

Lauren Bartlett, [lbartlett@support.ucla.edu](mailto:lbartlett@support.ucla.edu)  
(310) 206-1458

For Immediate Use  
May 25, 2001

## **Los Angeles and California Government Must Improve Infrastructure to Handle Expected Doubling of Population, UCLA Study Says**

People in Los Angeles and the rest of California will live in a degraded environment, experiencing difficulty with doing simple tasks such as plugging in a computer or commuting to work if state and local government do not develop the region's infrastructure to handle the expected doubling of the population in the next 50 years, according to a UCLA study.

But Los Angeles could become like Paris and London — popular, livable international cities with the infrastructure to handle the needs of dense populations such as efficient transit systems — researchers from the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture at the UCLA School of Medicine found in “Outgrowing, or Under-Investing In, Los Angeles and California?” The report is based on data from the 2000 U.S. Census and European sources.

“While some see that the state's population growth is the cause of water shortages and power outages, it is important to see that a large part of the problem is simply an inadequate infrastructure for the population we currently have” said David E. Hayes-Bautista, professor of medicine and director of the center. “Many of our competitor states and cities have far greater population densities than we do, but they also have the infrastructure to function well. We do not.”

An analysis of the population of the city of Los Angeles shows that the density of the 3.7 million residents is 7,873 people per square mile. That is less than one-sixth the density of Paris, about one fourth that of Tokyo and around one-third that of London.

Los Angeles needs to improve its basic infrastructure, Hayes-Bautista said, including its mass transit, roads, public safety, public health and education, to transform it into a flourishing densely populated city.

Freeway-clogged Los Angeles County, with a population of 9.5 million, has a density of 2,298 people per square mile. That is low compared to other large counties in the country, such as the five boroughs of New York City, which combined have a density of 24,039 people per square mile, or San Francisco, which has a density of 15,991 people per square mile.

## 2-2-2 Improved Infrastructure Needed

The 33.9 million residents of California live with a density of 217 people per square mile. There are 11 more densely populated states in the East and Midwest, with New Jersey having the highest density at 1,134 people per square mile, more than five times California's density. The Golden State's population is expected to expand up to 60 million by the middle of the century. But even then California will have a density less than half of current-day Connecticut or Massachusetts.

Yet, to accommodate such growth, changes must be made. Because Los Angeles and the rest of California were developed for a low-density population, the state has large, single-family dwellings, single-occupancy vehicles and high-volume use of water and power. Greater density will occur, and must be planned for.

Such density does not mean the end of a desirable lifestyle. While California has the sixth-largest economy in the world and a population equivalent to a mid-sized European country, its density is far lower than most. The most densely populated of the leading economic powers is Japan at 830 people per square mile. The next most densely populated is the United Kingdom with 638 people per square mile, followed by Germany and Italy. France's population density is also higher than that of California.

"Concerns about population growth need to be balanced by concerns about infrastructure. Properly handled, California's population could double, and the state could be as livable as France or Britain, with, of course, much better weather. Mishandled, daily life could be quite grim and difficult. The decision as to which future we will have rests with us today," Hayes-Bautista concluded.