

WATCHDOG!



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"Political Meaning of a Nickname"

Why is it that one of the most powerful persons in the Bush Administration, a man who is privy to the most confidential government information and who advises the President on matters of domestic and foreign policy at the highest level, is nicknamed "Turdblossom?" Karl Rove, who teamed up with George W. Bush as he began his career in politics decades ago, earned the name "Turdblossom" because of his genius at staging political tricks in order to manipulate news reports, public perceptions, and propaganda to achieve victory for whichever political candidate he was working for. As an old Texas politician said, his nickname is "Turdblossom". "The name was perfect, people said because whenever Rove was around, something was sure to pop up." In other words, in Rove's mind shit literally blossoms. Karl Rove, the current Svengali, the Rasputin, or if you will, the Talleyrand of the Bush Administration, deeply deserves the caprophilic title "Turdblossom" because he revels in the treasures that he alone can find in the gutter of American politics.

So why, reader, have we taken the time to discourse on Mr. Rove and why have we entitled the fourth of our Iraq articles "Turdblossom's War?" It's for a simple reason: when you strip away all the lies and propaganda behind the war, you will find that the Iraq War is essentially a political trick that was manipulated at a time of national hysteria to consolidate political power for President Bush – power over the past two presidential elections and unchecked political power over our society.

Napoleon once called Talleyrand "shit in silk stockings." We need to apply the same label to Rove if we are ever to understand how we got into the Iraq War and how we might get out. By any measure the war in Iraq is an unjust war, the gravest calamity that can ever befall a nation. Our political and Constitutional heritage reveal clearly that an unjust war can never be won, and indeed can bring greater harm to the perpetrator than to the victim. The war in Iraq is an unjust war that was launched to gain political power –hence the title of the following article, "Turdblossom's War," describing the disastrous consequences of placing a person whose only skill is concocting dirty tricks in charge of foreign affairs. America has sown the seeds of violence, lawlessness and greed and we are now reaping the bitter harvest.

Turdblossom's War

In our last several newsletters, SOFAR has highlighted some of the most grievous aspects of the war in Iraq. In "Change in Direction," we highlighted how the tremendous financial costs of the war are resulting in the deterioration of much-needed infrastructure in our cities, the depletion of financial and other resources, the lack of reservists to assist in times of national disaster, and the continued loss of civil liberties belonging to all American people.

Our May article, "Iraq Museum Looting," described the horrific destruction and loss of historical artifacts of the oldest civilizations of the world from the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad, and the complete disregard for the most ancient archaeological sites by the U.S. military as it continues to station its camps on top of them. We followed with the New York Times editorial, "Selling the Forests," which criticizes the Bush administration plan to sell national forest lands and other publicly owned lands in order to gather the massive funding needed for the war.

Not long ago came news of a massacre last November in Haditha, Iraq, where U.S. marines killed at least twenty-four Iraqi civilians, including children, women and an elderly man in a wheelchair. The Marine Corps covered up the incident for several months, until *Time* magazine investigated further and the true details emerged in May. The systematic, gruesome murders and cover-up scheme are abhorrent and defy both the principles of proper conduct of war and the fundamental principles of our nation. Recently, several additional incidents of violent attacks on Iraqi citizens by American soldiers have been reported. A hearing is currently being held to assess charges against four soldiers who are accused of raping a fourteen year old girl and murdering her family. One of the soldiers has confessed to the crime, revealing that he and his fellow soldiers planned it during a card game. Horrifying acts such as these should prompt us to reexamine the purpose, reasoning and consequences of engaging in this war against Iraq.

Throughout the war, the Bush Administration has presented the unacceptable message that such occurrences are the inevitable result of war, and are small "sacrifices" necessary to accomplish the greater "mission." It is imperative that the American people do not start to believe such a false and dangerous concept and that we do not make excuses for evil actions perpetrated by the military. This is particularly important since the Bush administration keeps changing its definition of the war's mission.

Independent Transit Planning Review

In May of 2004, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Board of Directors authorized an assessment of transit system planning within the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to ensure that we spend our funds efficiently on the projects we build. Upon adoption of the TransNet Extension tax, an Independent Planning Panel would

be set up to conduct the transit study. A panel of six nationally renowned transit experts was chosen by SANDAG to critique their transit plans and to provide expert guidance for future transit and land use planning. Recently, 2 years and \$300,000 dollars of taxpayer funding came to fruition with the panel's presentation of their findings to SANDAG officials.

In summary, while commenting on the many laudable transit goals contained in SANDAG's Plan and on the unique opportunities to realize Transit Oriented Development, the panel concluded that SANDAG's transit goals are unfortunately, out of reach with current transportation policy.

In fact, the panel's report established that even today's transit ridership is over estimated by SANDAG, "what seems apparent is that the current mode split is about 2% transit during peak periods rather than the 5% base reported in Mobility 2030. The 10% target does not seem achievable without major changes in policy." (5-19). As John Bonsall, a transit expert from McCormick/Rankin stated, "San Diego needs to go cold turkey (from freeway building) because travel demand will always increase to take advantage of new capacity". Another panelist, David Meiger, a transit expert from Los Angeles, warned SANDAG that their current policy of widening freeways to the maximum and continued sprawl road building mimics what Los Angeles has done over the past 20 years. He added, "In Los Angeles we built freeways until we couldn't have more land to build freeways (...) but now, Los Angeles is having to turn to transit". No sane San Diegan can say that we should copy the historical transportation practices from our neighbors in Los Angeles, yet current SANDAG policy is to widen all freeways to the maximum-just like LA!

Even the corner stone of SANDAG's freeway widening "transit" plan- Managed Lanes, was questioned for practical efficacy by the Independent Transit Planning Review (ITPR) panel. The report concluded that the modeling done for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on Managed Lanes is inaccurate because in reality, BRT in managed lane format performs at lower speeds because by increasing traffic capacity, the Managed Lanes actually weaken travel timesavings. An example of what one panelist pointed out would be a downfall for the region's transit ridership: by branding BRT on a substandard system, you just undermine efforts to build public support. Without dedicated transit lanes, (not currently planned for in the Regional Transportation Plan) BRT in San Diego will simply be a front for more road building.

More than just criticism of SANDAG's transit planning, the ITPR Report contains valuable suggestions to improve SANDAG transit planning and monitoring. In response to the wealth of ideas contained in the report, SANDAG is currently developing five transit scenarios upon which urban infill development could be based. Such Transit Oriented Developments could lead to a real solution of the unaffordable housing crisis in San Diego County. The ITPR pointed out using SANDAG's own smart growth criteria for housing densities that San Diego's future projected housing demand would be 314,000 units. As illustrated below, (fig.1) these units could easily be accommodated with SANDAG's denser, transit oriented, smart growth place-types. The Catch 22 is that to achieve smart growth and density goals there must be a transit foundation in place. Therefore, to develop a true transit based foundation, the transit alternative in the Regional Transportation Plan update must

include real solutions to questions raised by the panel and fund transit as a priority not as a so-called balanced transit/road building plan which when looked at closely totally favors roads over transit.

LAND CONSUMPTION W/ PROJECTED GROWTH			
Dwelling Units per Acre (du/acre)	314,000 Dwelling Units		Smart Growth Project Type
	Acres Consumed	Square Miles Consumed	
1	314,000	490	None
2	157,000	245	None
4	78,500	122	None
8	39,500	61	None
16	19,625	30	Rural Village
32	9,812	15	Town and Community Centers
50	6,280	10	Urban Center and Transit Corridor
75	4,200	6.5	Metropolitan Center

Fig. 1

To view the Independent Transit Planning Review Report visit the following address:

<http://ftp.sandag.org/pub/IndepTransitDraftFinalReport.pdf> or, contact SOFAR for more information.

Regents Road Bridge

Recently SOFAR submitted a letter to City Council on the University City North/South Transportation Corridor FEIR. Addressing congestion while minimizing harm to the environment was the purpose of this environmental review but once again there were only road building improvements (such as the Regents Road Bridge and Genesee Ave widening) as alternatives. Building more roads is not a sustainable means of addressing congestion. More roads leads to more cars. A real transit alternative should be looked at. Against the University

City Planning Group's recommendation, City Council voted 6-2 certifying the UCNSTC FEIR. Below is the comment letter submitted by SOFAR.

RE: University City North/South Transportation Corridor FEIR

Regents Road Bridge – SOFAR Opposition

Dear Council President Scott Peters:

Please accept this letter on behalf of Save Our Forests and Ranchlands ("SOFAR"), an organization dedicated to progressive city planning and to the protection of wilderness, watershed and agricultural resources in the San Diego region.

The University City North/ South Transportation Corridor ("UCNSTC") FEIR evaluates seven transportation alternatives intended to improve traffic flow between the southern and northern portions of the community of University City. Nonetheless, this FEIR fundamentally violates CEQA because it fails to include consideration of an alternative focused on public transit. The UCNSTC FEIR examines only road building alternatives – Regents Road bridge; Genesee Avenue Widening; Grade Separation; and, limited roadway changes – as the only alternatives to improve traffic flow and alleviate alleged congestion problems within the corridor.

Almost every one of these alternatives, and especially the large-scale build alternatives such as the Regents bridge and the Genesee widening, would have extensive environmental impacts. The City, therefore, has a duty under CEQA to evaluate alternatives that would accomplish the UCNSTC objectives while minimizing harm to the environment. A transit-focused alternative would accomplish this legal mandate.

Recently commissioned by the San Diego Association of Governments, the Independent Transportation Planning Review ("ITPR") report recommends several transit improvements that should be further studied within the Mid-Coast Corridor, including as part of this FEIR process. The ITPR report states that the "Coaster Rail Service has proven to be a success, but the physical and environmental track capacity in the corridor is limited and must be shared with Amtrak's Surfliners and with freight railroad needs." A tunnel under University City could increase capacity on the Coaster, and a station at UTC would also increase accessibility for residents, employees and students within the corridor.

In a previous study, the Mid-Coast Corridor DEIR, an alternative transit project was proposed which included a Coaster tunnel from Rose Canyon to Sorrento Valley with an underground station at UTC. The DEIR found that these rail improvements would "substantially reduce travel time for the Oceanside to San Diego commuter rail service... since it would bypass surface congestion at University City and eliminate the 6.1 kilometer (3.8mile) circuitous routing of Miramar loop." The double tracked tunnel under University City would increase the efficiency of the Coaster by avoiding the

controlling grade loop, straightening the alignment and decreasing the length of single track traveled. It is unclear why this alternative has not been considered as part of the current process.

Neither the construction of a Regents Road Bridge nor the widening Genesee Avenue are sustainable solutions to congestion, and neither will improve emergency response time in University City. Simply put, every study on the subject shows that in densely suburban areas, more roads lead only to more congestion. The UCNSTC FEIR shows that the Regents Road bridge and Genesee Ave. Widening would have little to no impact on LOS within the corridor.

SOFAR believes the bridge would not redistribute the flow of vehicles, but would instead draw cars from the I-5 and 805 freeways through University City. If there is no substantial reduction to the number of cars that flow between north and south University City, then even with these projects emergency vehicles would be caught in the same congestion they currently travel through.

The FEIR explains the City's 30-member Public Working Committee originally considered other changes to improving traffic flow in University City. These included the extension of Super Loop to South University City, "easily accessible transit alternatives," and "transit first implementations." (FEIR, Page 3-2). The FEIR provides no explanation why these and other transit projects were dismissed outright and not included as a separate alternative in the EIR.

SOFAR hereby requests that the City Council refrain from certification of the UCNSTC FEIR because it does not include a public transit alternative. We recommend transit studies be conducted to determine how and whether an investment in transit in the Mid-Coast Corridor would affect ridership of public transportation, and how such a change would effect the congestion and travel times both within the corridor and regionally.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns regarding this issue. SOFAR intends to make these and other comments during the scheduled public hearing, and in so doing, reserve all such issues for litigation.

Sincerely,

Marco A. Gonzalez

SOFAR releases Smart Mobility's Downtown Transportation Plan
(for the full text please visit SOFAR's website www.sofar.org)

1. Introduction and Summary to Complete Downtown Community Transportation Plan

San Diego Downtown Community Plan: Rising on the Pacific (DCP) generally is an excellent guide for the evolution of San Diego's downtown to a more vibrant urban place. It presents a compelling vision of a mixed use center that is accessible on foot, on bike, on transit and in cars. Streets are designed not just for passing

through, but are also attractive public spaces – both to experience urban life and to experience the natural world. However, the transportation aspects in the Plan and particularly in its *Final Environmental Impact Report* (EIR) fall short of what is needed to fully realize the Plan’s vision because there is too much reliance on cars. This report presents an alternative to the DCP that embraces the central role of the pedestrian realm in urban life – not just for transportation, but also for social interaction and experiencing the outdoor environment. Rather than planning for cars first, and fitting in the pedestrians and transit afterwards, this alternative begins with pedestrians and pedestrian access to transit. With a comprehensive downtown transit plan, all downtown development should be transit oriented. In addition, all development outside downtown, located within walking distance of trunk line stations, should also be transit oriented. Thus, without increasing congestion, Centre City development can lead to the laying of a foundation for affordable housing throughout the region. Ample access for cars is provided, but the cars are managed so that the urban environment is preserved. This plan will provide accessibility and mobility, while also creating and maintaining a high quality of life that will support the planned level of economic development – job growth and population growth. Our recommended *Complete Downtown Community Transportation Plan* includes:

- Maximize Coaster service – double track, increase service frequency, tunnel and station in University Town Center, extension to 6th Avenue, improved connection to Downtown circulator, increased feeder bus services, and more parking at stations
- Maximize Trolley service – increased service frequency, direct routing of Mission Valley trains to Downtown, station improvements, investments in switches and controls to allow more flexible operations, and increased feeder bus services
- New transit trunk lines integrated into downtown – new high capacity/high service trunk lines on new corridors integrated into a set of Downtown transit stations
- Improve local and express bus services – increased employment will create a need for increased local and express bus service into Downtown
- Very frequent free transit service within downtown – one or more circulator routes with free fares and headways of 5 minutes or better, possibly integrated with new trunk lines

- Market pricing for parking – removing minimum parking requirements and parking subsidies will increase transit usage and allow economically-efficient development

- Street diets – reclaiming street pavement where possible for on-street parking, landscape, and an improved pedestrian realm

- Pedestrian primacy – maximize pedestrian level of service by minimizing street widths, vehicle numbers, and vehicle speeds

The overarching goal is to significantly increase San Diego’s transit mode share for workers and overall transit mode share by 2020. This requires monitoring and an implementation plan. Implementation may require enactment of an ordinance to collect an alternative transportation impact fee or institute a tax increment financing district for transit operations and streetscape improvements.

¹ “Complete” here refers to “complete streets”, a planning term for streets that serve all transportation modes well.

Infrastructure Investment Leads to Rapid Growth in Bordeaux

The historically depressed growth in Bordeaux has been reversed through the city's investment in a transit foundation. It has become a model for the success that comes with investing in infrastructure and creating transit revitalization. Transit gives a region more than just better mobility, the Bordeaux tramway has enhanced economic prosperity and given its citizens the opportunity and desire to live in the center of town. Here are just a few

examples of how Bordeaux's smart urban transportation system has stimulated economic growth and prosperity within the city:

- The population of Bordeaux has grown rapidly: 14,000 residents in the last 5 years
- The regional forecast shows that population is set to increase 13% by 2030
- Rise in international airport traffic: up 16%
- Increase in tourism now more than 2 million visitors per year
- The progression of the commercial property market (10,000 M2 dealings in 2004)
- High levels of enterprise creation: 1700-1900 per year

Source: INSEE National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies www.insee.fr



(Friday afternoon in Car-Free Bordeaux Avenue)

A key element of the Urban Transport Plan, the new tramway is affecting everyone's way of life. A few figures can illustrate the scope of this project:

- 3 lines constructed simultaneously.
- 24.5 km and 53 stations in 3 years with, in the long term, 43 km and 84 stations.

When construction ends in 2007, the network will cover:

- 37 % of the population of the metropolitan area
- 65 % of schools and universities
- 54 % of hospitals and clinics
- 50 % of work places

