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Transportation Planning Land Use Strategy (TPLUS)
Steering Committee

AGENDA

April 5, 2005 – 2:30pm to 4:30pm

Sonoma County Permit & Resource Management Department
Planning Commission Hearing Room – 2550 Ventura Ave., Santa Rosa

- I. Introductions and Opening Remarks**
- II. Review and Discussion of previous TPLUS meetings**
 - a. Major Policy Concerns Identified by Committee*
 - b. Barriers to Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- III. Creating a New Transportation - Land Use Vision for Sonoma County**
 - a. Review of Draft Policy Framework*
 - b. Development of Best Practices Manual for Project Implementation
 - i. Guiding Principles and Policy Framework (TPLUS Steering Committee)
 - ii. Project Identification and Selection Criteria (SCTA Planning Advisory Committee)
 - iii. Program Funding Guidelines and Administrative Procedures (SCTA Staff)
- IV. Next Steps**

SCTA Staff

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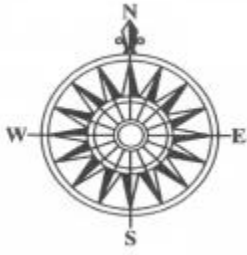
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This agenda packet is available online at www.sonoma-county.org.scta.

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Staff Report

To: TPLUS Steering Committee
From: Elijah Henley, Senior Transportation Planner
Re: Important Transit Oriented Development Policy Issues
Date: April 5, 2005

Issues:

1. Brief history of TPLUS committee and its role in the transportation/land use planning process
2. List of policy issues raised by the committee

Background:

The TPLUS Steering Committee held two meetings in 2004. The first meeting was held in late September and the committee reconvened in October. During these inaugural meetings, the committee was established and the function and purpose of this new group was discussed. Working with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) is in the process of drafting a 'Best Practices Manual' for developing and implementing Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects in Sonoma County. The TPLUS Steering Committee was created to support and help guide these planning efforts. After presentations from MTC on their regional efforts to support TOD and Sonoma County transit operators on the provision of transit services, the members of the TPLUS committee raised important policy questions that need to be addressed in the process of developing SCTA's Best Practices Manual.

Important Policy Questions, Concerns, and Comments:

During the first two meetings of the TPLUS committee, there were a great number of important policy issues raised by committee members. SCTA staff has thoroughly reviewed the minutes from both meetings and summarized the issues in the grouped lists of questions, concerns and comments found below. For the purpose of readability and policy development, questions and comments have been paraphrased and organized by common topic. The following four topic categories have been used to group information: (1) Community Development, (2) Provision of Public Transportation Services, (3) The Planning Process, and (4) Transportation Funding and Economics.

Community Development

1. Are there living examples of TOD throughout the bay area and what lending institutions buy into this process?

2. The words pedestrian and bicycle friendly has not been mentioned in this transit oriented development program. Further, what about infill and improvements to existing various neighborhoods and operations of transit? Does MTC have studies or information of other areas within the country on developing transit stations?
3. Commenting on vegetation in downtown areas, a committee member pointed out the importance of having a green downtown to attract people. Additionally, it was pointed out that many cities plant vegetation that is not native to the area. A suggestion was made that cities build an arboretum in downtown areas that can showcase native plants.
4. A comment was made that in the communities you have to look at how a project is going to integrate into the systems you have. Is it going to tie into the bicycle paths, is it closer to the business, what is the access to the businesses? When you have a business park going in, how does it tie into the community and what are the best advantages? You want to have something that gives the project priority if it is offering to build closer to mass transit.
5. It was pointed out that the principle stating “Communities that are walkable and pedestrian friendly” does not reflect cycling and non-motorized wheel usage. Adding language to promote this was suggested.

Provision of Public Transportation Services

1. There were general questions about how provision of transit services is coordinated between Sonoma County Transit (SCT) and local city operators.
2. There was a question about the provision of discount passes for SSU students and why that service had to be discontinued.
3. There was a comment that increasing the bike rack space on buses for would be desirable.
4. There was a discussion of various pricing strategies for providing discount passes for Santa Rosa Junior College students.
5. When public institutions relocate their facilities to areas that aren't serviced or are under served by transit, should those institutions be required to contribute to the cost of improving transit accessibility to their new facility?
6. A comment was made that it would be nice if the amount of parking surrounding future SMART train stations were minimized as a means of encouraging the use of alternate modes of transportation.
7. A counter comment was made that there is a danger in not making enough parking available at SMART stations in that if you want to add more parking in the future, you won't be able to because the land will be used up. You can always redevelop parking lots in the future if the demand for parking is less than what is being used.

8. A question was asked about the possibility of initiating new employee bus pass programs subsidized by employers.
9. There was a comment about the need to increase bus frequencies to 15 or 20 minute headways in Santa Rosa to capture new choice riders.
10. There was general concern expressed with deficiencies in the provision of paratransit services and other ADA issues related to the segment of the disabled community that doesn't qualify for paratransit service.

The Planning Process

1. Are there going to be any region wide meetings on issues of form based zoning and overlays to get planners up-to-speed?
2. Consideration for the handicapped under ADA program and beyond is very important especially in the planning process for the future.
3. It was pointed out that the vision statement "Local General Plans that will focus on city-centered growth" needs to be broadened to reflect implementing words into the code. General Plans tend to be where you put feel good clauses, statements and policies. Issues like parking ratios are embedded in zoning codes. In the context of a vision statement, the implementations of your plan have to be embedded in those lower documents or they won't happen. It has to re-stem in your zoning codes, parking codes, and in your subdivision codes.
4. It was pointed out that the Cities and the County are experiencing traffic congestion. It is important not to lose sight of that and how we manage and operate our infrastructure be folded into any policy framework produced by the committee. It is an important element of what we have on the map now.
5. It was suggested that one of the stated goals in the process of developing this plan should be to also develop a subcommittee to follow the issues of the plan towards actual implementation. This would give the participants more of an incentive to continue to participate.
6. Has there been any consideration given to working through local planning commissions to ensure new development projects are properly conditioned to provide adequate access to alternate modes of transportation?
7. There needs to be more public education and outreach related to the benefits of TOD and increase diversity of mobility options.
8. How well are the development plans for SMART's property being coordinated with other transit operators?

Transportation Funding and Economics

1. What makes transportation difficult is that it is ultimately a consumer decision. Transportation is a public utility that is largely paid for by the public. They will make a consumer decision partly about the amenities, but it is also about cost and convenience. Until we realize that the ultimate success of a system is defined by consumer acceptance and consumer choice, you will be continuing to butt up

against the wall, wondering what are we doing wrong when we have a beautiful system and it is under utilized.

2. There is general concern related to the long-time security of transit funding? If you are going to build new multimodal transit villages and have people rely on public transportation, then how committed is the transportation authority to people riding that transportation? If you can say you can do without a car, someone has to keep that commitment to the constituents.
3. There has to be some coordination on where we put investments in relation to securing priority service. If public investment of sufficient size is made in bus and rail systems, it encourages the real estate and development community to locate there.
4. It was noted that the two huge issues for employers in this area are issues with housing and transportation, which have a very significant negative impact on recruitment and retaining employees. Is there adequate representation from the business community on this committee? Who is going to create jobs in the future for Sonoma County residences?
5. There should be something said about economic accessibility for Sonoma County's multimodal transportation. You can have the most perfect system, and if its price is 75% out of your consumer market base, you have a problem. Additionally, the socio-political consequence of long distance commuting, caused by a shortage of affordable housing, is that people lose any sense of community loyalty and political consciousness.
6. Disappointment was expressed that there wasn't a member of the Santa Rosa Chamber present at the meeting to represent the small business community. SCTA staff was encouraged to invite the transportation representative from the Chamber into this process.
7. Does this process address the question of the free parking that subsidizes all of our automotive effort, or the ways that we impose hidden taxes on ourselves to support parking?
8. It was suggested a principle be drafted along the lines of encouraging informed choice by having our local governments better inform consumers on the hidden costs associated with various modes of transportation. That way you're not saying one mode is better than the other. By providing more information, better-informed transportation decisions can be made.
9. A counter point was made that the need to be informed about the cost of transportation to make better choices is not quite it. You make everything free because you bury all the costs somewhere. Furthermore public transportation used to pay for itself, now it doesn't because we provide all this enormous amount of space for free to use cars. It would pay for itself again if we didn't do that.
10. A comment was made on the word 'subsidy'. In the transportation world, it is only applied to transit systems. Yet we are spending public money much more on highways as we do more than on transit. The word subsidy is never associated

with highways, but somehow, subsidy has taken on a bad connotation and been applied to transit only. We should work to stay away from using that word in our statements.

11. Currently, any developer fees collected for the purpose of congestion mitigation can only be spent on capital improvements to the transit system. Has there been any consideration given to diverting some mitigation fee money to help cover transit operating costs in corridors where new development is occurring and increased bus/train frequencies would be necessary to attract new ridership?
12. What incentives or disincentives are being considered to encourage developers and lenders to more proactively incorporate TOD principles in their development plans?

Staff Recommendation:

TPLUS Committee members should review these lists of policy questions, concerns and comments and inform SCTA staff if any issues they may have raised during the first two haven't been addressed in this staff report. Additionally, committee members should give some thought to how these issues present both opportunities and barriers to TOD and be prepared to discuss how these lists can be used to develop the policy framework for SCTA's Best Practices Manual.

Transportation Planning Land Use Strategy (TPLUS)
Guiding Policy Statement for Promoting and Implementing Transit Oriented
Development in Sonoma County

Putting Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the Sonoma County Context

Vision

A network of cities and local communities connected by a comprehensive multimodal transportation system and land use configurations that significantly reduce the level of automobile dependency while increasing the health and well being of all Sonoma County residences.

Mission

Develop the policy framework and implementation strategies necessary to successfully build community support for TOD projects that: (1) improve access to public transportation, (2) make communities more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, (3) and create new living spaces that better serve the daily activities of Sonoma County residences by interfacing with a more diversified set of mobility options.

Goals and Objectives

- Support community focused development
 - Build closer-knit communities by increasing the availability of affordable housing and access to a well maintained multimodal transportation system.
 - Transform land use patterns and reconfigure transportation networks to better preserve open space and protect the environment.
 - Ensure Communities are pedestrian friendly and readily accessible by non-motorized modes of transportation.
- Increase availability of public transportation
 - Reduce the level of automobile dependence in Sonoma County by increasing people's access to alternate modes of transportation.
 - Help reduce commute distances and volumes by implementing multimodal transportation solutions that interface with transit friendly, mixed-use community development.
- Codify TOD principles in the planning process
 - Advocate for city-centered local general plan and zoning regulation amendments that provide maximum flexibility in assigning land use designations and development densities.
- Improve the jobs/housing balance and grow local economy
 - Increase availability of affordable housing
 - Develop new economic incentives to attract new businesses to Sonoma County and stimulate local job growth.