



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Tuesday June 7, 2016

Mitchell Park Community Center, Matadero Room
1:00 PM TO 4:00 PM

TITLE: Transportation Subcommittee 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 February 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 three times: in 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 have 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. The updated draft of the document 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 February draft is available at this link: http://www.paloaltocomplan.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. 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."

What to Expect at the Meeting

The purpose of the June 7 transportation subcommittee meeting is to review the updates to the element and confirm that the content reflects the comments received since February. Staff proposes that the subcommittee review the updates goal-by-goal, and to facilitate that review, a summary of the edits made to the preliminary draft reviewed by the CAC in February is provided below.

Detailed review of the Transportation Element by the subcommittee has been invaluable in refining the February draft, and as you complete your work in preparation for presentation of the revised draft to the CAC in June, staff would like to ensure that this is a document you can support. To that end, if you feel there are issues where policy/program options would be helpful or on which the CAC should vote, please let us know.

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. Please note that the maps included in the element are currently being updated on the basis of new data to improve content and legibility. The updated maps will be included in the version of the element circulated to the full CAC prior to the June 21 meeting.

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 and 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.

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 T-1.3 [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.

As of February 2016, the City was in the process of developing a 5-year plan for its free shuttle service (Palo Alto Shuttle). Currently, the City has three shuttle routes: the Embarcadero Route (partially funded by Caltrain), the Crosstown Route, and the East Palo Alto Route (funded by the City of East Palo Alto). However, the 5-year plan, which will consider options for expanded shuttle service, looking at additional routes, frequencies, branding, and “on demand” service options, has been put on pause pending the results of the Valley Transportation Authority’s (VTA) ongoing network concepts study and a potential transportation sales tax measure on the ballot in November that could create a new funding stream for shuttle service if approved by voters.

VTA's Next Network project is part of an effort to make public transit faster, more frequent and more useful for Santa Clara County travelers. With a limited budget for transit service, VTA believes it must choose between designing for frequent service in transit-favorable corridors and designing for coverage that serves as many areas as possible regardless of ridership. Currently, VTA spends about 70 percent of its operating budget on ridership services and 30 percent on coverage services. As part of the Next Network project, VTA has developed three conceptual maps that imagine what VTA's transit network could look like if designed at 70/30, 80/20 and 90/10 balances of ridership and coverage, respectively. The network concept maps can be viewed here: <http://www.vta.org/projects-and-rograms/transit/next-network/concepts>. The 80/20 and 90/10 concepts would reduce transit coverage in Palo Alto in favor of more frequent service on select north-south routes.

In view of the changing landscape and the long-range nature of the Comp Plan, staff would like to hear input from the transportation subcommittee to help craft a strategy for shuttle service in Palo Alto. Shuttles - including Palo Alto Shuttle, Stanford's Marguerite Shuttle, Caltrain's Deer Creek shuttle (which takes riders between the California Avenue Caltrain Station and Deer Creek area office buildings during commute hours), and private shuttles run by local employers and hotels - are an important part of the local mobility equation. Coordination among shuttle services and with emerging private sector ridesharing services is the key to efficient, effective shuttle service in the future and the Comp Plan should articulate a forward-thinking, flexible strategy.

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 gathering 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 on below-grade rail alignments that address safety concerns and adverse noise and vibration impacts.

One notable change under this goal is the deletion of Policy T-3.8 [T75 from the February draft], 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).

Goal T-4 Neighborhood Impacts

The policies and programs under this goal focus on transportation and quality of life on neighborhood streets. Priority is placed on traffic calming measures to limit cut through traffic and promote the use of non-motorized transportation for short, local trips. Updates to policies and programs under this goal included the deletion of outdated items like Policy T-3.2 [T113 from the February draft]. Plans for future bicycle boulevards include traffic circles that facilitate cycling and help balance use of neighborhood streets among transportation modes. Former Policy T-3.2, which called for stop signs every two blocks, was inconsistent with this initiative. Another conflict that existed in the February draft had to do with Policy T-2.2 [T67 from the February draft], 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.

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. 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 Special Needs

The intent of the policies and programs under this goal is to provide transportation options and services for special needs populations in the community, including seniors and those with mobility constraints.

The policies focus on improving access for special needs groups through design considerations, coordination of services and financial assistance. Paratransit service, currently administered by VTA through a contract with Outreach and Escort, Inc. (OUTREACH), could be affected by the transit network changes VTA is considering. Paratransit service area is available to those within a ¼-mile corridor around the VTA bus routes and light rail stations. The Comp Plan will need to take a long-range view to ensure the needs of special needs groups are met in the coming years.

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 the revised 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.

Next Steps

As described above, the goal of the June 7 transportation subcommittee meeting is to review the modifications made to the February draft of the Transportation Element and approve it for presentation to the full CAC later this month. Following the June 7 meeting, subcommittee recommendations will be incorporated into a revised draft of the element and distributed to the full group in a packet approximately seven days ahead of the June 21 meeting. That revised draft will also incorporate the revised maps as described above.

Following review and approval of the full CAC, the revised preliminary draft Transportation Element will be presented to Council in summer 2016.