

How L.A. Can Model the Future



Eric Garcetti

Mayor
City of Los Angeles

Michael S. Burke

Chairman and CEO
AECOM

Imagine what major cities — from New York to New Delhi — might look like if government investments in public transportation and housing joined forces with sharing economy pioneers and innovators.

Nearly 100 years ago, as Los Angeles experienced its first major growth spurt, the automobile was forging the city's car culture, while an emerging middle class launched the era of the single-family home. With its sunshine and Hollywood good looks, L.A. quickly became a major global city.

But what initially drew people to Los Angeles — expansive green lawns, spacious homes, sprawling highways — has posed challenges to our future.

Today the city faces a rapidly growing population, traffic congestion and a housing crunch.

L.A. is not alone. Cities around the globe face similar challenges. The World Health Organization tells us

that 54 percent of the world's population already lives in urban spaces, with tens of millions more expected to crowd into major cities globally in the next 20 years. Shaping infrastructure requirements to meet the demands of urbanization means both practical fixes today and bold partnerships that could redefine the look of cities over the next century.

By leveraging new technologies, cities can give residents and businesses more insight and control over their daily lives — while helping to mitigate traffic, develop smarter energy systems and increase public safety. And a sweeping sustainability plan released last year shows how Los Angeles can preserve resources while improving neighborhood livability.

But imagine what major cities — from New York to New Delhi, Sydney to Shanghai — might look like if government investments in public transportation and housing joined forces with sharing economy pioneers and innovators, who are transforming the technological landscape.

Imagine, as an example, the impact of autonomous vehicles on dense urban spaces. Autonomous ride-sharing vehicles would never need to park, efficiently picking up and delivering passengers to their destinations. An estimated 80 percent of parking spots could disappear forever in a fully autonomous future, allowing us to reclaim public space for better public uses — including affordable housing, parks and community centers.

Imagine how a Hyperloop — AECOM is building the first test track near Los Angeles — might transport people and products at high speeds across Southern California and beyond, with little to no impact on the environment. How can more cities emulate Eindhoven’s elevated bike paths or Medellín’s aerial gondolas, which lift commuters above crowded streets to transport them across the city? Solutions can be as varied as geography and need.

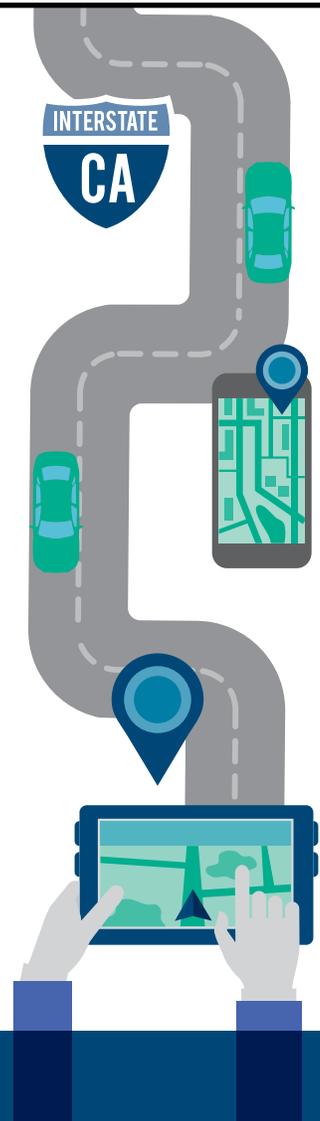
Imagine a more dynamic housing stock that fits the unique needs of a city’s changing workforce. Building smaller private units in buildings that have more flexible, common living spaces might expand housing choices and ownership options that play to demographic changes and our increased mobility.

Cities around the world already have benefited from public partnerships with companies like AECOM — which fuses design, engineering and

big-picture thinking to inform urban infrastructure projects. These partnerships go beyond merely accommodating current needs; they offer resilient pathways forward.

Los Angeles is pairing up with the private sector, building partnerships that lay the foundation for that future. Together, this combines the best of both worlds: nimbleness and scale, innovation and infrastructure. These partnerships are designed to be duplicated so that other urban spaces can imitate and build on L.A.’s progress.

It’s exciting to consider how a trend-setting gateway city like Los Angeles can influence mobility and housing strategies. Done right, L.A. can show the world how to accommodate population booms while delivering resilient, connected and equitable solutions that work for everyone.



Here's how we get there:

Pursue new alliances between government and business to address long-term infrastructure demands.

Build public-private partnerships that can lead to more robust, more socially equitable transportation and housing systems that enhance coverage, complement existing systems and reduce our carbon footprint.

Evaluate how the city has traditionally invested in transportation infrastructure, with an eye toward freeing up money for additional priorities. More efficient roads, bridges and transit lines means fewer operational costs to cities — while offering potential new revenue streams for government, an expanded customer base for businesses and improved quality of life for residents.

Taking steps to shape the future reduces the risks posed by waiting for the future to shape us. When we pair the best and brightest economists, architects, investors, engineers and innovators with government, we can turn Los Angeles into a living laboratory for innovative and actionable ideas — a model for the world. And that’s exactly what we’re doing.