
Chapter 1

Introduction and Policy Framework

PURPOSE AND NEED

Background

Santa Clara County's spectacular economy has generated equally spectacular increases in traffic congestion. Congestion is no longer limited to morning and evening commute hours, it occurs midday and on weekends. It is a feature of cross-county trips, as well as trips to the local supermarket. Throughout the past four decades, roadway expansion permitted more auto-oriented development with the side effect of more motor vehicle traffic demand so that the congestion relief was only temporary. Relieving congestion is now no longer as "simple" as building new and wider roadways. In Santa Clara County, there is often little or no remaining right-of-way for roadway expansion. The public is also increasingly sensitive to loss of open space and the effects of motor vehicle traffic on noise levels, air quality, global warming, water quality and community life.

Providing more viable choices and options for people to get around without an automobile relieves some of the impacts of congestion as well as congestion itself. Bicycling is a pollution-free, economical and healthy method of transportation and recreation. Creating an environment where bicycling can be a viable alternative to the automobile can have a significant and positive impact on the quality of life in Silicon Valley. Those individuals who bike to work, school, shop, and play improve not only their own quality of life but those of others, because they are not contributing to vehicular congestion or the many adverse environmental impacts.

Bicycles have been used for transportation in Santa Clara County since the turn of the 20th century. The County's year-round temperate climate, low rainfall and flat terrain in the developed areas are ideal for bicycling. While the level of bicycling by adults declined from the 1920's through the 1950's due to increased use of the automobile, it remained a common mode of transportation for children and teenagers through the 1970's. Bicycling for both transportation and recreation gained a resurgence in popularity among adults in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Along with the increase in bicycling came the problem of motorists and cyclists sharing the road. The competition for the use of the roadways led to the development in some communities of bike "side paths" to separate the bicyclists from the motorists. However, it was soon learned that many bike paths, especially side paths, were not a workable solution for serious cyclists. For the most part, serious cyclists viewed poorly designed bike paths as an inconvenience and often encountered safety problems on them. It is now recognized that a comprehensive bicycle network is composed of both on-street and off-street facilities; to implement a successful bicycle network, it is also essential to improve existing roadways to safely accommodate cyclists.

Purpose of the Countywide Bicycle Plan

The purpose of this Bicycle Plan is to assemble in one document all the pertinent elements of past bicycle plans and working papers, identify the final cross-county bicycle corridor network, including gaps and needed projects, and include other elements to help local agencies responsible for projects to secure funding and plan effectively for the future. The Countywide Bicycle Plan (CBP) will function as a regional framework for local plans, and will identify coordination possibilities between the local bicycle plans. The Countywide Bicycle Plan has a regional emphasis, while local jurisdictions' bicycle plans and general plan circulation elements cover their communities in greater, more comprehensive detail. The relation between the CBP and the VTA Bicycle Expenditure Plan (BEP) is discussed in Chapter 4.

Format of this plan:

This Plan is composed of six main chapters:

Chapter 1 begins with the vision and the policy framework of the Bicycle Program. It then discusses planning and coordination within VTA and with other agencies. It also describes current and past bicycle and trails planning efforts by the county and cities in Santa Clara County.

Chapter 2 describes current conditions and the physical setting for cycling in Santa Clara County, as well as existing bicycle mode share and ridership statistics.

Chapter 3 describes the planning approach for a countywide bicycle plan and cross county bicycle corridor network.

Chapter 4 describes bikeway capital projects necessary to complete the cross county corridors as well as provide other essential regional infrastructure; it also describes how projects get implemented including a description of funding programs and strategies.

Chapter 5 describes bicycle safety education for both bicyclists and motorists and also promotion strategies.

Chapter 6 describes and makes recommendations for bicycle parking and for city policies regarding bike parking, showers, and other support facilities. It also describes VTA's bikes on transit policies.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Vision of the Countywide Bicycle Plan

To establish, protect and enhance bicycling as a viable transportation mode and to assure that bicycling is a practical and safe mode of travel, by itself and in combination with other modes.

In practical terms, this means:

- Closure of gaps
- Routine accommodation/Complete streets
- Steady funding
- Planning & coordination

Policies, Goals, and Action Items

The VTA Board of Directors approved a comprehensive set of bicycle-related policies in February 1999 which were incorporated in the 2000 Countywide Bicycle Plan. These helped frame the 2000 and subsequent Bicycle Expenditure Plans. The recommended policies fall into five main categories:

- A. Transportation Planning and Programming
- B. Land Use Planning
- C. Local Ordinances and Guidelines
- D. Design and Construction - Infrastructure
- E. Complementary Policies that Encourage Bicycling

Additions and revisions to the policy framework were solicited during 2008 bike plan update from the Bicycle Plan Update Working Group and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). The 2008 Policy Framework is presented in Table 1-1 with three to five policies for each main goal. Specific action steps were identified for each policy that are measurable ways of assessing progress in implementing the policy. Appendix A contains the full Policy Framework with each implementation action and its current status, i.e. completed, not yet begun, or is an on-going endeavor.

Table 1-1: Policy Framework

Goal A. Transportation Planning and Programming	
POLICY:	
1)	Plan and implement a seamless bicycle and pedestrian travel network that is continuous across city boundaries and county boundaries.
2)	Include bicycle and pedestrian facilities in applicable transportation plans, programs, and studies.
3)	Coordinate with other federal, state, regional, county and local agencies to fund and implement bicycle projects in Santa Clara County.
4)	Fully integrate bicycle access to and within the transit system.
5)	Utilize multi-modal transportation demand models that are based on person-trips and that can forecast bicycle trips, pedestrian trips and transit trips in addition to motor vehicle trips.
Goal B. Land Use / Transportation Integration	
POLICY:	
1)	Encourage existing developments to provide bicycle/pedestrian connections to link neighborhoods and residential areas with schools, commercial services, employment centers, recreational areas and transit centers.
2)	Encourage new developments to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as trails and bicycle lanes.
3)	Encourage new developments to provide mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists by providing non-motorized connections and access ways such as cul-de-sac connections, pathways and other short-cuts to schools, transit centers and other adjacent destinations.
4)	Ensure that existing bicycle facilities and access are maintained and preserved.

Goal C. Local Ordinances and Guidelines	
POLICY:	
1)	Provide policy guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop model ordinances and policies to foster discussion and innovative policy development
2)	Establish guidelines that encourage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycle parking ordinances • Bicycle parking facilities • Showers and commuter clothing lockers in new and renovated developments • Mileage reimbursement when bicycles are used on official business when travel time is equivalent to an automobile trip • Reduced bail for bicycle citations • 24 hour trail access
3)	Encourage Transportation Demand Management programs to include bicycle and pedestrian components.

Goal D. Design and Construction	
POLICY:	
1)	Ensure that Member Agency construction or rehabilitation projects incorporate best practices for bicycle and pedestrian facilities when and where appropriate.
2)	Implement proactive strategies to identify and remove obstacles and hazards to bicycle travel.
3)	Consider roadway designs to enhance traffic safety.
4)	Establish guidelines for and encourage the use of bicycle-safe and friendly roadway and bike path design and operation.

Goal E. Complementary Policies That Encourage Bicycling	
POLICY:	
1)	Increase institutional encouragement of non-motorized travel within VTA.
2)	Encourage inter-jurisdictional cooperation in the development and implementation of non-motorized projects.
3)	Promote bicycle planning and engineering training programs for Member Agency staff.
4)	Promote Public Awareness through Education & Positive Enforcement Programs.

PLANNING AND COORDINATION

Countywide Transportation Planning

Valley Transportation Plan (VTP) is the countywide long-range transportation plan for Santa Clara County. It covers a twenty-five year timeframe and is concurrent with the development of Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) by MTC. It is updated every four to five years. The goal of the VTP is to identify transportation facilities and services that support a high quality of life for the county's residents and continued health of the county's economy and integrates bicycle transportation into the total transportation system. The VTP addresses all transportation-related funding needs including transit, land use, intelligent transportation systems, pedestrians, bicycles, highways, expressways, and local streets and roads. The Bicycle Expenditure Program (BEP) is the Bicycle Element of the VTP; having a separate BEP identifies the critical bicycle infrastructure projects that are eligible for funding through the VTP. The VTP (and the BEP) and the Countywide Bicycle Plan are two separate documents that continue to reflect the most recent version of each. More discussion on the BEP is presented in Chapter 4.

The Countywide Bicycle Plan (CBP) is the overarching policy document detailing how to integrate bicycle transportation into the full multi modal system. The goal of the bicycle plan is to establish, protect, and enhance bicycling as a viable transportation mode and to assure that bicycling is a practical and safe mode of travel, by itself and in combination with other modes in Santa Clara County. The CBP policies and master bicycle project list serve as input into updating the BEP. The bicycle project list in the CBP also assists in identifying and scoping projects in other areas of the VTP such as local streets and roads, and in assisting local agencies in preserving ROW and in conditioning development to implement projects of regional significance.

The VTA Bicycle Program is organizationally part of the Congestion Management Agency (CMA). One of the CMP's goals is to help implement and fund the projects in the BEP. Bicycle transportation overlaps with other divisions of VTA including: Operations (through our bikes onboard transit vehicles); Facilities (with our bike parking programs); Marketing (through bikeways maps and bike-to-work day activities); and Highway Design. It also overlaps with many functions of VTA including Development Review; and the Community Design and Transportation (CDT) Program.

Bicycle Planning

During the 1970's, many local jurisdictions in Santa Clara County developed and began to implement bicycle plans. However, statewide design criteria and guidelines were not established until the publication of the Caltrans *Planning and Design Criteria for Bikeways in California* in 1978. Prior to the Caltrans criteria, city and county staff lacked experience and guidance for bicycle planning, and in many cases, planning efforts focused on separating bicycles from auto traffic. Therefore, some of the bikeways constructed before 1978 are now considered outdated and unacceptable.

In the past fifteen years, in particular, many cities have once again focused attention and effort in developing bicycle plans. There is a growing recognition that the bicycle is a bona-fide mode of transportation, and serious consideration is merited in integrating bicycle facilities with the rest of the roadways that constitute the conventional surface transportation system. Bicycle planning has expanded beyond its role as a minor element in local general plans or park/open space plans. In California since the passage of Proposition 111 in 1990, congestion management agencies (CMA) have become an instrument for bicycle planning at the county level and provide coordination between city-level plans. In addition, with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991 and local sales tax measures, more regional, state and federal funding has become available for bicycle projects, which can be better managed if an adopted bicycle plan is in place (see Chapter 4).

Santa Clara County Bicycle Plan Chronology

The first countywide bicycle plan was generated in 1974 when the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors adopted the *Arterial Bikeways Plan*. The routes identified in the *Arterial Bikeways Plan* represented corridors rather than specific streets. The County was not authorized to implement the plan on a city street without that city's agreement, and the plan did not obligate the cities to implement the routes.

Subsequently, several documents were produced that addressed bicycle transportation:

- The *Transportation 2000 Plan* (T2000), adopted by the Board of Supervisors in May 1987, was a comprehensive look at the transportation system; "*T2000 Working Paper #11: Bicycle Element*" examined options that could facilitate bicycle travel in Santa Clara County.
- The *1994 Santa Clara County Bicycle Plan* by the Santa Clara County Transportation Agency (serving as the County's CMA) described the existing bicycling environment and recommended numerous policies to improve the level of bicycle use and to serve the needs of all members of the bicycling community. (The policies in the 1994 Plan provided the basis for the Policy Framework for the 2000 and 2008 Countywide Bicycle Plan.)

- The *1997 Countywide Bicycle System T2010 Update Working Paper* was developed in response to the 1994 policy to “develop a countywide bikeways system that is continuous across city boundaries and provides for intra-county connections.” This document addressed ten preliminary cross-county bicycle routes and identified the major gaps involved in implementing them. The ten corridors were the basis for the sixteen Cross County Bicycle Corridors developed in the 2000 Plan, which in turn were the basis for the 48 cross county corridors in this plan (24 roadways, 17 trails and 7 espressways).

The Countywide Bicycle Plan adopted October 2000 was a comprehensive document addressing existing conditions, policies, cross county bicycle corridors (CCBC), capital projects and programs. The capital projects were the basis for the call for projects that created the first Bicycle Expenditure Plan (BEP); since then, the project list of the BEP has been amended as described in Chapter 4 .

City Bicycle Plans

While most cities in Santa Clara County include bicycle considerations in the Circulation Elements of their General Plans, most cities also have adopted bicycle plans. Three cities (San Jose, Sunnyvale, and Santa Clara) had developed bicycle plans in the early 1990's and are in various stages of implementing the plans. By 2008, ten of the 15 cities in Santa Clara County had adopted bike plans and several cities have separate Trails Master Plans in addition to or in lieu of Bicycle Plans. In addition, about half of the cities in Santa Clara County publish a bikeways map for distribution to the public to help cyclists plan and identify routes to ride on. The status of each city's bicycle plan is summarized in Table 1- 2.

Table 1-2: Bicycle Plans of Santa Clara County Cities

Jurisdiction	Last Adopted (or Updated) Bike Plan	First Adopted Bike Plan	Bicycle Element in General Plan?
Campbell	Adopted the Countywide Bicycle Plan as the City Bike Plan (2005)	1995	No
Cupertino	December 1998	1998	discussed in the <i>Circulation Element</i>
Gilroy	2002 Bicycle Pedestrian Transportation Plan and 2005 Trails Master Plan	2002	Yes
Los Altos	January 2006	2002	Yes
Los Altos Hills	None	na	
Los Gatos	None	na	discussed in the <i>Circulation Element</i>
Milpitas	Bicycle Master Plan June 2002 (Update underway 2008) Master Trails Plan 1999	2001	Yes
Monte Sereno	None	na	
Morgan Hill	January 2001	2001	Yes
Mountain View	September 2003	2003	No
Palo Alto	June 2002	2003	Yes
San Jose	Update in progress 2008	1992	Yes
Santa Clara	July 2002	1992	Yes
Saratoga	None	na	discussed in the <i>Circulation Element</i>
Sunnyvale	August 2006	1993	Yes

Trails Planning

A number of levees, parks, creek corridors, and open space preserves in Santa Clara County have trails including multi-use bike paths or shared use paths. While many of these multi-use trails are associated with recreational activities and nature appreciation, they also serve as bicycle transportation facilities removed from the urban setting and street traffic.

1995 Countywide Trails Master Plan and Map

In 1995, *the Countywide Trails Master Plan Update* comprehensively reviewed all trail policies and the trails map contained in the County General Plan. The recommendations of this plan update were presented to the Board of Supervisors as an amendment to the General Plan. This plan proposed approximately 535 miles of off-street countywide trail routes within Santa Clara County divided into four main categories: paved bicycle/pedestrian trails, unpaved multi-use mountain bike trails, hiking only, equestrian and hiking trails. Of the first category, approximately 24 miles of paved trails exist today. An additional 120 miles of on-street bicycle routes are also part of the plan as complement or connecting segments to the paved trails.

Trail routes are also categorized into three hierarchies. These are:

- **Regional Trails:** that are of national, state, or regional recreation significance and extend beyond the borders of Santa Clara County;
- **Sub-Regional Trails:** that provide regional recreation and transportation benefits by providing continuity between cities and convenient, long-distance trail loop opportunities that link two or more Regional Trails; and
- **Connector Trails:** that provide convenient means of access from urban areas to the trail network of Regional and Sub-regional Trails or that connect County Parks.

All the regional and sub-regional trails are included in the Cross County Bicycle Corridor due to their regional significance; these are (the number following the trail name is the number from the Countywide Trails Master Plan):

Regional Trails

- Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (R1)
- Monterey-Yosemite State Trail (R2)
- Benito-Clara Trail (R3)
- San Francisco Bay Trail (R4)
- Bay Area Ridge Trail (R5)

Sub-Regional Trails

- Matadero Creek/Page Mill Trail (S1)
- Stevens Creek Trail (S2)
- Guadalupe Trail (S3)
- Los Gatos Creek Trail (S4)
- Coyote Creek/Llagas Creek Trail (S5)
- West Valley Trail (S6)
- Morgan Hill Cross-Valley Trail (S7)
- San Martin Cross-Valley Trail (S8)

The County Trails Master Plan identifies approximately 95 miles of trails as high priority, 18 miles are within unincorporated Santa Clara County and 75 miles are within the County's Urban Service Areas. These trails generally emphasize urban and urban fringe areas where the need for trails and the usefulness of trails are the greatest. The trails of most significance to bicycle transportation include portions of the Bay Trail, De Anza Historic Trail, and Coyote Creek Trail and all of the Los Gatos Creek Trail, Guadalupe River Trail, Stevens Creek Trail and San Tomas Aquino Trail. The relationship of the 1995 *Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Master Plan Update* and the Cross County Bicycle Corridors is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

City Trails Planning

Many cities are actively planning and constructing trails within their city limits in addition to those listed above. Some of these traverse several jurisdictions e.g. the Los Gatos Creek Trail which runs through four jurisdictions. Many of these trails have countywide significance and are included in the CBP. These trails include:

- San Tomas Aquino Trail
- Uvas Creek Trail
- S.R. 87
- S.R. 237

Trail Guidelines

The *Uniform Interjurisdictional Trail Design, Use, and Management Guidelines* were developed and published in 1999 in order to provide the multiple agencies and jurisdictions in the County a guideline for trails planning compatible to creating a countywide trail system. They cover hiking, equestrian and bicycle trails as shown on the Countywide Trails Master Plan Map. They suggest mitigation to potential environmental impacts as well as provide further guidance on the design, use or management of trails.

In addition, VTA's Bicycle Technical Guidelines (BTG) provide additional guidance on the design elements important for trails used for bicycle transportation.

Multi-agency Involvement

Trails often pass through several jurisdictions making the need for interjurisdictional cooperation vital to trail planning and management. The policies and Trails Master Plan Map are also intended to provide a coordinated vision for linking the existing trail plans and implementing efforts of individual jurisdictions and agencies within the County rather than pre-empt them.

In addition to the 15 cities and the County Parks and Recreation Department, the following agencies and special districts also plan, develop, operate, and manage public trails within Santa Clara County:

- Santa Clara County Open Space Authority
- Mid-peninsula Regional Open Space District
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- National Parks Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Caltrans – mitigation for SR237 and other freeways

The other public agencies who are participants in the process of implementing trails are:

- Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)
- Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
- Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC)
- California Department of Fish and Game, the California Department of Forestry
- County Roads and Airport Department
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD)

History of Trails Planning in Santa Clara County:

Trails have been a part of the Santa Clara County General Plan since 1980 but planning for trails has been an integral part of land use planning in Santa Clara County for at least the past 40 years.^{1/}

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, plans were developed by various agencies to provide hiking and bicycling trails as part of park chains proposed along most of the major streams that flow through the Santa Clara Valley, including Coyote Creek, the Guadalupe River, and Stevens Creek. Some of these proposed trails and parkways are only now becoming realities.

The 1978 *Trails and Pathways Master Plan* encompassed both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county, as well as adjacent county boundaries. The 1978 Trail Plan cited the existing and growing network of hiking, bicycling, and equestrian trails located in the foothills and mountains, baylands, and the valley floor. The 1978 Trail Plan also recommended many trails to meet the recreational needs of the ever-increasing population.

The "Regional Parks, Trails, and Scenic Highways Element" of the County's 1980 *General Plan* was created by combining the 1972 *Plan of Regional Parks for Santa Clara County* with the 1978 *Trails and Pathways Master Plan for Santa Clara County*.

The 1980 *General Plan* map for trails envisioned an interconnected, countywide network of hiking, bicycling, and equestrian trails and pathways that linked parks and public open space lands with one another and provided access from the urbanized valley floor to hillside reservoirs, and mountain parks and open space lands.

In 1990, the Board of Supervisors initiated a review of the 1980 *County General Plan* and established a General Plan Review Committee. One of the Committee's responsibilities was to develop and implement a public process to more accurately identify trail routes on the 1980 General Plan Trails and Pathways Map.

In 1992, the Board of Supervisors adopted the "Trail Easement Dedication Policies and Practices" which provide County staff, Commissions and the Board with directives regarding the requests of trail easements in conjunction with land subdivision and development. Due to public interest and concern about trail routes and the easement policies, the Board of Supervisors approved a recommendation by the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission to review and update the trails portions of the General Plan elements being reviewed by the General Plan Committee. This process culminated in the 1995 Trails Master Plan discussed previously.

^{1/} State law does not mandate that trails be included in a General Plan. The fact that Santa Clara County includes trails in its General Plan is exactly the type of expression about "local conditions and circumstances" that General Plan guidelines reference. It is up to the decision makers to decide what are desirable and reasonable goals to establish for the County relative to the provision of the public good, including trails.