



CALTRANS DIVISION OF RESEARCH,
INNOVATION AND SYSTEM INFORMATION

Research Results

Executive

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Project Title:

The Implications of Freeway Siting in California: An Equity, Geospatial, and Case Study Approach

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Task Manager:

Tyler Monson
Senior Transportation Planner
Tyler.monson@dot.ca.gov

The Implications of Freeway Siting in California: An Equity, Geospatial, and Case Study Approach

This project will examine four case studies of freeway construction impacts on minority neighborhoods

WHAT WAS THE NEED?

Freeway siting continues to have profound health, employment, educational, and social consequences decades later, so uncovering its history is vital to addressing one of the state's most significant spatial inequities.

WHAT WAS OUR GOAL?

This study uses empirical research to not only understand but also quantify and describe in detail the historical impacts of freeways on communities of color in four California cities and areas: Pasadena and Pacoima in Southern California and Sacramento and San José in Northern California.

WHAT DID WE DO?

Unlike previous studies relying only on qualitative methods to determine the impact of freeways on communities, this project employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and utilizes data and techniques that allow us to empirically document four outcomes. This study explores:

1. Was the choice of freeway alignments racially biased?
2. What were the direct effects of freeway construction? How many housing units did freeway construction destroy, and what was the racial composition of affected households?
3. What were the indirect effects of freeway construction? What impacts did it have on areas surrounding the freeway and the broader housing market?
4. What other impacts did residents of the affected neighborhoods experience?



DRISI provides solutions and knowledge that improves California's transportation system



WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Our historical and quantitative examination of freeway planning and construction in California reveals that neighborhoods of color were often chosen as sites for freeway projects, which displaced many residents, impacted those that remained, and left communities divided and depleted. The four cases are different in notable ways, but they share in common a disproportionate impact of freeway construction on communities of color.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

Acknowledging the history of disparities in transportation decisions, that communities of color experienced the greatest share of negative impacts from freeway siting, is a step towards repairing trust with these same communities. Recognizing past harms, however complex or challenging, influences future transportation decisions, invites all communities to participate in those decisions, and bends the arc of future history toward equitable outcome of shared benefits and disparities across all communities.

LEARN MORE

<https://ncst.ucdavis.edu/research-product/implications-freeway-siting-california-four-case-studies-effects-freeways>

<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/research-innovation-system-information/documents/research-notes/task3439-rns-07-22-ally.pdf>

IMAGES



Image 1: The Laurel Drive-in Theater before Freeway Construction, 1964, and the SR-118 Freeway on the Same Site Today
Sources: Laurel Drive-in Aerial Shot, 1964 and Google, 2023