

Transportation and Land Use

As indicated early in the CTP, transportation and land use are linked in many ways. The location of jobs vis-à-vis housing, commute patterns, location of retail and other services are all considerations in the planning for a transportation infrastructure. This plan must consider local land use decisions and complement the general plans within the county. The SCTA is committed to transportation solutions that meet a variety of needs and support a high quality of life.



Vision:

- An improved jobs/housing balance that reduces the distance workers commute. This can be achieved through the active encouragement of projects that incorporate the principles of pedestrian or transit-oriented development (TOD) which connect housing to important activities of daily life such as: work, school, daycare, shopping, community events, etc.
- Communities that are walkable and pedestrian friendly.
- Local General Plans that will focus on city-centered growth.
- A transportation system that supports mixed-use developments.
- A transportation system that does minimal harm to air and water quality.

On two key measures of the linkage between transportation and land use, Sonoma County scores very well. On average, people in Sonoma County only travel approximately 12 miles to get to work everyday and 82% of employed county residents work in Sonoma County. We have the lowest in-commute and out-commute ratio of any county in the Bay

Area (ABAG 2003). However, Sonoma County faces significant challenges based on future growth projections. ABAG estimates that the number of jobs created in Sonoma will increase by 36% in 2030 while housing is only projected to grow by 19% (refer to page 10). From a transportation perspective, these trends present a number of potential problems because the predominant intra-county commute pattern relies too heavily on the automobile and the road segments that support the lesser inter-county commute will continue to become more congested as more Bay Area residents commute to Sonoma to take advantage of the growing job market.

The SCTA Vision focuses on future opportunities. It recognizes that land-use policies can influence transportation patterns and that simply changing our transportation policies cannot solve land use problems. There are other factors – primarily housing availability and affordability – that also influence land use decisions. Therefore, the vision focuses on those land use issues that are relevant to transportation. Through the deployment of various TOD strategies, SCTA is committed to improving transit accessibility and non-motorized mobility in an effort to enhance people’s travel options, reduce congestion, improve air quality, and encourage high density – mixed use reconfiguration of current land use patterns where feasible.

Smart Growth Initiative

The SCTA is participating in ongoing efforts related to regional smart growth initiatives. In the fall of 2000, MTC joined forces with four other regional agencies – the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) – as well as the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development to investigate smart growth and sustainable development in the Bay Area. One goal is to develop consensus on a set of “best practices” and financial incentives to spur similar smart growth efforts in Sonoma County. The agencies also intend to work with local governments to identify environmentally important areas that should be preserved or enhanced, as well as to define appropriate land use patterns for those areas deemed suitable for development.

The SCTA kicks off its T-Plus (Transportation Plus) program in the summer of 2004 in cooperation with the regional effort led by MTC. The T-Plus program has been initiated by MTC as a way to develop policy tools and planning strategies that better integrate the transportation and land use decision-making process. In support of this initiative, the SCTA is refining its modeling capability to better understand and predict the causes and effects of traffic and the connection to how

we live and work. Workshops and meetings to solicit public input will culminate in a Transportation and Land Use toolkit and best practices manual. This is the first step in implementing a local program of incentives to encourage smart growth principles.

The Planning Directors from the cities and County are considering the following policy statement advocating the adoption of a smart growth strategy for Sonoma County.

Goal: *Provide a well-integrated circulation system that supports “smart” growth principles and the city-centered growth philosophy, through a collaborative effort of all the cities and the County.*

Objectives:

- ▶ Utilize a growth management strategy that emphasizes a jobs/housing balance tied to housing affordability in providing development allocations.
- ▶ Design and build “walkable communities”, making trips on foot easier, safer and more pleasant.
- ▶ Concentrate growth in city centers and around exiting travel routes, focusing on transit.
- ▶ Support development and implementation of a rail transit system along the SMART ROW, including the necessary supporting transit network (bus, bike, ped, etc).
- ▶ Focus commute and through traffic onto US 101 and designate major arterial routes to serve primarily as connectors between urban areas (rather than as relievers to US 101).
- ▶ Each jurisdiction takes responsibility for accommodating future traffic within its jurisdiction as much as possible rather than relying upon roadways through surrounding communities.
- ▶ Provide east/west connectivity within each community including interchange improvements, transit/rail stops, and pedestrian enhancements to improve access to US 101 and the rail/transit system.
- ▶ Reduce travel demand by striving to provide a jobs/housing balance (1.5 jobs per household) concentrating a mix of jobs and housing along the rail corridor and other transit centers.
- ▶ Support a countywide sales tax to pay for the major regional Circulation and Transit system improvements, such as Rail system and US 101.
- ▶ Develop and adopt a subregional traffic mitigation fee and/or require a fair share contribution towards major subregional improvements that lie outside of the local jurisdictions but are affected by growth within the cities and county.
- ▶ Monitor the effectiveness of the Circulation and Transit system by maintaining an ongoing countywide traffic-modeling program through the SCTA.

Preservation

Sonoma County has made great strides in protecting our community's natural resources.

In 1990, voters approved a 1/4 cent sales tax for the purchase of agricultural and open-space easements, creating the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. The District has annual revenues of approximately \$13 million, which is for agricultural land preservation and open space acquisition in accordance with the Expenditure Plan approved by the voters.

Additionally, eight of nine Sonoma County cities have voter-approved urban growth boundaries that restrict development and reduce urban sprawl. The County also has an ordinance that limits development of property between cities with urban growth boundaries.

In 1998, voters approved Measure D, ensuring that a greenbelt will be preserved between Marin and Sonoma.