

Development around the Grapevine



Jan de Leeuw

I will concentrate on a 10 miles radius around Gorman, Fort Tejon, and the Grapevine. But obviously development in that area is cumulative to what is and has been going on in the Santa Clara Valley (and before that in the San Fernando Valley).

In 2030 California will have 48M people, a growth of 30%. If planned developments in the Grapevine area all go through, it will have a population of more than 100K, a growth of more than 1000%. Centennial, near Quail Lake, will have the population of Santa Monica.

The area is currently thinly populated, biologically sensitive (condor, linkages), ecologically unique (four ecoregions), remote, rural, seismically active (1857), historically and culturally significant (indians) and at high elevation.

Development in the area will be 30 miles or more from Lancaster, Santa Clarita, Bakersfield and 60 miles or more from most of Los Angeles. This means two-hour commutes -- if the traffic situation remains the same (which it won't). It will be expensive for the tax payers to bring the resources to these communities: typical dumb growth.

Four hours of commuting means a work-day of 12 hours. Especially for young families that is devastating. Also, it's unhealthy. One takes in three times the amount of air pollution on the freeway -- and because trucks and ports and relaxing standards air pollution is becoming more serious.

So there will be 20K + 20K + 4K + 1K houses in the middle of nowhere, using up precious open space, draining taxpayer resources, increasingly difficult to get to and to get out of. It is almost irrelevant *how* they build, it is the *where* that matters.

The only serious connection between North and South California remains the I-5. But in our area the I-5 is very stressed. It is badly maintained (potholes, lane closures) and sensitive to weather (snow, slides).

About 18K trucks (14K five-axle) pass through the Grapevine daily. Each fully loaded truck has an effect on the road surface of 9000 cars: if half of the trucks are fully loaded this means the equivalent of 81M cars per day. And, as we know, truck traffic from the ports will triple, and even trucks from the Port of Oakland use the I-5.

Adding 20,000 homes in Newhall, 20,000 in Centennial, 20,000 in San Emigdio New Town, 4,000 in Tejon Mountain Village will add innumerable trips to the I-5.

The most common arguments against our position that these developments should not happen are “you are just a nimby” and “you folks are against growth”. Both arguments are vacuous. If the back yard is precious and irreplaceable open space, we should all be nimbies. And there is a huge difference between smart growth and dumb growth, or even malignant growth.