



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

**Tuesday June 21, 2016**

Mitchell Park Community Center, El Palo Alto Room

5:30 – 8:30 pm

**TITLE:** Transportation Element Discussion  
**FROM:** Elena Lee, Interim Planning Manager,  
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## **Background**

The full CAC met to provide input on key issues and recommendations for updating the Transportation Element policies and programs in October 2015, considering input from the community received at the Summit and via the Digital Commenter. Based on CAC input, staff and the consultant produced a preliminary draft Transportation Element that was posted in the Digital Commenter for public comment in January 2016 and subsequently reviewed by the full CAC that same month. In the course of discussions at the CAC, the one transportation-related issue on which there was no clear consensus was the issue of parking, and so to resolve that issue and forge consensus on an approach, the transportation subcommittee met four times: in December, February, March and April 2016. CAC members also recommended streamlining the narratives that introduce the policies and programs in the element, and in May the Comp Plan sustainability subcommittee met to make recommendations on strengthening the link between the Comp Plan and S/CAP, as directed by City Council. Staff and the consultant revised the preliminary draft Transportation Element to reflect all of the input received since February 2016, including the transportation subcommittee's approach to parking; the sustainability subcommittee's recommendations for policies and programs to link the Transportation Element and S/CAP; and revisions to streamline the introductory narratives in the Transportation Element. Then, the Transportation subcommittee met on June 6 to review the revised Element and provide feedback, and staff and consultants have made those changes in response. (See subcommittee meeting summary below.) In addition, the maps in the Element have been updated. Detailed review of the Transportation Element by the subcommittee has been invaluable in refining the February draft.

The updated draft of the Transportation Element is included in this packet in two formats - a tracked version showing all changes made, and a clean version with all edits accepted. Both have the same content, the only difference is that the tracked version shows the original language plus all subsequent edits, while the clean version shows only the current, updated language. For reference, the previous February draft is available at this link: [http://www.paloaltocompplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/1\\_Revised-Draft-Transportation-Element-021616.pdf](http://www.paloaltocompplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/1_Revised-Draft-Transportation-Element-021616.pdf).

- Attachment A - Revised Preliminary Draft Transportation Element (June 2016) - Clean

- Attachment B - Revised Preliminary Draft Transportation Element (June 2016) - Tracked

Note that the unique identifier assigned to each policy and program in the February draft has been preserved in the revised draft Transportation Element documents attached to this packet, and new unique identifiers have been added to all new policies or programs. The unique identifiers, noted in square brackets at the end of each policy or program (ex [T1]), are meant to help CAC members refer quickly to policies and programs and also to help track the disposition of policies and programs from the 1998 Comp Plan as well as new ideas recommended for inclusion in the update. The unique identifiers will be removed from the final version of the element, as they are only needed while the document is "in process."

Over three full CAC meetings, five Transportation subcommittee meetings, and one Sustainability subcommittee meeting, the Transportation Element has received substantial and detailed attention. CAC members may have additional comments, and it's very helpful to staff and consultants to receive written comments, particularly for specific wording change suggestions. Explaining the reasoning behind suggested changes is also very helpful. Changes that we consider going forward should be consistent with the changes that have been discussed with group. Written comments are due by 10:00 AM on June 21. Staff will bring copies of all written comments for the full group.

#### **What to Expect at the Meeting**

The purpose of the June 21 CAC meeting is to review the updates to the element and confirm that the content reflects the comments received and that the CAC is comfortable forwarding the Transportation Element to City Council for their review and comment. CAC members can continue to make suggestions and, if necessary, the CAC can craft options for Council consideration. Options should reflect a spectrum of CAC consensus. Staff proposes that the CAC review the Element goal-by-goal, and to facilitate that review, a summary of the edits made to the preliminary draft reviewed by the CAC in February, based on subcommittee input, is provided below.

#### **Summary of June 6 Subcommittee Meeting**

On June 6, Transportation subcommittee members Don McDougal, Bonnie Packer, and Ellen Uhrbrock met with staff members Elena Lee, Elaine Costello, and Sue-Ellen Atkinson (Transportation Division) and consultants Andrew Hill and Joanna Jansen (PlaceWorks). Member of the public Penny Ellson and CAC member Alex Van Riesen also attended. The subcommittee reviewed the Element goal by goal, beginning with Goal T-1, to review the revisions to the Element since the May 17 full CAC meeting and finalizing the Element for full CAC consideration.

The subcommittee:

- Discussed the overall organization of the Element and, in particular, the interconnections between Goal 2, Traffic Congestion (formerly Goal 9), and other goals related to sustainability (T-1), efficiency (T-3), safety (T-6) and others. Because these goals are all inter-related, the subcommittee acknowledged the challenge of identifying the most appropriate location for policies and programs under that support multiple goals.

- Discussed the relative roles of policies versus programs, and came to consensus to focus primarily on policies. However, the subcommittee reiterated the importance of clear and specific programs in the Implementation Element to demonstrate how a policy will be implemented.
- Added the idea of “gathering places,” particularly under the section of Goal T-1 addressing shuttles and ride-sharing, and identified additional opportunities to refer to first/last mile connections.
- Added references to the role of employers in educating and incentivizing employees to use alternative transportation.
- Identified the need to consider economic disadvantage as a category of special need under Goal T-7, and suggested revisiting the policies and programs to address a broader category of transit-dependent individuals, whether transit-dependent for economic reasons or due to physical limitations.
- Requested a close look at the use of the terms “regional,” “adjacent,” “surrounding,” and similar in Goal T-8 to ensure different terms are used consistently and appropriately.
- Suggested that any policy or program wording referring to funding be consolidated in single location.

### **Summary of Edits to the February Draft**

#### Narratives and Maps

Several CAC members recommended clarifying the objectives of the transportation element up front, and to address that comment the updated version of the element includes a table of contents that lays out the each of the goals and the topical subheadings under them has been added. Additionally, the narratives have been streamlined to create a more concise introduction to the key issues addressed in the element and to eliminate the discussion of the airport, which will be moved to the Land Use Element. The maps included in the element have been updated to reflect new data and to improve content and legibility. City staff are currently reviewing the revised maps further to ensure they are complete and accurate.

#### Goal T-1 Sustainable Transportation

The policies and programs under this goal are intended to guide Palo Alto towards a more sustainable transportation system with strategies intended to reduce reliance on the single-occupant vehicle, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and make it easier and more convenient to use alternatives to the automobile, including transit, walking, biking, shuttles and ridesharing services. In the February draft of the element, Goal T-1 had by far the most content of all the goals in the preliminary draft Transportation Element, with 39 policies and 34 programs. Updates under this goal focused on streamlining and consolidating the policies and programs to present a clearer, more concise message in response to CAC comments. A handful of policies/programs that dealt with land use patterns (unique identifiers T94, T195 and T197 from the February draft) were shifted to the Land Use Element; some others were moved under different goals in the Transportation Element for a better balance (T11 and T12 were moved to traffic congestion; T95 was moved to regional collaboration); and one policy (T17) was deleted as it is already required by Ordinance 5263 adopted by Council in August 2014.

Under Goal T-1, the subcommittee increased references to first/last mile connections; added emphasis on marketing, education, and promotion to support transit and shuttle use; consolidated policies related to monitoring progress from other goals into the “monitoring progress” subsection; and consolidated policies related to funding under a new “funding” subsection. The subcommittee also revised the section on shuttles to encompass all types of transportation needs, not just employees, and to add language on gathering places.

The Transportation Element already includes a number of policies and programs that support the objectives of the *S/CAP*, including policies that expand transit options and reduce the carbon intensity of vehicular travel to, from and through Palo Alto. Additionally, at the recommendation of the sustainability subcommittee, two programs related to electric and alternative fuel vehicles were added under Policy [T13] to strengthen the connection with the *S/CAP*. Policies and programs related to bicycling under this goal were edited to incorporate feedback from the Palo Alto Bicycle Advisory Committee.

### Goal T-2 Traffic Congestion

Not in the 1998 Comp Plan, this goal was added by Council in September 2015 and originally included as Goal T-9 in the February draft. Given the importance of this objective, however, the transportation subcommittee recommended moving it up to emphasize it as a priority for the community. The policies and programs under this goal are intended to address traffic congestion by developing and implementing comprehensive strategies with regional and local partners, including public agencies as well as Palo Alto employers and businesses. The focus here is on partnerships that address technological improvements, employee commute trips and local travel patterns, recognizing that the policies and programs under Goal T-1 will also make an important contribution to reducing traffic congestion in Palo Alto.

### Goal T-3 Efficient Roadway Network

The policies and program under this goal are intended to promote efficient circulation for all modes of transportation and to guide transportation infrastructure improvements, including street modification, street design and grade separation along the rail corridor. In line with direction from City Council, conventional roadway level of service standards are maintained and complemented with measures that advance the City's commitment to Complete Streets principles. Emphasis is placed on improving connections to community gather places such as parks, community centers, recreational facilities, schools and libraries as well as improving east-west connections within Palo Alto. The policies and programs also prioritize below-grade rail alignments that address safety concerns and adverse noise and vibration impacts. This Goal includes the concept that the City will continue to prioritize the safety of school children in street modification projects [T80].

One notable change under this goal is the deletion of Policy [T75], which was not serving the City well. This policy, which prevented the incorporation of stop lights on certain north-south arterials, was often used by VTA and others as justification for avoiding mitigation of the adverse impacts of bus rapid transit (BRT).

Under Goal T-3, the subcommittee added a new policy relating to the tree canopy and shifted policies regarding pedestrian-friendly design from Goal T-1.

#### Goal T-4 Neighborhood Impacts

The policies and programs under this goal focus on transportation and quality of life on neighborhood streets. The City will prioritize traffic calming measures over congestion management (T109) and will use traffic calming measures to limit cut through traffic and promote the use of non-motorized transportation for short, local trips (T110). Updates to policies and programs under this goal included the deletion of out-dated items like Policy [T113], which called for stop signs every two blocks, was out of sync with plans for future bicycle boulevards include traffic circles that facilitate cycling and help balance use of neighborhood streets among transportation modes. Another conflict that existed in the February draft had to do with Policy [T67], which called for maintaining alternative routes as a way of minimizing traffic loads on major streets. This policy potentially conflicts with the objectives of the policies and programs under Goal T-4, which prioritize traffic calming on neighborhood streets over efficient traffic flow through the city and was deleted accordingly.

The subcommittee suggested adding arterial streets to Policy [T109] regarding traffic calming measures, but the role of arterials is to carry traffic and keep heavy traffic off of local and collector streets, so arterials would not be appropriate for traffic calming. The policy keeps the existing reference to traffic calming on local and collector streets only. Other policies are in place to ensure safety, as discussed below.

#### Goal T-5 Parking

The policies and programs under this goal have been updated based on the work of the transportation subcommittee. As revised, they articulate a phased approach which includes a near-term focus on optimizing the use of existing parking spaces and conducting needs assessments to establish a baseline for adequate parking in each of the city's commercial centers and employment districts under current conditions. Then in the mid- to long-term, as it becomes easier and more convenient to walk, bike, rideshare and use transit, and as the effectiveness of parking management programs can be measured, the focus will shift to recalibrating parking supply. Bridging between these two phases will require identifying performance standards for transit, walking, ridesharing and bicycling that represent the thresholds at which point mechanisms to phase in updated parking requirements and reduce space allocated to parking over time should be considered. The policies and programs here were reviewed by the transportation subcommittee in May and recommended revisions resulting from that review have been incorporated.

#### Goal T-6 Roadway Safety

The intent of the policies and programs under this goal is to promote and enhance the safety of all roadway users, through the use of engineering, enforcement and educational strategies as well as technological improvements. This goal carries forward an existing policy, [T153], that the City will continue to make safety the first priority of citywide transportation planning and will prioritize pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile safety over vehicle level-of-service at intersections and vehicle parking.

Safe Routes to School policies and programs are clustered here so that they can be easily found and implemented. The concept of safe routes to work, shopping and community services is also introduced. Particular emphasis is given to improving safety along the rail corridor.

#### Goal T-7 Transit-Dependent Community

The intent of the policies and programs under this goal is to provide transportation options and services for members of the community that cannot and choose not to drive and depend on transit. In the previous version of the Element, this goal focused on improving access for seniors and those with mobility constraints through design considerations, coordination of services and financial assistance. However, an important change directed by the subcommittee has broadened this goal to also address the needs of those who are dependent on transit due to economic disadvantage. The CAC could consider additional policies and programs to support access to transit for those community members specifically. The Comp Plan will need to take a long-range view to ensure the needs of all special needs groups are met in the coming years, particularly in light of VTA service changes that are beyond the City's control.

#### Goal T-8 Regional Collaboration

In the February draft, Goal T-8 contained policies and programs related to the Palo Alto Airport; however, on the recommendation of the CAC, these items have been shifted to the Land Use Element of the Comp Plan. In this version of the Transportation Element, Goal T-8 pertains to regional collaboration on solutions to the pressing transportation issues we face together with our neighbors on the Peninsula and in the wider Bay Area region. Whereas in the earlier draft, the policies and programs called for Palo Alto to take a leadership role, based on the recommendations of the CAC, the policies and programs have been revised to emphasize collaboration with our neighbors in the region. Additionally, the introductory narratives and the policies and programs have been updated to reflect Council's preference for high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes over express lanes. Express lanes potentially give single-occupant vehicle drivers priority over other roadway users upon payment of a fee, which is inconsistent with the stated aim of the Comp Plan to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips.

The subcommittee did not make substantial changes to this Goal but did add a new program to identify and improve bicycle connections to neighboring communities in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties (T248).

#### Next Steps

As described above, the goal of the June 21 CAC meeting is to review the modifications made to the February draft of the Transportation Element and forward it to the City Council for their review and comment. Following the June 21 meeting, final CAC recommendations, and any options that need to be forwarded to Council, will be incorporated into a revised draft of the element and distributed to the City Council for discussion in August. The Council meeting date has not yet been determined.

The next full CAC meeting, on July 19, will be to review a draft Land Use and Community Design Element.