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## The land use-traffic connection comes to Santa Cruz in a May 22 forum

By Paul Wagner

Issues develop just as humans do. First come the tears and tantrums, then the resentful initial learning that soon gives way to loud adolescent chest-beating, and finally, the act of sitting down to face the somber, complex adult facts.

The strongest sign that our local transit conversation is reaching maturity--way beyond the early-'90s "my favorite vehicle is better than your favorite vehicle!" and the teenager-y millennial "we'll *force* them out of their cars"--has appeared in the form of a remarkable multiple-host forum this Thursday evening. Its title: Designs for a Green Future: The Transportation-Land Use Connection.

Here's the premise, from the sponsors: "In our state, vehicle miles traveled increases at twice the rate of population. This wipes out any reduction in greenhouse gas emissions gained by better vehicle efficiency. Changes in land use development are needed in order to achieve any reduction in emissions."

Put starkly, we can only solve the problems inherent in tens of millions traveling the state each day--congestion, road cost, pollution and the health and social hardships that come with it--by reducing travel. Since travel is a strict, unforgiving mathematical sum of distances between origins and destinations, we must shorten those distances.

That means ridding ourselves of the 1950s-era low-density, minimum-height planning and zoning rules still in place in many localities, including Santa Cruz County, in which growth control has prevented megasprawl, but archaic density and height limits have continued to crowbar growth into the countryside, leaving more residents dependent on gasoline-powered vehicles. In other words, forcing people into cars.

"It's not realistic to invite people out of their cars and into alternative transit if it's so inconvenient to do so," says Rick Longinotti, who as a member of the Campaign for Sensible Transportation helped launch Thursday's forum. "So we realized it was time to initiate some community dialogue."

Eighteen co-sponsors, from People Power to Brooks Properties (disclosure: *Metro Santa Cruz* is one), are supporting a forum of speakers from numerous disciplines. Among them are Lois Fisher, who designed the nation's first-ever smart-growth ordinance code for Petaluma; Christopher Pizzi, who specializes in redesigning neighborhoods as lively, vital transit-oriented zones; Amanda Eakan, who's working with new state Senate leader Darrell Steinberg to set state rules for smart growth and assistant county planning director Mark Deming.

The goal? "Stimulate people's imaginations about how we can redesign our neighborhoods," says Longinotti. Sounds good to us.

*DESIGNS FOR A GREEN FUTURE Thursday, May 22, 7pm at Live Oak Grange Hall, 1900 17th Ave., Santa Cruz. Free. For information call 831.425.0341.*