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# The Brawl over Sprawl: Is “Smart Growth” Really All That Smart?

Steven Hayward and Ted Mondale

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Hayward and Mondale spoke to an *American Experiment* audience in January 2000. Mondale referred several times to the approaching 2000 legislative session.

## The Potential for Mischief

Steven Hayward

I wonder how new the issue of “sprawl” really is. A Brookings Institution scholar recently pointed out a New York City regional plan that worried about “development that proceeded indiscriminately into areas which are predominantly rural in character.” Urban growth outside the city, the plan said, “takes on forms that do not harmonize with and may be injurious to the central community.” This sounds pretty familiar, doesn’t it? The date of this plan was 1929.

And here’s a New York Times front-page headline from May 28, 1966: “Planners Offer a Way of Attack on Urban Sprawl.”

The poet Edna St. Vincent Millay once remarked that history is not one damn thing after another; it’s the same damn thing over and over again. That seems to be the case with sprawl.

I’m not against the better planning that smart growth promises us, but I am also confident that there are few things wrong with our cities and suburbs that better planning can’t make worse, if we put our minds to it.

My central proposition is that the self-styled “smart growth” movement is right about a great many things and can make a major contribution to improving our cities and suburbs—if its ideas are moderately applied. My fear is that these ideas will be immoderately applied.

There is within the smart growth movement an avoidance, if not an ignorance, of some of the trade-offs

involved in its prescriptions. And avoiding trade-offs—a key trait of my baby-boomer generation—is a sure sign that there’s a strain of utopianism at work, a sure sign that a good idea, taken too far, will make things worse instead of better.

The best way to illustrate this briefly is to talk about a few of the ironies and anomalies of the issue. Perhaps the central idea of smart growth is that we need to develop cities at higher densities. So let’s consider the case of two metropolitan areas, Portland, Oregon, and Los Angeles. The Los Angeles area is considered the epitome of sprawl, along with Atlanta. And Portland is considered the shining example of smart growth.

The population density of the greater Los Angeles area is about 7,000 people per square mile. Portland’s is about 3,500 people per square mile. People in Portland and in other western states will say that Los Angeles represents the future they want to avoid. Yet the smart growth plan for Portland calls for doubling its density over the next forty years to 7,000 people per square mile, the same as Los Angeles today.

“When you double your density,” I always ask audiences in Portland, “do you think you will be less like Los Angeles or more like Los Angeles?” When you think about this density question, you begin to suspect that it hasn’t been thought all the way through.

A lot of smart growth advocates will rightly say that it’s not simply density itself, but the form density takes. That’s reasonable, but their inspiration on this point is another curiosity to me. A lot

of smart growth people point to Jane Jacobs's wonderful book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs is their hero. A planner in Portland told a reporter, "We got tired of protesting the Vietnam War, read Jane Jacobs, and decided to take over Portland."

Here's where the political irony comes in. When Jacobs published her book in 1961, the planners roundly rejected her critique and brushed her off as a gadfly, while one of her earliest champions was William F. Buckley Jr., who included a chapter from her book in one of his anthologies of conservative thought in the 1960s.

If you go back to the 1950s, you find some conservatives—Russell Kirk, sociologist Robert Nisbett, and a few others—saying that the interstate highway actually wasn't a very good idea, that it would hurt rural communities bypassed by the new roads and disrupt the urban neighborhoods they would run through. The chief Senate sponsor of the Interstate Highway Act in 1956 was Senator Al Gore Sr. When Vice President Al Gore Jr. embraces smart growth and criticizes the interstate highways, it's a case of the sins of the father being visited upon the son.

While some conservatives were making observations that sound like smart growth today, in the 1960s there were some liberals who actually worried that we weren't sprawling enough.

A U.S. News & World Report headline on December 18, 1967, read: "Open Spaces Get Wider, Cities Grow Denser."

The U.S. secretary of agriculture, Orville Freeman, said, "The time has come to take issue with the urbanist school that believes the megalopolis is the wave of the future, with the countryside being preserved as a kind of huge national park where urbanites rest their nerves before plunging once again into the maelstrom of the city."

The Johnson administration warned that if nothing was done, "by the year 2000, 208 million people will be jammed into cities on 3 percent of the U.S. land area."

Today, 208 million people is about three-quarters of the American population. And right now, they live on 3.5 percent of the continental land area of the United States. In the 1960s, for some liberals, that was too much density. For the smart growth movement today, it's not enough.

This sort of turnabout is why I sometimes feel justified in saying to smart growth advocates, "Welcome to the party. What took you so long to get here?" But what prevents people like me from becoming card-carrying members of the smart growth movement is the overwhelming sense that a lot of people in the movement want to use stringent land use regulation to cram it down our throats, whether we want it or not. Condescension toward suburbs and suburbanites runs through a lot of smart growth writing and discourse, suggesting that the aim of some people in the movement is not simply improving the practical functioning of cities and suburbs, but transforming them wholesale.

Herbert Gans wrote in his wonderful 1969 book *The Levittowners* that elite opinion regarded suburbanites as an “uneducated, gullible, petty mass which rejects the culture that would make it fully human, the good government that would create the better community, and the proper planning that would do away with the landscape-despoiling little boxes in which they live.” Gans is a sociologist, so maybe he was just being a bit windy.

More recently, James Howard Kunstler, one of the leading new urbanist, smart growth writers—he’s written some books and some *Atlantic Monthly* cover stories—said in a 1999 speech:

Suburbia is the dwelling place of untruth, a cartoon of rural life with none of the qualities of it. I believe we in the Congress of the New Urbanism recognize its profoundly culturally toxic nature. A common complaint about these brand new megasuburbs is that everything looks the same. This is only the most superficial symptom of their evil nature.

So suburbs are toxic and evil—and he’s just getting warmed up.

Here’s the rest:

Its present is a dangerously provisional collective hallucination, nourished by a sadomasochistic idiot pop culture which can fall apart at the slightest provocation. We have a name for this collective hallucination: the American dream. A sort of mega-lie stating that this sort of ghastly provisional collective hallucination is the ultimate state of being, worth aspiring to.

The poet Randall Jarrell years ago remarked that we could solve all of our problems if we could just get our hands on this fellow called society. Today, sprawl has taken the place of society as the general cause of all bad things.

My point is this: no matter how insightful some smart growth critiques of urban form may be, I simply do not trust giving more power to people with such offensive and condescending attitudes.

One of the best places to see the potential for mischief and the potential ultimate frustration of grand designs is in the debate over transit, especially rail transit. Light rail is hopeless as a mobility strategy except at very much higher densities than the Twin Cities area is ever likely to achieve.

But there’s a second rationale for rail transit—one I think Chairman Mondale has endorsed in the press—that sees it as a way of reshaping the city. The mastermind of Portland’s plan, John Fregonese, said, “Light rail is not worth the cost if you’re just looking at transit. It is a way of developing your community at higher densities.” In other words, rail is supposed to become a development magnet, and over time it reshapes your community and perhaps leads to more efficient transit down the road.

This is a somewhat more plausible and cogent rationale. The problem is, it hasn’t worked very well anywhere.

Here’s a December 1999 *Sacramento Bee* lead:

In 1992, Sacramento County had a grand plan. It would try to concentrate a mix of development around

commuter rail stations where people could easily walk to homes, offices, and stores. Seven years later, county planners acknowledge their blueprint has been a whopping failure.

And here's the Journal of Urban Economics on a study they did of Atlanta's MARTA: "Conclusion: MARTA has had no discernible impact on total population or employment in station areas." A study of San Francisco's BART—which has yet to achieve its ridership projections for 1975—by the University of California at Berkeley concluded that "BART has had little influence on the location of either population or employment."

Recall T. S. Eliot's famous line: "Between the idea and the reality . . . falls the shadow." Between the idea of smart growth and the realities of modern urban life, there are a number of shadows.

The challenge for the smart growth movement is to come out of its self-imposed shadows. Otherwise, suburban renewal—which is another way of thinking about what smart growth is—will turn out to be something like urban renewal was forty years ago, and forty years from now, people will gather to talk about how dumb smart growth was.

## Responding to Change

Ted Mondale

First, to counter the ideas and policies that have been mistakenly ascribed to Minnesotans and to this administration and to past Metropolitan Council chairs, let me try to define what we in this administration—and what I think

most people in this area—believe that smart growth is.

Smart growth is really a new approach to very significant changes in our regional economics and demographics. Let me tick them off briefly.

We're moving toward a global economy, a skilled workforce, a worker shortage. Most importantly, we are becoming a major metropolitan area. In the new economy, we compete not Minneapolis versus St. Paul, not metro versus outstate, but as a region. We're competing against St. Louis and Chicago and Portland and Seattle. We've been set up to compete against each other, and now it's important that we compete together, that we aggressively go after our weaknesses and build on our strengths so that we can be a world economic power.

The competition is pretty simple when you break it down. It's about the quality of our infrastructure: airports, roads, telecommunications. It's about the quality of our workforce and the quality of our lives: Is this the kind of place where people want to live and raise a family? If we can outcompete other regions in these areas, our economy will grow, and we will give our kids and our grandkids a future we can't even dream of today.

Our demographics are changing too. We're older, and there are more of us. Because we're successful economically and in other ways, people are moving to the Twin Cities. We will have 650,000 more people living here in the next twenty-five years. From an infrastructure standpoint, it's like adding the city of Woodbury every year

for the next twenty-five years. We're going to have a 25 percent increase in travel on our roads. Today, we have 100 miles of congestion every day. If we do nothing, we will have 300 miles of congestion—basically, gridlock—every morning and evening and at other times of the day when there is bad weather.

I agree with Steve on many points, but one piece that he leaves out of his analysis is that we are unable financially and socially to have the same kind of development we had over the past twenty-five years. We built roads to accommodate growth. The problem is, building the next round of freeways will cost us \$10 billion to \$12 billion—so says the Minnesota Department of Transportation—above the approach we've adopted today. Not many people would like to increase taxes to that level; it's about \$600 a home every year for the next twenty-five years.

There are other issues as well. How would we widen 394? We would have to widen the Lowry Tunnel, move the Basilica, and pave the Sculpture Garden.

My point is that we're changing quickly, and the development model we've had since World War II is no longer feasible or affordable, even if we wanted to pursue it. Smart growth is a response to that.

We've got to get out of our old debates. Economic growth somehow has been equated with environmental degradation. Doing something in the Phillips neighborhood in Minneapolis has been equated with hurting people in the suburbs. Building a road has been equated with failure of the transit

system. Helping the Twin Cities metropolitan area means killing outstate Minnesota.

This debate is no longer useful. It has split us apart. It makes good headlines, and reporters like to write about it, but it has no place as a basis for either policy or politics if our region is going to be successful in the future.

Smart growth is about applying three core principles.

Number one, economic growth makes sense. How can we grow this economy as strongly as possible? It is not either/or; it is the number one issue that we need to push forward successfully. How and where are issues we need to debate, but we've got to get out of the old either/or point of view.

Second, environmental preservation is important. Our area has natural assets—the St. Croix River, the chain of lakes in Minneapolis, Lake Minnetonka, farmland in southern Dakota County—that we want to have around in fifty and a hundred years. That's a Minnesota value.

The third piece is fiscal conservatism. That is, when government makes decisions, we need to think about the cost of those decisions and not, as government generally does, just think about the width of the road, the size of the bus, the size of the sewer.

So what does that mean? What are some of the smart growth principles that have been implemented in this region over the past few years?

The Livable Communities Act has made money available to communities to support redevelopment. It's starting to make a difference in the region.

Second, the decision not to build a new airport when there really isn't a need—when we looked at the \$7 billion to \$8 billion in infrastructure cost and the fact that most of the delay at the existing airport is due to weather and mechanical breakdown—was a good and wise decision. We decided to save the money and save the farmland.

Third, in the 1999 bonding bill, we took \$2 billion worth of requests down to \$400 million. Again, we looked at overall impact: Is this going to create new growth or is it just shifting economic growth? We stuck to our principles and got a good, conservative bonding bill.

We have five strategies for the Twin Cities. Number one: plans for orderly growth with services. When we grow, we want to grow sequentially, with plans for roads and sewers and other things. That's what Steve endorses, it's what makes sense, it's what we've been doing, and it's what we're going to continue to do.

Second, redevelopment and infill—that's what the Livable Communities Act is about. It's incentive-based, and it's starting to work in helping communities choose what they want to be in the future.

Third, incentives for housing near jobs. The market is building fairly high end housing and nine- to fourteen-hour jobs on the other side of town. What happens? The roads get clogged and employers can't get employees. It makes sense to build housing for people who are going to work where new industrial development is going to happen. It is not solely an economic issue; it's a

moral issue as well. The people who teach our kids, the people who clean our offices at night, the people who would go into our houses if they were on fire—they ought to be able to live in the neighborhoods that we live in.

Also, we believe that transit expansion makes sense. We have underinvested in transit in this region. We're one of the only systems whose growth—18 percent in the last two years—is way ahead of service expansion, which was only 4 percent. The Ventura administration's 2000 transportation proposal would support an increase from moving 70 million people to moving 100 million people. Of the people who work in downtown Minneapolis, 35 percent get there by metro transit; it's about 17 percent in downtown St. Paul. We've got a good system. The core of the transit system will be the buses, but we need to expand at least to get to the mean of cities of our size.

Last but not least is managing new growth areas so that they are planned and laid out according to these principles.

Let me close by saying that this approach enjoys wide support among Minnesotans. A recent survey of 500 people by the National Homebuilders Association basically said that we want planned, orderly growth rather than chaos or massive government regulation. We think our approach should be incentive-based, like the Livable Communities Act, and that our approach to transportation ought to be balanced: not all roads, not all buses.

The Twin Cities area is in good shape. We have balanced policies that will allow our region to grow aggressively in a way that in ten, twenty, or thirty years will make us one of the great economic powers because we did it right—we did it the Minnesota way.

## Burn the Planning Code

Steven Hayward

There are a lot of examples in American urban history of the genius planner who for the most part left an imprint for the good on our cities. Frederick Law Olmsted is one. Robert Moses is another, though he's controversial. There's obviously room for leadership on these questions. I'm not a purist or a marketeer saying leave it to the market; if we simply left it to the market, we might not have Central Park or some of the parks and lakes in the Twin Cities.

My perspective on this is a little different from Ted's in this respect: I look a little more narrowly than he does, because he's got a broader mandate than I have. The planning principles of smart growth are targeted infrastructure, higher-density development, and orientation to transit; urban growth boundaries are optional. In short, they add up to better planning.

It's hard to do all those things well over a long time horizon for a number of cognitive reasons. I picked on James Howard Kunstler earlier, but there are other things he says that I applaud. He and other smart growth people say that what's been wrong with our planning processes since the end of World War II is rigidly segregated uses that prevent

mixed use: we've created requirements that have prevented the marketplace from offering as much diversity as it might offer if it were not constrained by zoning regulations, planning codes, street width requirements, setbacks for strip malls, all those kinds of things.

But what I don't hear, except from Kunstler, is this: he says start a bonfire and burn your planning code and throw out your comprehensive plan, too, because it's just as bad. That's where I agree, but you don't ever see anybody actually doing this anywhere. There are no examples of the smart growth movement leading to substantial deregulation. Instead, the pendulum having gone too far in one direction, they now want to swing it back too far the other way, or so it seems to me.

On the subject of regional competitiveness, think about Silicon Valley. If you were to look at Silicon Valley in the abstract—the high cost of housing, the high tax burden, the regulations—you would say it had to be the most uncompetitive area in the country. Who would want to start a business there? Yet people are starting businesses there like crazy.

There are a couple of points to this. One is that conservatives who have argued that high taxes and government regulations are the most important things are partly wrong. You can see overriding reasons for companies and talented people to cluster in a place like Silicon Valley. But another interesting thing is this: the popular thing to do if you're a hotshot Silicon Valley

software designer is to live in San Francisco. Today, the traffic is worse going out of town in the morning to Silicon Valley than coming in from down in the peninsula. That's new in the past five years.

What I'm getting to is that the balance between jobs and housing was a key idea in Los Angeles fifteen years ago, and it has been pretty much abandoned because it's hard to make it work. Whose job are you going to put close to home in a two-income household?

Finally, an observation. Ted said 35 percent of downtown Minneapolis workers take transit to work. The difficulty is that probably no more than 5 percent of the workforce in the greater metro area works in downtown Minneapolis or St. Paul. Downtown Los Angeles accounts for less than 3 percent of total employment in the greater Los Angeles area, which is why they finally pulled the plug on metro rail in Los Angeles: even if you got a lot of workers to use metro rail, it would still be a drop in the bucket in terms of the commuting patterns of the area as a whole. That's why we can't build our way out of congestion. But I'm not sure it makes sense to say a billion dollars on light rail gets you more mobility than a billion dollars on roads.

## Incentives, Not Penalties

Ted Mondale

We in this region have rejected the penalty approach and the urban growth boundary approach.

The approach we're taking is very different from where the far left has

been going. The Metropolitan Council has been more in line with what Steve has been talking about. We're searching for a new government response for new economic and demographic times. We want to get away from the old top-down command and control of big schemes that can't work, like the urban renewal process.

But neither does the *laissez-faire*, don't-worry-be-happy approach make sense. In Atlanta they didn't pay attention—and guess what? A big, ugly, overpowering state agency is making decisions for local units of government because they had so much pollution that the federal government wouldn't free up dollars for them.

Reports by BankAmerica and Price Waterhouse—not exactly bastions of liberalism—both warned investors to watch out for regions that aren't resolving these issues.

We need to give communities more tools and more choices than they have today. Let me give you an example. We see a tremendous amount of growth in Washington County and along the Highway 36 corridor. We didn't tell those communities what to do, but we did hire Peter Calthorp and his group to work with eight volunteer Minnesota and Wisconsin communities on some development models.

Those communities—Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, Lake Elmo, North St. Paul—said it was the best thing the Metropolitan Council had ever done for them. North St. Paul, which doesn't have a planning department, put together a plan for the next ten or fifteen years. Oak Park Heights and Lake

Elmo now talk to each other. This is the type of thing I'm talking about.

A great paper done by some Fannie Mae people talks about the dark side of smart growth. I think there are two dark sides. One is this: you need to understand that it's not the whole area, but there are some places where you can create transit-oriented development and give people a different kind of choice about where to live. This is a trade-off, and in order to have that trade-off, you have to have the transit piece. People aren't going to give up their bigger yards unless there's something in it for them. For some people, especially as we age, living near transit makes it cheaper to get to work and more convenient to get around. We ought to give communities that choice.

Also, we don't want smart growth to become just a gentrification program. Gentrification is going to happen anyway, but if we don't include affordable housing, we've made a mistake.

Following their presentation, Steven Hayward and Ted Mondale took questions from the audience.

Brent Robbins: Chairman Mondale, you said that the Met Council does not advocate a growth boundary, but I've heard from developers that the way the Met Council is doing the sewer district lines, the reality is that it's so difficult to extend sewer lines that, in fact, we're beginning to get a boundary around the Twin Cities that's going to cause the same kind of prob-

lems they're seeing in Portland. Is that the case, or am I misinformed?

Ted Mondale: The builders are telling us that not enough land is available, so the cost of land is driving up the cost of housing. They're also saying that the cities give us great comprehensive plans that they don't intend to follow or have the capability to follow.

We're talking about working on a bill that would take away some of the barriers to development. For instance, we have a rule that all roads need to be fifty feet wide. Most developers say they only need to be twenty-six feet wide in the suburbs, and the cost of wider roads drives up the cost of housing. We have a good relationship with the builders as long as we're heading in this direction, and we work very closely with them. The supply of land, obviously, is a key issue.

Steven Hayward: If you go back twenty-five years in Oregon, whether you use an urban growth boundary or an urban service area approach, the idea is that they are planning tools for sequential, orderly development. In the abstract, that makes a reasonable amount of sense. What happens in the real world, though, politically, is that a constituency builds up not to expand the urban growth boundary. A very powerful faction in Portland calls itself the Zero Option. They don't want to expand it at all. And what's happened, because the regional government there is elected, is that they have not expanded the urban growth boundary as much as the staff says it ought to be expanded. There's litigation because

the original legislation said that the boundary had to be moved out to accommodate reasonable growth.

It's a little harder when you have an urban service area concept, where you don't necessarily have a fixed line on a map, but the same sort of political dynamic comes in. A constituency that doesn't like growth brings pressure on local government people not to expand the boundary, and so it becomes a de facto growth-constraining device. That's the thing to worry about.

Ted Mondale: I want to reiterate that we are not following and never have followed the approach of Portland. Portland is charging businesses to grow in downtown. We work on the zoning codes with them and try to shape growth, but we're not going to charge businesses to grow. The Portland approach is a red herring in discussions of the Twin Cities area.

Vern Mattsen: I'd like each of you to answer this. Chairman Mondale said that we cannot afford to continue to do what we have been doing, and we have to spend money on light rail. I've done a lot of research on this, and as near as I can tell, it costs five times as much to build a mile of light rail as it does to add an extra lane on one mile of freeway, and one lane on the freeway handles five times as many passengers per mile as light rail, so the efficiency is twenty-five times better. How can you possibly say that we can't afford to build roads?

Ted Mondale: We're moving away from an either/or approach. This administration put together a balanced

proposal, with about \$1.4 billion to \$1.5 billion in new spending on roads. I don't know of any politician who's going to stand up and say, "We really need \$15 billion in the metro area alone to move forward. Let's raise the gas tax a buck."

We've tried congestion pricing. We've tried toll roads; that was rejected. We've tried high occupancy vehicle lanes with some passes that might generate dollars. We've tried an increase in the gas tax; there's no political support for that approach. The administration approach is a very balanced and aggressive transportation package.

Let me run through the numbers on the light rail line. My father condemned the land for that line in 1961; it was one of the first things he did as attorney general. Some people would like us to study it more, but there's a lot of paper already. There was a cost-benefit analysis of this line that didn't take into account the fact that the original plan was \$200 million for a six-lane road. The plan that we have in place now for that strip of road is only \$83 million. There was a \$117 million savings there.

Second, this is a good line. It is what light rail transit should be for: connecting places of high urban use where there are value issues that would make it successful—the cost of parking at the airport, for example, or the fact that downtown Minneapolis is going to run out of parking very soon.

The third piece is a huge redevelopment potential that was not taken into account. The study shows that we could get up to 20 million commercial

square feet and about 750 housing units around the line if we do the land use right. Arguably, 10 million of it would go somewhere else in the region, and there would be a tremendous cost, then, on top of that on local infrastructure roads, sewers, whatever. So, we think it's a good line.

Some people would argue that Minnesotans somehow would be better served if that transit money we pay on our federal income taxes—we get eighteen cents on the dollar—were spent in Orlando.

Steven Hayward: I'm skeptical. One bold new approach for a lot of infrastructure questions, not just roads, would be privatization. Indianapolis privatized its water treatment and water supply functions, so it's suddenly no longer an issue of whether the government is subsidizing growth out in the suburbs.

Congestion pricing is not popular in public opinion anywhere, but nowhere was the idea of charging a toll on a road more difficult than in California, which has never had a toll road and only had a couple of tolls on the San Francisco Bay bridges. But a private company built a toll road on the most congested route, and it's turned out to be extremely profitable. After thirty years, the state owns the road—it's a thirty-year leaseback deal—so the state got a free road. The taxpayers didn't have to pay a dime for it.

In the best of all worlds, you would get rid of the gas tax completely, both state and federal, and go to direct pricing of roads using global positioning

satellite cellular technology. You could transform it overnight, but it's probably never going to happen quite like that.

In the short run, what you want to do, it seems to me, is take a HOV lane and make it a HOT lane—turn a high occupancy vehicle lane into a high occupancy toll lane. All of a sudden, you find that these things become popular with people. The idea of road pricing in California is proving more popular. The best work on this has been done by the Environmental Defense Fund. I'm more optimistic about that idea. If you're going to talk about bold new approaches, it seems to me that the gnat of road pricing is a lot less difficult to swallow than the camel of megarail.

Steve Hackbarth: The gas tax goes into the general fund. Dedicating it to roads and transit would solve a lot of problems, wouldn't it?

Ted Mondale: The gas tax is dedicated to the trunk highway fund. If we added a nickel to the gas tax, we would be tied with Wisconsin, and we would raise a couple hundred million dollars a year.

The administration's proposal is to rededicate the sales tax on motor vehicles to transportation. The promise in 1974 was that the tax on cars would fund roads and transportation. It's been moved back and forth. In 1991, when economic times were bad, we dedicated it to the general fund with the promise that when economic times were good, we would dedicate it back to transportation. Our policy now is putting those dollars back into transportation.

Jean Harris [mayor of Eden Prairie]: Steve, you mentioned that MARTA and BART have not met their projections in terms of increasing densities along the rail lines. But what about other benefits that accrue from moving people en masse from one point to another, such as people without cars who are able to get to jobs or stores or recreation, or the cost benefit of moving larger numbers of people in one vehicle as opposed to one per car, or reducing the number of automotive trips on roadways, thereby reducing pollution, or that increasing phenomenon, road rage?

Steven Hayward: I have a Washington Post clipping that I call "Metro rage." They had a near riot on the Washington Metro. People who ride in rail cars are not all peaceful and placid and neighborly; they actually had to arrest people in Washington.

But here's the problem. The numbers just aren't big enough, except in very high density cities like Philadelphia and Boston; even Washington doesn't work terribly well. I've debated John Fregonese, the author of the Oregon plan, and he says that light rail is a great success in Portland and they're hitting their targets for ridership. Well, they get 60,000 riders a day. Federal figures say that people in Portland make 7 million trips a day, so the rail is capturing a fraction of 1 percent. If that's their idea of success, I'd hate to see what failure is.

What about people who lack cars and other alternatives? I don't know what the situation is in the Twin

Cities, though I understand it's somewhat better than in other areas. In some areas—Portland, Miami—rail travel is so expensive and requires such a large subsidy that they typically discontinue the bus lines on the same routes. Sometimes the rail trip is longer for people who used to take the bus. And in places like Miami, an awful lot of the light rail riders are people who used to ride the bus. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office concluded ten years ago that light rail had led to a net reduction in people taking transit in Miami, because the rail line was actually less useful to them than the old bus system. There's the pollution problem of buses and some other issues, but fixed rail is fixed, whereas buses can adjust and change their routes and adapt as commuting patterns change. That's another reason for skepticism about rail.

Ted Mondale: Many conservative analysts look at the overall trips in the region and say that rail therefore isn't a good investment. If you said that about NASA, how many people fly up to the moon? Not a very good investment.

The right question to ask is this: Where you provide quality transit service, what percent of the ridership does it carry? Here in the Twin Cities, we carry about one-third of the people who commute to downtown. If you shut that off, it would be absolute chaos. We carry 16 or 17 percent of those who go to St. Paul. Should we introduce service to places where it won't work? No. Should we be fixed to one particular type of technology? No.

The problem of Los Angeles is this: they spent \$7 billion building a rail system, gutted the bus system to operate it, and lost one-third of their ridership. That's not a mistake of technology; that's a mistake of implementation.

We have tried to come up with the right transit alternatives for a particular corridor, knowing that the backbone is the bus system and the most cost effective means is the bus system; in a limited number of places, other types of technology make sense.

Terry Forbord: I'd like you both to address the land supply issue. There are three participants in this: the providers, the end users, and the policy makers. The providers will tell you that the sprawl issue was lost ten or fifteen years ago with the restriction on land supply [via Metropolitan Council restrictions on extending sewer lines]. That restriction still exists today and, in fact, it appears that this administration is going to try to restrict it even further. That has caused people to move out beyond the seven-county metro area. Anybody who is in the provider business will tell you that sprawl is well beyond the seven-county metropolitan area. What are we going to do to feed the demand for affordable land? There just isn't enough of it close in. And what are we going to do to expand to the [sewer] capacity that's in the infrastructure right now, to make sure there's a lot of land supply so the prices don't increase exponentially, as they have been doing recently?

Ted Mondale: I keep getting back to the same point, and that is that we don't use, we haven't used, nor are we planning to use a regulatory, heavy-handed, top-down, command-and-control approach. The tools and strategies we're using are sensible and incentive-based. We are pursuing them in an aggressive way, but in a way that makes sense from an economic standpoint. One thing we don't have here that other successful regions have is engagement of the business community on these issues. Regions have been successful where the business community has brought its keenness, its inability to wait, and its strong financial understanding into this area.

We've got the Downtown Council in Minneapolis and folks in St. Paul, and the builders are involved, but there's a whole set of folks—some of the core businesses, some of the bigger developers, and others—that we think need to be a part of this debate. We don't think we'll be successful unless we have the kind of corporate and business buy-in that we do not have today.

Steven Hayward: Let me answer this very broadly. A lot of what's going on socially on this issue is that people move to the suburbs hoping for a quiet, stable community, and all around them they see constant change and more growth and another field being developed. That's understandably upsetting, and I think that is what is driving a lot of the public sentiment about growth

and sprawl. Once you're in your suburban house, the next guy's house is not a popular item with you.

For many years, in a lot of the country, there have been increasing constraints on the land supply, just as an accumulation of all the individual permitting decisions, because city councils and planning commissions are taking heat about this everywhere.

Housing in the Twin Cities, relative to other cities, is still quite affordable. I say relative to other cities, but what happens is that the smart growth movement is for a lot of people a sort of high church version of NIMBY—not in my back yard. A lot of people who hear “smart growth” hear “less growth.”

It's a challenge for smart growth leaders who take this public sentiment as support. It turns out that a lot of people interpret “smart growth” as density in someone else's neighborhood. This seems to me to be the single biggest problem for the smart growth movement and also for any responsible local government person. That whole dynamic just naturally wants to constrain more land, which is why all the clichés about running out of land are harmful to the process. n