

SANTA CLARA GENERAL PLAN

GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE – MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Date: July 15, 2009

Location: Santa Clara City Hall

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members Present:

Joe Kornder, Co-Chair
Jamie McLeod, Co-Chair
Thomas Banholzer
Dixie Baus
Michele Beasley
Brian Brennan
David Dolizier
Ian Champeny
Ray Hashimoto
Frank Kadlecsek
Jerry Marsalli
Teresa O'Neill
Kevin Park
Alice Pivacek
Andy Ratermann
Ed Richards
Peter Yoon

City Staff:

Kevin Riley
Carol Anne Painter
Doug Handerson
Julie Moloney
Gian Martire
Julia Hill

Dyett & Bhatia, Consultants:

Rajeev Bhatia
Sarah Nurmela
Jean Eisberg

Fehr & Peers, Consultants:

Sohrab Rashid
Kathrin Tellez

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Discuss transportation, transit, and mobility issues.
- Provide input on transportation, transit, and mobility policies for the General Plan.

MEETING SUMMARY

I. Welcome and Announcements (Co-Chair Kornder)

II. Vision and Priority Exercise (Committee)

Steering Committee members were asked to respond to the following question: By area or Citywide, what primary mode of transportation is most in need of improvement efforts? How? Why?

Steering Committee Feedback

Areas	Bus Rapid Transit	Light Rail	Shuttles	Bicycles	Pedestrians	Cars
El Camino Real						
Stevens Creek Boulevard						
Santa Clara Station Area						
Downtown						
North of Bayshore						
Between Bayshore and Caltrain						
City-wide						

Other comments:

- El Camino Real improvements will require coordination with VTA and Caltrans, since it is a State highway.
- Consider needs of electric and other new vehicle technologies.
- Consider additional improvements along north-south corridors and connections to the more prominent east-west corridors.
- Consider linkages within neighborhoods (e.g. connecting neighborhoods to activity centers with shuttles, or improved sidewalks and bicycle lanes).
- Consider providing additional facilities for bicycles on transit vehicles in addition to dedicated lanes within the city.

III. Continue Discussion on Draft Annotated Outline Sections Related to Transportation Issues (Kevin Riley and Carol Anne Painter)

Mr. Riley encouraged the Steering Committee to be prioritize livability; focus on more than just commuters; think beyond traditional level of service measures; and, strive to reduce reliability on vehicles by providing convenient and safe transportation alternatives. The City is compelled to change its emphasis to alternative modes, through AB 32 and SB 375 legislation, which seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mobility & Alternate Transportation Modes

Streetscape Design & Classifications

Ms. Painter described the traditional roadway classification system, used by most communities and proposed for the General Plan transportation classification system. These include: freeways, expressways, major and minor arterials, collectors, local streets, pedestrian corridors, transit hubs, and bicycle paths and routes. Definitions were provided in a table in

the agenda packet. Typically, these are distinguished by right of way dimensions, number of travel lanes, and frequency of access points.

The Committee discussed the following potential improvements and considerations:

- Limit curb cuts, promote detached sidewalks and include sidewalks in industrial areas to improve walkability.
- Consider bike pedestrian bridges (i.e. on bike trails, over roads) to maintain continuous routes.
- Reduce vehicle lane widths to accommodate other travel modes (i.e. wider sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes, exclusive and transit lanes).

Transit & Alternate Transportation

Ms. Painter described the draft Transit Accessibility map, which shows transit opportunities along Great America Parkway/Bowers Avenue. The City is pursuing a multi-modal strategy to promote Complete Streets, described in the “Introduction to Mobility” section of the agenda packet.

Committee members offered the following recommendations:

- Move the Downtown node on the Transit Accessibility map to the Station Area, since the latter is the burgeoning transit hub and has more physical capacity to accommodate the traffic associated with a hub.
- Consider a shuttle connection between Downtown and the Station Area (and potentially beyond) such as a trolley, and possibly partnering with Santa Clara University. Other Bay Area examples include: the Marguerite, which runs between Stanford and Caltrain in Palo Alto, and the Emery-Go Round, which is financed by businesses in Emeryville.
- Use El Camino Real as a test case to experiment with alternative approaches to determine optimal multi-modal combination for success.
- Purchase VTA Eco-passes to allow employers or residential developers to provide transit passes on behalf of their employees and residents, respectively. There was some concern about having the expense fall exclusively on the residential developers and businesses, and about securing the transit improvements in tandem with increasing ridership.
- Consider a transit hub near Rivermark and near the Homestead Road/Lawrence Expressway intersection.
- Provide maps that show how the various transportation modes integrate, and include the Airport access routes using transit modes.

Environmental Quality

Level of Service, Vehicle Miles Traveled & Travel Time

Ms. Painter explained that the General Plan’s mobility policies affect transportation standards, which, in turn, have implications for the environmental analyses associated with

the plan as well as future development projects. The California Environmental Quality Act allows jurisdictions flexibility in setting local thresholds for impacts (e.g. Level of Service (LOS), vehicle miles traveled). Santa Clara currently uses LOS for vehicular traffic congestion at intersections. Other communities have adopted multi-modal standards as a way to balance alternative transportation priorities.

The Committee discussed potential options for standards and priorities:

- Vehicle miles traveled does not capture emissions levels, which may differ because of gas-mileage differences between vehicles (e.g. gas/electric hybrids vs. SUVs).
- A multi-dimensional approach to evaluate transportation impacts and benchmark greenhouse gas emissions can more accurately reflect the multi-modal emphasis of the Plan.
- Safe alternative transportation opportunities should be implemented before removing parking or limiting vehicle accessibility.
- LOS, as a standard, is outdated and ineffective in supporting a multi-modal transportation network. A multi-modal threshold would better prioritize the mobility of people rather than exclusively focusing on the mobility of automobiles.
- The existing LOS of D should be retained, but investment should be put into bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Consider LOS standards for different focus areas, intersections or land uses (e.g. around school sites or other types of traffic “choke” points).
- Retain LOS for vehicles as a standard until alternative modes are more reliable, available and convenient.

Ms. Painter provided an indication of the cost and benefits for the LOS standard when applied to specific locations. For example, prioritizing vehicle mobility using the current LOS standard for San Tomas Expressway requires the addition of an HOV lane at a cost of \$40 million, with a resulting improved travel time of only four seconds. Improvements at Lawrence Expressway near Monroe would have similar results at a cost of \$50 million dollars. As an alternative, the City can establish a relationship between a proposed project and improvements that either addresses an average LOS for the City in order to maintain system-wide performance; or, prioritizes the performance of pedestrian bike/transit facilities as a means to reduce vehicle miles traveled (and associated congestion reductions); or, some combination of these options..

IV. Public Comments

- The City should recognize that the population in Santa Clara is aging when thinking about transportation needs.
- The transportation network needs to include additional north-south transit connections.
- Using an “average” LOS threshold may allow higher LOS at some intersections because of an acceptable LOS at other intersections. Such a standard will not allow the City to effectively reduce traffic congestion everywhere.

V. Adjournment

NEXT STEPS

Ms. Painter asked the Committee to provide feedback on parking, transportation demand management, LOS, and current General Plan transportation policies for discussion at the next meeting. The topic of mobility will be continued at the next meeting on August 20, 2009, at 5:30 p.m. in the City Council chambers located at Santa Clara City Hall.