Creating and Sustaining "Place" with Transit

Rail-Volution Conference
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Moderator: Paul Zykofsky, Local Government Commission
Troy Russ, Glatting Jackson
Rebecca Draper, Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative
Ellen Shubart, Campaign for Sensible Growth
Local Government Commission

- Nonprofit membership organization based in Sacramento, CA of local government officials – elected and staff
- Founded in 1979 to work on solar energy
- During 1980s expanded to work on environmental issues: pollution prevention, waste management, hazardous waste
- 1991: Started working on land use issues
The Ahwahnee Principles, 1991

- Planning complete and integrated communities with mix of uses
- Within walking distance of one another
- Within walking distance of transit stops
- Should contain a diversity of housing types
- Should have a center focus
- Regional transportation system built around transit
What do we mean by “place” or “placemaking”? 
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Distinction between “space” and “place”

- “Placeness is about people. It is the presence of people that turns space into place.”
  — David Engwicht, Author, Beyond Traffic Calming

- “Place is the vessel within which the spirit of community is stored; Community is the catalyst that imbues a location with a sense of place… You cannot have community without place; and a place without a community is a location.”
  — Donovan Rypkema, Economist
PPS’s Characteristics of Successful Places

Source: Project for Public Spaces
What do “place” and “placemaking” have to do with transportation?

- Alleys, lanes, streets, avenues, highways, etc. are key part of public realm in U.S.
  - Help shape and have an impact on place
  - In contrast to European tradition of great public plazas
- Place is at the intersection of land use and transportation
Great American Streets

Philadelphia, PA
Great Plazas in Europe

Plaza Catalunya
Barcelona, Spain
Great Plazas in Latin America

Oaxaca, Mexico
Great Plazas in the U.S.

Pioneer Square, Portland, OR
How do roadways/transportation affect “place”?

- Roadways
  - Are part of a place
  - Help define place
  - Set the context for place, and vice versa
  - Can help create a great place
  - Can undermine efforts to create a place

- Transportation facilities have a significant impact on places and placemaking

- “Of all the public decisions that go into placemaking, the most important is what type of transportation system to use.”
  — Alex Marshall, *How Cities Work: Suburbs, Sprawl and the Roads Not Taken*
Roadway can undermine efforts to create a great place

Castro Street, Mountain View, CA

Before Road Diet
Roadway can help create a great place

Castro Street, Mountain View, CA

After Road Diet
Roadways are part of place

Street Fair
Mountain View, CA
Roadway can help create a great place
Roadway can undermine efforts to create a great place

Embarcadero Freeway
San Francisco, CA
Roadway can help create a great place

The Embarcadero
San Francisco, CA
Roadway/Transit can help create a great place

The Embarcadero
San Francisco, CA