

Dear Secretary Mineta,

Others commenting here have outlined the problems our current auto-dependence has brought us. The auto monoculture adversely impacts our health, the economy, and a host of other aspects of within our society.

You also will hear from opponents to transit, rail, and other alternatives that the expense of alternatives to autos is damnable, and should be avoided (as though the expense of requiring everyone drive--in effect a regressive tax--is acceptable).

Whether you accept the need for public transit or not, the land uses that support it are perfectly acceptable, cost no more, and have been widely accepted by the market. Please do what you can to promote them.

Neighborhoods built to support even eventual transit are mixed use (homes, offices and shops), connected by pedestrian-friendly streets. Common sense says these are desirable--people have a chance to interact with their neighbors, even to walk or bike to shopping or work whether transit exists or not.

Currently Federal Transportation funding does relatively little to encourage building such neighborhoods. Federally-sponsored home financing (FNMA, GNMA, FHA, VA, FmHa, etc.) positively discourages it.

The Federal Government has a role to play here. Just as FHA provided the foundation of most of the country's building codes, so transportation funding should set mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly streets as one of its focusses.

Unless you get such commitments from the projects you fund, we're bound to get more of the same (record levels of obesity, diabetes, wars in the Middle East to ensure petroleum supplies are safe, etc., etc.)

Let's do something else.

--Regards,
--Mark Dempsey