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## Untying traffic

### Time to rewrite the old L.A. story about congestion

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THE larger findings of City Controller Laura Chick's audit of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation were not news to Angelenos.

We know traffic is bad out there and getting worse. Everyone in the world knows it. It's the perennial L.A. story.

We also know it's not just the freeways anymore. Surface streets from Venice to Van Nuys are choked with cars at all hours of the day.

We also know that the city's traffic engineers and officials have no plan for managing the traffic problems of the city now and in the future.

Indeed, the audit confirmed these two things and put into writing what has frustrated millions of motorists trying to navigate this large city. Further, Chick concluded that unless the city takes bold action in the "reinvention and reorganization" of the city Department of Transportation, traffic will only get worse.

What's most shocking is to see those at City Hall actually acknowledge that traffic congestion isn't seriously taken into consideration when they sell out the city and its people to developers who so handsomely contribute.

As an ally of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Chick is carrying the mayor's water with this audit, which was launched at the request of his new Transportation Department head, Gloria Jeff. That's a statement of fact, not a criticism, as long as they really mean to develop a comprehensive plan for managing traffic now.

So far the mayor's traffic plan - despite his rhetorical flourishes - has seemed little different from that of his predecessor, fixing a few intersections and a few potholes and calling it a day.

As with his school reform plan, when it gets down to the particulars for traffic relief, the mayor is best at offering pipe dreams, like a subway to the sea, rather than solutions.

As Chick notes, we're on the verge of becoming a city mired in gridlock, with surface streets as jammed as freeways. This calls for radical thinking and concrete ideas, such as different kinds of public transportation and tougher rules on trucks in rush hours, not platitudes supplemented with the occasional traffic-signal synchronization.

This audit laid the problems out for everyone to see. Now comes the test of who may be willing to take up the challenge of applying bold thinking to this age-old Los Angeles story and put their political capital on the line.