



Moving People Quickly and Sustainably to Work, School and Play

Summer 2009

»»» IN THIS ISSUE

Interview:

Marcela Escobar-Eck, Chair of the Board of Move San Diego

Scott Peters: Dear San Diego Transit-Wishers

MoveSD Take Action:

MoveSD's proposal for the "Mid-Coast Corridor" transit infrastructure

Move MoveSD News:

FAST Planning Presentations

MoveSD requests new performance indicator in Regional Comprehensive Plan

Interview: Marcela Escobar-Eck, Board Chair

Marcela is the former Director of the Development Services Department and worked as a planner for the City of San Diego for 20 years. She was also Planning Director for the City of Carlsbad and is now in private practice.



Marcela Escobar-Eck

Q. What motivates you to volunteer for MoveSD?

A. Public transit is near and dear to my heart because it's so important to great cities. I was born in Colombia, raised in New York City and in the Bay Area and didn't have a car until I went to college. When I worked for the City of San Diego, I would take the Coaster as often as I could.

Q. Do you think San Diego can ever catch up with their public transit system?

A. Absolutely! It's really required for us to achieve smart growth. We were leaders in transit when, in 1981, we were the first City in North America to implement a light rail line. Twenty-five years later, we are well positioned to be leaders again by applying current global best practices in transit to our region. Yes it will take great changes, but that's why MoveSD is so important and so worth supporting.

Q. What are the greatest impediments to transit improvements?

A. Of course we love our cars! And our region was built-out around cars – so that's a challenge. But market research shows that San Diegans will take transit if it meets their needs. It must be fast, reliable and connect more key employment centers with existing density. MoveSD research shows that we can create a high-service regional transit infrastructure that's worth the investment.

Q. Transit has been severely cut, aren't you concerned that it's irrelevant politically?

(continued on page 4)



P.O. Box 87588
San Diego, CA 92138
(858) 272-0347

info@MoveSanDiego.org
www.MoveSanDiego.org





Moving People Quickly and Sustainably

Scott Peters: Dear San Diego Transit-Wishers

San Diego News Network, April 24, 2009

With state and local tax revenues plummeting, there is no way to avoid cuts to government programs, including transit subsidies. That means fewer bus lines, spottier service and higher fares, which... is not much of a marketing strategy.

Unfortunately, many advocates for transit are really just interested in helping the poor. That's honorable, but it misses the point. A subpar system won't get better for the poor if it doesn't work as transportation for everyone. The service won't be better and the fares won't be lower.

And by the way, Advocates for the Poor, if we accept the status quo transit mindset, transit is just another way that the poor are separated from everyone else. It doesn't have to be that way – look at DC. Georgetown squawked at planners' notion of a metro stop – “not our kind of people” – and they stopped it. Now their merchants have realized (oops) that the riders who can't get to Georgetown on the metro have briefcases and wallets. The briefcases and wallets choose the metro because it's better than the car, even though poor people are also secretly riding on it.

But you gotta wonder about the long term viability of any outfit that is so dependent on annual subsidies for operations. And it doesn't make sense – as many have suggested – to take money for future capital investments and spend it on today's operations. I know we want to protect those who only have transit to get around – “life-line” transit riders – but when the capital investment money runs out, we are back to where we started or worse. There won't be any life-line transit if there's no transit at all.

To summarize, as my wise friend Pam says, “transit s**ks because no one uses it, and no one uses it because it s**ks.” But do not despair, transit-wisher; there is yet hope.

Budget crises can bring planning opportunities. In the next year, SANDAG is reviewing its Regional Transportation Plan, giving us all an opportunity to push our transit system to be more competitive. Maybe now is a time for a new look, to plan for a system that works better, whether the model is Portland, Denver, Brisbane Australia or anywhere in the world with a world-class system.



Scott Peters

Also, gas prices will increase again as the economy recovers. That's going to put a lot more consumer eyes on our trains and buses, impelling more voters to become riders.

And California has passed two groundbreaking environmental laws that could support transit. AB 32 will require our region to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; SB 375 will require our local governments to plan future land uses that reduce “vehicle miles traveled.” These laws may help us learn just how much the environment loves transit and hates cities built for cars instead of people.

So with a little public engagement, constructive thought, economic trending and legal compulsion, here's hoping we might make some improvements.

Scott Peters is a commissioner for the San Diego Unified Port District, a former council president for the city of San Diego and is member of the Move San Diego Board of Directors.

See Scott's complete commentary on the San Diego News Network website, www.sdn.com/sandiego/2009-04-24/news/politics-city-county-government/scott-peters-dear-transit-wishers



MoveSD Take Action

MoveSD’s proposal for the “Mid-Coast Corridor” transit infrastructure

MoveSD has proposed an alternative for the upcoming Environmental Impact Report for transit services in the “Mid-Coast Corridor” between the community of Old Town and the northern boundary of the City of San Diego. The “Corridor” as defined by the existing EIR done in 1995, “contains approximately 75 square miles bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west, Del Mar and Carmel Valley to the North, Kearny and Sorrento Mesa to the east and Mission Valley to the south.”

MoveSD’s proposal is designed to provide better connectivity, shorter transit travel times and greater expandability and scalability than what is currently being proposed as the preferred alternative: simply extending the Trolley.

MoveSD’s proposal includes:

- Reconfiguring the proposed trolley services as an upgrade to the existing Coaster services. This would allow for more frequent Sprinter-like services with a rail tunnel

(continued on page 4)



MoveSD News

FAST Planning Presentations

MoveSD presented FAST Planning principles to the City of San Diego’s Land Use & Housing Committee on February 18th. A follow-up presentation with Council Member Todd Gloria, resulted in his endorsement of Move San Diego’s FAST Transit Planning Principles.

Other presentations have been made to: State Senator Christine Kehoe, San Diego Regional Sustainability Partnership Transportation Committee, La Mesa Chamber of Commerce Smart Growth community forum, American Lung Association San Diego/Imperial County Chapter, San Diego Women’s Environmental Council, UCSD Extension, Building Industry Association, San Diego Social Media Breakfast, Highway Development Association, Southwestern Yacht Club, San Diego Sierra Club, Conservation Committee, Political Committee and Executive Committee, San Diego Eco Investment Club, La Jolla and Del Mar Rotary Clubs and the Urban Design Council.

If you would like a presentation, please contact us.

Please endorse our FAST Planning principles online at our website, MoveSanDiego.org

MoveSD requests new performance indicator in Regional Comprehensive Plan

MoveSD provided public testimony to the SANDAG Board’s RCP 2008 Performance Monitoring Report requesting that they add a new performance measure related to transit. While the RCP reports on driving times in key transportation corridors for eleven trip pairs, the RCP does not report transit travel times. This is a critical missing component required to measure if we are making progress toward smart growth. Given that the underlying factor required to increase transit ridership – and key goal of the Regional Transportation Plan – is competitive trip times, transit trip times need to be published. Another benefit is that transit trip times are easily available using sdcommute.com.

As of this writing, SANDAG has taken no action on this suggestion.



Interview: Marcela Escobar-Eck, Move San Diego Chair

(continued from page 1)

A. Yes it has been a target for cuts, but that doesn't mean it's not still important to cities. We cannot sustain the quality of life we expect and demand without smart transit. Looking globally, in high population areas, cities without decent transit suffer from high pollution and traffic congestion. Healthy cities will require better performing transit. It is also going to be key to reducing climate change emissions being required by both state law and sound science.

Remember, this is also an important issue for

economic growth – especially for hi-tech and clean-tech workers. Businesses will not want to locate – and existing businesses face recruitment challenges when they can't show potential key employees that there is an alternative to being stuck in traffic every day. MoveSD is working with the Regional Economic Development Corporation and other businesses and community members to educate decision-makers about the strategic importance of transit – and we'd like everyone who has ever been stuck in traffic to join us!

“Mid-Coast Corridor” proposal

(continued from page 3)

under the Golden Triangle and feature a joint Coaster/Amtrak station. This would also be the least environmentally damaging alternative for Rose Canyon and includes the potential for a connection with High Speed Rail.

- Quickway (grade separated busway) infrastructure linking a UTC station with major destinations in the Golden Triangle and Sorrento Mesa.
- Quickway and other infrastructure linking Pacific Beach with Mission Valley, Hillcrest and Downtown. This infrastructure allows for buses (and emergency vehicles) to bypass major traffic knots into/out of the beach communities.

MoveSD has the following concerns about merely extending the Trolley:

1. The trolley will not be able to connect to where most trips to/from the Golden Triangle are coming from/going to. It provides no service to Sorrento Mesa or into beach communities.
2. The Mid-Coast Corridors principal employers are not arranged in such a manner that a single “line” can effectively meet network performance goals.

3. Travel times will be excessive leading to relatively low levels of drivers who are willing to shift to transit and therefore ease traffic and reduce their climate change emissions.

SANDAG has thus far declined to include MoveSD's alternative in their analysis.

It doesn't make sense that the public should be denied analysis of what could be the best performing alternative for the region. And if it's not better performing, then their Board could choose any other alternative.

Please visit our website and click on mid-coast alternative to review the details and support our call for SANDAG to include it in their analysis.

Join Move San Diego

Become a member... download our membership form from our website, or join online. Move San Diego is a California 501(3)c public benefit corporation dedicated to convenient, healthy, sustainable transportation throughout the San Diego region.