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- WORKING PAPER NO:** ITS-WP-95-10
- TITLE:** Transport of Delight – The Mythical Conception of Rail Transit in Los Angeles
- ABSTRACT:** The imposition of organising and simplifying structures is basic to understanding. Myths tacitly provide an alluring simplification. Telling simple but powerful stories, they point to specific cures. Those cures depend for success on the often invisible assumptions inherent in the myth. But those assumptions can steer the way to bad planning decisions which fail to provide the hope-for benefits. Myths are constructed by symbolic processes: the images, symbols, and metaphors that are part of our everyday lives, and which provide compelling messages on what is good and bad in our world. Following a brief assessment of the rail passenger system planned and under construction for Los Angeles and an outline of the research approach employed here, this paper examines the myth-building symbolic processes at work in transport planning in Los Angeles, summarising part of a recently completed doctoral dissertation. Thus it will be explained why a new rail passenger system – which makes poor use of scarce resources – has almost unanimous support in Los Angeles. The implications for planning will be considered: we need a type of psychotherapy to make us aware and critical of both our myths and our approaches to evaluation and problem solving.
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