

Your column here  
Ted Winterer

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# Signatures please

EVERY YEAR CITY HALL'S SURVEYS RANK homelessness, traffic and parking as the biggest concerns residents have about life in our town. But while recently our government has laudably tried new approaches to reducing homelessness, city officials have shown no such vision about traffic.

That's why I'm one of the three proponents of the Resident's Initiative to Fight Traffic (RIFT), a local ballot measure proposed by the Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City (SMCLC). This initiative will cut in half the rate of commercial growth, which creates three to four times the traffic of residential projects. It exempts residences, schools, hospitals, affordable housing, and other desirable development from its limits. I fervently believe it is a moderate, thoughtful and long overdue measure that empowers residents to take control of traffic in our city.

Street congestion has worsened dramatically in Santa Monica, creating pollution, hazards for pedestrians and cyclists, cut-through traffic in residential neighborhoods, burdens on the local economy, and enormous stress. Yet here are a few examples of the ways in which city policies have failed to manage traffic:

■ Ignoring its own projections for growth, City Hall approved nine million square feet of commercial projects over 27 years while our resident population stayed the same. The result is that we import massive numbers of commuters to fill all those commercial buildings, reversing the historic traffic flow on the freeway and clogging our streets.

■ Twelve years ago our City Council passed a law that required developers to pay fees to mitigate traffic when they build new buildings. It was a great idea and one that many other cities have implemented. The only problem in Santa Monica is that City Hall doesn't actually collect the money that is supposed to be used to enhance mobility in Santa Monica.

■ City Hall's Sustainable City Plan calls for a 1:1 balance of jobs to housing as a tool to reduce traffic. But since the plan was adopted, city officials have neglected this goal and the imbalance of jobs to housing has gotten worse as commercial growth exceeded residential development, thus increasing congestion.

Lately, city officials have uttered some token rumblings about coping with traffic. Their plan seems to be two-fold, to rely on a new citywide plan for development and transportation (due in 2004 and now likely to be completed in 2009) and the extension

of the Expo light rail to Santa Monica, last projected to be completed in 2015.

I greatly admire Planning Director Eileen Fogarty and her vision for our city, but there's absolutely no way to assure future leaders at City Hall will adhere to her blueprint for growth. It's too easy to disregard these plans, as our history has proven.

And while the Expo light rail will be great if and when it's built in an era of uncertain government finances, it will only alleviate pressures on roadways between Santa Monica and downtown and do nothing about car trips to and from the Valley, Manhattan Beach or Malibu. It will help, but it's not the solution.

Instead, the answers to our traffic woes require the sort of tough stances our local and regional politicians thus far are unwilling to undertake, such as setting reasonable limits on the kind of new development that generates the most traffic — commercial buildings.

Already big developers and their allies are lining up to challenge RIFT. Developer attorney Tom Larmore, currently the chair of the Chamber of Commerce, has called our initiative "ill-conceived," even though RIFT addresses the traffic woes which impact businesses as much as residents. For instance, the Los Angeles Times reports that "the region's chronic congestion wallows the economy to the tune of about \$12 billion a year in lost wages, productivity and fuel." And certainly local businesses, especially the small ones, would benefit from RIFT as fewer of them would be displaced by large developments that uproot existing establishments and replace them with chain store competitors.

There's no doubt there will be more of these attacks on RIFT in the future from deep-pocketed developers and special interests who seek profits in Santa Monica without regard to the quality of our lives.

Meanwhile, those of us who crafted RIFT have nothing to gain from it other than saving the community we love from even greater traffic woes. That's why it's critical that residents rally behind this initiative.

If you want to fight traffic, please visit [www.smrift.com](http://www.smrift.com). We need volunteers to gather signatures to place this measure on the November ballot and we need donations to fend off the moneyed interests who would defeat it. It's time to take back our city.

TED WINTERER is a resident of Ocean Park. He can be reached at [TedwRIFT@aol.com](mailto:TedwRIFT@aol.com)

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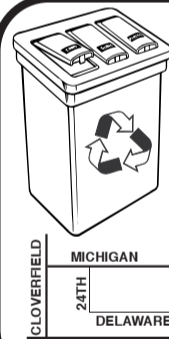
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## The Q-Line

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### Standing with the ban

Does your favorite restaurant still use Styrofoam? The city recently introduced a ban on the ecologically unfriendly packaging, but it will take a while before it begins enforcing the new ordinance.

So this week's Q-Line question asks:

**Would you stop going to your favorite eatery if they don't comply with the Styrofoam ban sooner than later?**

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your answers in the weekend edition of the Daily Press. Please limit responses to a minute or less.



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