

# chapter 1

## Introduction

### Purpose of the Bicycle Plan

The Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) Countywide Bicycle Plan Update is the countywide planning document for bicycle facilities. It demonstrates the planning efforts for each jurisdiction in one comprehensive package. This plan is being created at the direction of the Countywide Bicycle Advisory Committee (CBAC) and will also serve as a resource for information about current and planned facilities.

The Countywide Bicycle Plan is designed to complement the SCTA Countywide Transportation Plan. Like the SCTA Countywide Transportation Plan, and the Regional Transportation Plan, the Countywide Bicycle Plan will be updated every 2-3 years. Maps will be maintained more frequently on-line at [www.sonoma-county.org/scta](http://www.sonoma-county.org/scta).

### Countywide Bicycle Advisory Committee

The Countywide Bicycle Advisory Committee (CBAC) is an advisory committee to the SCTA. It is composed of representatives of every jurisdiction. In this way, decisions made at the local level are reported to the Countywide BAC. The primary function of the CBAC is to advise the SCTA on all matters relating to bicycle facilities.

The CBAC provides a venue for the local BACs to communicate and coordinate. Regional programs are coordinated through CBAC, as is countywide planning. Funding opportunities and strategies are discussed and coordinated at the CBAC meetings.

### Our Vision

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) of the SCTA facilitated a series of Town Hall meetings in 1999 in order to provide a forum for discussion on transportation. Members of the SCTA and CAC invited the public to share their concerns and preferences for the future of transportation in Sonoma County. These meetings were hosted in Petaluma, Windsor, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol and Sonoma. Hundreds of people participated by attending the meetings or by submitting written comments.

Based on citizen input, the SCTA developed a vision of transportation in Sonoma County by 2020. This document, ***Getting Around Sonoma County in 2020...A Vision for Our Future*** was created to guide our transportation choices over the next 20 years. These resulting vision statements have guided the SCTA in planning and policy. They are the backbone of the 2001 Countywide Transportation Plan and this complementary document – the SCTA Countywide Bicycle Plan.

Our Vision for a comprehensive bicycle system:

- A fully, implemented Countywide Bicycle system, with paths or designated bicycle lanes that link all cities and are connected to paths or designated bicycle lanes within cities.
- A safe and comfortable system for those on bikes.
- Enhanced transportation opportunities for tourism.
- A linkage from bike paths or designated bicycle lanes to rail stations and bus stops; and a path that follows the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way, creating a north-south linkage.

The Goal of the SCTA Countywide Bicycle Plan:

The goal is to create a countywide non-motorized transportation system, which provides safe and efficient opportunities for bicyclists to access school, work, shopping centers, professional services, and transportation to recreation areas. These facilities may also serve as recreational paths in and of themselves.

### **Policies**

The following policies were drawn from a compilation of policies from all jurisdictions in Sonoma County. These policies are held in common in all of the member jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction may have additional policies pertaining to bicycle and pedestrian facilities, which have been adopted as part of their local bicycle plan or general plan.

1. When facilities are newly constructed or upgraded careful consideration should be given to include improvements for bicycles.
2. Encourage creative development or redevelopment site designs and mixed-use land uses that minimize travel distances and enhance convenience for bicyclists.
3. The design of bicycle facilities should adhere to the design provisions as outlined in the Caltrans "Bikeways Planning and Design" chapter (1000) of the *Highway Design Manual*.
4. Planning for non-motorized transportation facilities should consider critical connections to other jurisdictions and closing gaps in existing routes.
5. Make use of abandoned railroad rights-of-way, natural waterways, flood control rights-of-way, and public lands or easements for non-motorized transportation facilities where available and appropriate.
6. Where available and appropriate make use of active railroad rights-of-way for non-motorized transportation modes.
7. Encourage bicycle safety education programs for adults and youths through schools, law enforcement agencies and other appropriate interest groups.

8. Encourage businesses and government agencies to promote use of bicycles as a viable transportation alternative (e.g. through provisions of economic incentives and adequate facilities).

## Consistency and Conformance with Other Policies and Plans

### **Federal and State Policies**

#### US DOT Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) adopted a policy statement “Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach”. This policy encourages the integration of bicycling and walking facilities into all transportation projects (when possible).

#### Caltrans DD-64

“The Department fully considers the needs of non-motorized travelers (including pedestrians, bicyclists and persons with disabilities) in all programming, planning, maintenance, construction, operations and project development activities and products. This includes incorporation of the best available standards in all the Department’s practices. The Department adopts the best practice concepts in the US DOT Policy Statement on Integrating Bicycling and Walking into Transportation Infrastructure”.

#### Assembly Concurrent Resolution 211

Assembly member Joe Nation authored ACR 211, which encourages “Integrating walking and biking into transportation infrastructure”.

### **Local Bicycle Plans:**

All jurisdictions in Sonoma County discuss bicycle planning either in the circulation element of their general plans, or in adopted comprehensive bicycle planning documents (or both). It is recommended that anyone interested in the bicycle/pedestrian facilities in a particular community consult that specific document for details. A contact list is provided in Appendix A.

#### 2001 Countywide Transportation Plan

The Countywide Transportation Plan, adopted in September 2001 by the Sonoma County Transportation Authority, provides a list of proposed bikeways in Sonoma County over the next twenty years.

### **Regional Plans:**

#### 2001 MTC Regional Bicycle Plan

The Regional Bicycle Plan (RBP) produced by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission provides information about the state of current bicycling conditions in the Bay Area. It defines concerns and actions needed to establish a regional bicycle network that links the entire Bay Area. The RBP recommends the expansion of local bicycle routes that connect to a regional network of bikeways, increased multi-modal connections, and increased bicycle capacity on buses. Maps of the proposed regional bikeway system are included in their plan.

### The Bay Trail

The Bay Trail will be a 400-mile bicycle and hiking trail encircling the San Francisco and San Pablo Bays. Currently 210 miles of the trail is in operation, three of which are in Sonoma County. 48 miles of trails are proposed for Sonoma County. The segments proposed in Sonoma County will involve the following routes:

- Highway 37: Sonoma/Marin County line to Highway 121.
- Northwestern Pacific Railroad: Petaluma River Bridge to Highway 37 Crossing.
- Lakeville Road: Highway 37 to Highway 116 (Stage Gulch Road).
- Highway 121: Highway 37 to Highway 116.
- Highway 116 (Stage Gulch Road): Lakeville Road to Highway 121.
- Arnold Drive: Highway 116 to Leveroni Road.
- Leveroni Road/Napa Road: Arnold Drive to 8<sup>th</sup> Street East.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Street East: Napa Road to Highway 121.
- Highway 121: Highway 116 to Ramal Road.
- Ramal Road: Highway 121 to Napa County line.

More details about the Bay Trail are located at the San Francisco Bay Trail website:

[www.baytrail.abag.ca.gov](http://www.baytrail.abag.ca.gov).

### The Bay Area Ridge Trail

The Bay Area Ridge Trail will be a 400-mile multi-use trail encircling the Bay Area along ridge tops. Currently 150 miles of the trail is in operation, 20.4 of which is in Sonoma County. Approximately 15.2 miles of the Ridge Trail run through regional and state parks along existing trails. The remaining 5.2 miles of the Ridge trail run along streets in Petaluma.

The sections within Sonoma County are isolated, with large unplanned gaps between them. The remainder of the proposed alignment within Sonoma County has not been dedicated yet. A non-profit association in San Francisco manages the Bay Area Ridge Trail project. They coordinate with local jurisdictions to implement the system. More details about the ridge trail are located at the Bay Area Ridge Trail website: [www.ridgetrail.org](http://www.ridgetrail.org).