that one operator can haul 200-1000 seats. As the general wage level climbs, so do wages of operators, bus and rail alike. Real cost per seat-mile is headed inexorably upward. It has done so since World War II, bringing financial distress to

(continued from page 1)

scheduled bus services throughout the industrialized world. The cost trend afflicts rail but with lower impact per seat-mile. Eventually some rail transit systems will function without on-board operators at all. Prototypes already exist at a few airports.

Ironically, Portland's LRT may ultimately bump up against a productivity ceiling. The 200 foot long downtown blocks limit train lengths to two cars; otherwise they block intersections when stopped for passenger loading/unloading. Longer trains might require going underground, but few expect voters to approve the associated investment.

Oregonians are not yet ready to stop subsidies to driving. Parking at LRT stations is free but, with the emphasis on livable communities, in structures. Valuable, near-in land is devoted to development other than parking lots. There are no barren tundras like those that surround BART stations and discourage walking in or out. There is no more enthusiasm in Oregon than in California to charge motorists enough to recoup the economic and social costs they engender.

In short, Building Livable Cities has become a chic theme but remains a fuzzy, distant goal. Portland has come a long way but they have much further to go. In California we have barely left the starting blocks.

*Dr. Piper is a freight transportation consultant in Berkeley. He has 10 years experience in transit, rail passenger service, and airport planning and in economic development. He was Director of Transportation for the City of Berkeley 1976-1978. His avocation is working with the Sierra Club on transportation and land use issues.*



### Coastal Program Analyst I

### Coastal Program Analyst II

CA Coastal Commission

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The CA Coastal Commission is testing for Coastal Program Analyst I & II. Excellent benefits, positions state-wide. Requires college degree with emphasis in planning, ecology, marine biology, geology, geography, coastal management, environmental science, natural resource management, public policy, or related field (seniors admitted) OR four years planning experience and college degree. Written test in April and interviews in May/June in northern and southern CA. All phases of exam conducted in CA. For exam announcement available in mid-February, call (415) 904-5430. <http://ceres.ca.gov/coastalcomm/index.html>. Mail application by stated deadline to CA Coastal Commission, 45 Fremont St. #1900, San Francisco, CA 94105 EOE/ADA

### City Planner

Santa Rosa, CA

Salary: \$ 3848-5417/mo.

There is one current vacancy in the Community Development Department. The Planning Division provides current and advance planning services for a growing community of 136,000. Solid foundation in planning principles and practices. Strong communication, interpersonal and customer service skills. Requires sufficient experience in public planning; equivalent to a BA degree with major study in a related field and a valid CA driver's license. Final Filing Date: 3-26-99. City app. & supplemental questionnaire required. Obtain mats from: City of Santa Rosa Human Resources Department, Rm 1, 100 Santa Rosa Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95404 (707) 543-3060 (voice), (707) 543-3063 (TDD). EOE



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City of Fremont, CA

Salary Range \$63,672 - \$85,968

The City of Fremont is seeking an innovative, experienced senior planner to manage its current planning section and act as the City's zoning administrator. The successful candidate will demonstrate strong team leadership and teamwork skills, have excellent writing skills, and a very good working knowledge of CEQA and California planning and development law. Position is responsible for managing the preparation of evaluations of all current development projects for conformance with City standards and policies. Master's degree in planning or related subject, experience in a public agency, supervisory/management experience, and 3 years experience as an Associate Planner (or equivalent senior staff level) is highly desirable. Recruitment period: 2/22/99 - 3/19/99. Call the Personnel Office at (510) 494-4747 to obtain application packet.

**Associate Planner**

City of San Ramon

Salary: \$4,037 - \$5,504

Requires working knowledge of CA planning, zoning and development laws, 3 yrs. governmental planning exper. and BA. with major in urban or regional planning or other closely related field. Position performs variety of functions, incl. review/analysis of development proposals for compliance with City policies and regulations; preparation of written reports and correspondence incl. making recommendations on development proposals; oral presentations to city boards and commissions; attendance and facilitation of public meetings; review/evaluate architectural drwgs. and construction plans for residential and commercial developments, and assistance to the public at counter and on phone. For application form contact City of San Ramon at (925) 275-2200. EOE. Apply by 2/26/99.

**Assistant Planning Official**

City of Palo Alto

Salary : To \$6,846/Month7.5

We are seeking an urban planning professional to take the lead in supervising the long-range and special studies section of the City's Planning Division, providing technical direction, training and support to other division professionals and coordinating planning studies with city and county agencies. Position requires a Bachelor's degree in Urban Planning and 5+ year's of increasingly responsible experience, including a demonstrated ability to successfully manage and supervise projects. Candidates must have excellent communication and presentation skills. We offer competitive salaries and fully paid benefits. For consideration, please send/fax resume to: City of Palo Alto, Attn: Leslie Jennings, Human Resources, 250 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301. Fax (650) 329-2696. For more information, visit our Web site at: [www.city.palo-alto.ca.us](http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us). EOEM/F/D/V.

**Project Planner - Parks**

City of Fairfield

Salary: \$3828 - \$4653/mo.

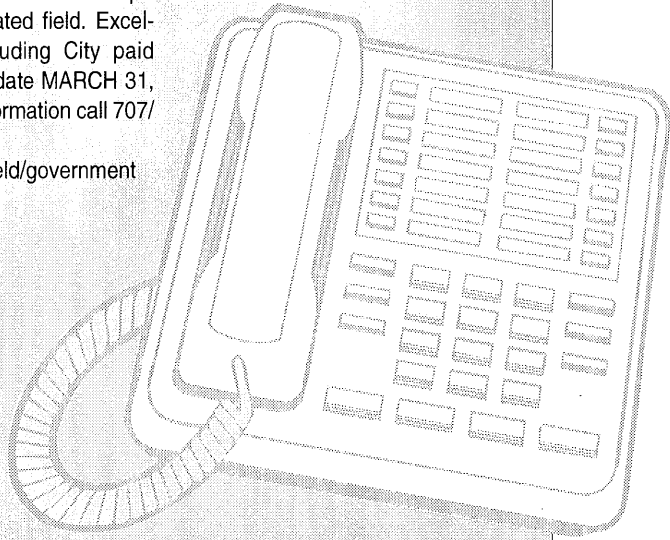
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**Senior Planner**

City of San Diego

Salary: \$3953 - \$4781/Month

The City of San Diego is currently seeking interested applicants for the position of Sr. Planner for both current and future vacancies. Requires a Bachelor's degree which must include a minimum of 18 semester or 24 quarter units in Urban Planning, Urban Studies, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Economics, Geography, Geographic Information Systems, Public Administration, Life Science (such as Biology, Zoology, Ecology, Botany), Environmental Studies, or a closely related field; AND three years of full-time professional planning experience in one or more of the following areas: general and community planning, transportation planning, urban planning, zoning administration and enforcement, environmental analysis, resource management, landscape architecture, architecture, or site planning. Master's degree in one of the above fields may be substituted for one year of experience. For more information, call the Jobline at (619) 682-1011 or you can access us on the web at [www.ci.sandiego.ca.us](http://www.ci.sandiego.ca.us). Applications are available at the City of San Diego Employment Information Center MWF only, 1200 3rd Ave., Ste. 101, San Diego, CA 92101. EOE. Apply January 22 to March 2, 1999.



# 1999 Northern Section CCAPA Awards Program

Each year the American Planning Association, through its sections and chapters, conducts an awards program to acknowledge outstanding efforts in the profession. The Northern Section has been quite successful over the years in obtaining state and national recognition for its nominees who have been granted local awards, and encourages interested individuals, planning agencies and consulting firms to submit applications.

Awards are granted in several categories, and in many cases the categories include awards for both small and large jurisdictions. The categories are:

- |                          |                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ◆ Comprehensive Planning | ◆ Planning Implementation      |
| ◆ Planning Project       | ◆ Innovative Use of Technology |
| ◆ Focused Issue Planning | ◆ Advocacy Planning            |
| ◆ Contribution to Women  | ◆ Education Project            |
| ◆ Academic               | ◆ Distinguished Leadership     |
| ◆ Distinguished Service  | ◆ Journalism                   |
| ◆ Media                  |                                |

Award nominations are rated against criteria such as innovation, transferability, originality, quality and implementation by a jury of planners from the Northern Section. Successful nominations are then forwarded to the state jury for consideration of a state award.

For further information and application materials, contact Wayne Goldberg, Northern Section Awards Coordinator, P.O. Box 1678, Santa Rosa, CA 95402-1678. (707) 543-3220.

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**NORTHERN SECTION CALENDAR**

**February**

- 20 State Chapter meeting, Burlingame  
(contact Director Mark Rhoades)
- 25 *Bay Area Dreaming*, SFMOMA, 7:00 p.m.

**March**

- 4 NSCCAPA Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m.  
City of Berkeley Permit Services Center
- 15 Registration deadline for May 8 AICP exam

FEBRUARY						
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28						

MARCH						
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**Northern News**

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