



I've [been somewhat critical](#) of LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's environmental policies, which tend to have more style than substance. But I have overlooked his [30/10 plan](#), which (as the New York Times reported the other day) might revolutionize the way sustainable infrastructure is built in American cities. That's unfair, because the Mayor has really done the right thing here.

A couple of years ago, Los Angeles voters passed Proposition R, which added a half-cent to the county sales tax for transit projects. That will produce nearly 6 billion dollars over its lifetime. 30/10 essentially seeks to bond this money, allowing the projects to be built in a faster time. 30/10 isn't really Villaraigosa's idea: it's the brainchild of [Denny Zane](#), the outstanding and visionary transit advocate. But Villaraigosa deserves credit for picking up the idea and biking with it.

The funny thing, though, is that many of the breathless accounts of 30/10 don't really make clear about why and how it is so different. It's nothing new to bond a dedicated revenue stream: public agencies do that all the time. Tim Rutten of the LA Times wrote [a couple of months ago](#) that Congress needs to figure out a way to finance it. Why couldn't it be bonded through the private market? Perhaps it's because even with Proposition R, 30/10 will still need substantial federal monies for the individual projects, so that means that Congress must allow federal dollars to be leveraged in the same way. (Rutten also mentioned that Senator Barbara Boxer is trying to reduce the number of environmental reviews for the west side subway extension from 3 to 1). Reporters (and maybe bloggers) need to dig a little more on this and hold the city's feet to the fire.

But so far, it's a good start.