



City of Santa Barbara

Planning Division

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

MAY 8, 2008

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Transportation and Circulation Committee Chair David Tabor called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

II. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Planning Commission: Chair George C. Myers, Vice-Chair Stella Larson
Commissioners: Bruce Bartlett, Charmaine Jacobs, and Addison S. Thompson

Transportation and Circulation Committee: Chair David Tabor, Vice Chair David Pritchett
Commissioners: Bill Boyd, Mark Bradley, Keith Coffman-Grey, Michael Cooper, Steve Maas.

Absent:

Planning Commission: John Jostes, Harwood A. White, Jr.

Staff Present:

Bettie Weiss, City Planner
John Ledbetter, Principal Planner
Rob Dayton, Principal Transportation Planner

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Tabor opened the public hearing for items not on the agenda, and with no one wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed.

IV. DISCUSSION ITEM:

WORK SESSION ON PLAN SANTA BARBARA CITYWIDE TRANSPORTATION MODELING

Work session for Transportation Planning staff and the City's *Plan Santa Barbara* transportation consultant Fehr & Peers/Kaku Associates to present information about the citywide transportation model under preparation as part of the *Plan Santa Barbara* planning process. This is a work session

discussion only and no action will be taken. The Planning Commission and Transportation and Circulation Committee will receive public comment and discuss the transportation modeling effort.

Staff Presentation:

Rob Dayton, Principal Transportation Planner, gave a staff presentation, providing background on the *Plan Santa Barbara* General Plan Update process underway. Transportation modeling will assist in policy analysis and impact analysis as part of the associated environmental impact report (EIR).

Brian Welch of Fehr & Peers, lead member of the City's transportation professional services team, gave a PowerPoint presentation outlining the transportation modeling effort, including what the model will be used for; how the model will be developed; and what information the model will contain.

Commissioner and Committee Member Comments and Questions:

Commissioner Jostes' questions and comments were provided by Commissioner Bartlett:

- If the model is the solution, what is the problem? [Mr. Welch responded that modeling provides the best method of citywide transportation analysis for *Plan Santa Barbara* and the EIR.] .
- Will model consider parking pricing? [Mr. Welch responded affirmatively.]
- Will the model address connectivity from an urban design perspective (e.g., situations where there are neighborhoods immediately adjacent to commercial, but which require a mile drive to access)? [Mr. Welch noted that the model will incorporate features that block connectivity, such as Highway 101, topographic features such as rivers, etc.]
- Will the model be responsive to community distrust of traffic studies? [Mr. Welch responded affirmatively.]

Commissioner Bartlett:

- If the ITE Manual is to be used for trip generation factors, will the model be able to consider size of unit as a factor? [Mr. Welch responded that it would. He noted that the ITE manual is the starting point for trip generation factors. In addition to ITE, data from SBCAG and other California communities, and new traffic counts for 50 intersections and 30 road segments will be used to calibrate and validate the model, to adjust trip rates to better reflect Santa Barbara.]
- Will the model be able to quantify trips not generated due to alternative mode use, e.g. traffic savings from commutes not taken? [Mr. Welch explained that the model identifies travel generation from all modes. Overall changes in vehicle traffic and alternative mode use will be identified.]
- Will the model reflect that people create trips and demand, not buildings? [Mr. Welch agreed that traffic and travel are about people. He noted that an EPA study over the past 10 years helped to identify some elasticities of travel demand, such as density and proximity to transit.]
- Will the model address oil pricing? [Mr. Welch responded that the model has the capacity to include gasoline prices as a factor; however it is difficult to predict the extent of its effect on people's behavior.]

Committee Member Cooper:

- A summary of Fehr & Peers background and credentials was requested. [Mr. Welch noted that the firm was founded in 1985; has 220 people in the western States; focuses on planning, operations and engineering; and Mr. Welch has 20 years experience in travel forecasting.]
- Would the model have long-term maintenance costs? [Mr. Dayton noted that the initial modeling costs for Plan Santa Barbara are funded by permit fees over 20 years. Long-term maintenance of the model would involve additional costs.]

Commissioner Thompson:

- What is the predicted accuracy of modeling results? [Mr. Welch noted the difficulty in predicting human behavior. Traffic levels tend to have 10 – 15 % variation day-to-day. The Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans provide standards for calibration of models. The model identifies the “screen line”, or ways to get out in and out of Santa Barbara (freeways, ramps, major streets), and there are numerical percent accuracies. There is a dynamic validation process.]
- Will the model be available for future use with later projects? [Mr. Welch noted that the model is accurate enough for such use. Mr. Dayton noted that there would be a later decision on whether the model will be used for project reviews, based on a cost/benefit analysis. There would be added cost for technical staff and periodic validation of the model over time. There would be a benefit in the ability for ongoing citywide monitoring as well as project reviews.]
- Will the baseline data take into account current land use? [Mr. Welch noted that the model will use the City’s data base for existing land use on the ground, as well as traffic counts of existing traffic levels.]

Committee Member Pritchett:

- Noted the contributions of former TCC member, the late Barry Siegal, to this discussion.
- Noted that ocean commuting to Ventura Co. occurred during 2005 when the City was temporarily cut off.
- Will Freeway 101 improvements be included in the model? [Mr. Welch noted that March 2008 - when traffic counts were taken - will be the existing condition baseline. Planned improvements to the road network will be included in future scenarios modeled.]
- Will the model include final output with A-F LOS (Level of Service) determinations that community is familiar with? [Mr. Welch noted that the analysis would include LOS determinations at 50 intersections throughout the City.]
- Will the model consider the proximity of retail development and residential? [Mr. Welch responded affirmatively.]
- Will the model analyze housing density assumptions? [Mr. Welch responded affirmatively.]
- Will speeding issues by drivers be considered as part of the analysis? [Mr. Welch noted that speed limits for roads are coded into the model.]
- Will the model consider regional perspectives, such as commuters from Ventura County and northern Santa Barbara County? [Mr. Welch responded affirmatively.]

- Will the willingness to ride the bus be considered?[Mr. Welch responded that the “4 Ds” analysis does provide a tool for analyzing how certain aspects of land use influence travel behavior.]
- Will the model include estimates of people not counted in the census? [Mr. Welch explained that the land use data base and other data on household sizes and housing types will be used, and trip rates will be adjusted based on traffic counts.]
- Will car parking lot prices be included as factors in the model? [Mr. Welch confirmed that factors such as parking time limits and costs will be included, and Jeremy Nelson of Nelson/Nygaard will provide additional information about parking for the model.]
- If Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) are in part based on similar land uses, how big or small will they be in Santa Barbara? Note that the community here will be sensitive to lumping and splitting of zones. [Mr. Welch responded that Santa Barbara TAZs would be fairly small. They will vary in size based on similarity of land uses and trip generation rates, with downtown zones expected to be block by block, and more outlying areas with several blocks.]

Committee Member Maas:

- How will the regional model be used? [Mr. Welch responded that the City model will use the same software platform as the SBCAG model. The City-refined TAZs will be subsets of the SBCAG TAZs. Certain regional socioeconomic data will be used as well.]
- For calibration of the baseline data, how detailed will data be for alternative modes, e.g., transit? [Mr. Welch noted that ridership information for transit will account for a percentage of trips.]
- There are typically problems with accounting for transit in models. [Mr. Welch noted that the model will be able to account for shifts in modes and elasticities in travel assignment.]
- Will there be mode split information by land use? [Mr. Welch responded that mode split information would be identified by overall policy and scenario.]

Commissioner Larson:

- Reminder provided to correctly identify Route 225.
- Will this model process re-determine peak traffic hours for some locations (such as Upper State Street, where the peak-hour is correlated with retail hours)? [Mr. Welch responded affirmatively.]
- She concurs with Ms. Orias’s letter that our Charter Amendment policy for Living Within Our Resources is key, and with the need to identify intersections at LOS D.

Commissioner Myers:

- Importance of baseline was noted.
- Comparisons of future scenarios will be key.

Chair Tabor:

- Important that existing land use data will reflect on-the-ground conditions. Calibration and validation of the model provides an improvement from usual traffic studies, including accounting for use of alternative modes.

Commissioner Jacobs:

- Would like to see the list of 50 intersections counted; the list needs to include Uptown State Street, Airport area, and Coast Village Road.
- How sensitive are the ITE Manual and model to factors such as changing from a one-way to two-way street; and flex scheduling to spread out peak highway traffic. [Mr. Welch responded that the model can account for such factors.]
- We want the travel model to inform development of the General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements. What is the timeline for seeing some analysis? [Mr. Welch responded that model runs would begin at end of August.]
- Charter policy for Living Within Our Resources includes traffic capacity. [Mr Welch responded that the model would look at alternative measures of resource capacity in addition to Volume-to-Capacity ratios.]
- Looking back at 2005 when community was cut off is important.
- It is important to consider the 20,000 – 30,000 commuters and 20,000 tourists that are added to the community each day.
- SBCAG (Santa Barbara Association of Governments) just gave the City of Santa Barbara RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Allocation) numbers of 5,000, and we'll need to consider the consequences.

Committee Member Coffman-Gray:

- How are TAZ boundaries determined? [Mr. Welch explained that the process starts with the bigger SBCAG zones, then they are reviewed street by street for the circulation network and parcel-based land use data base. Each zone has a centroid connector which accounts for how people travel within and between zones. When there are many intersections and land uses, there are more zones.]

Committee Member Boyd:

- Is the model a transportation or travel model, or fully integrated land use model that can forecast alternative land use and population? [Mr. Welch confirmed that the model can test assumptions about land use and identify whether the travel network supports or doesn't support the land use scenario. Alternative policies for roadways, transit, land use, parking policies may be evaluated.]
- Does the calibration only consider current land use, or also how development occurred over time in considering potential for future development? [Mr. Welch noted that the Development Trends report looks at development over time, which is a factor for developing assumptions.]
- What are the model sensitivities and blind spots; i.e., what can't be addressed? [Mr. Welch responded that there is limited information about pedestrian and bicycle trips. The model can say how many travel trips but not directions.]

- For commercial trips, is the impact of large vehicle trips considered in intersection calculations? [Mr. Welch affirmed that truck trips and other large vehicles are included in the traffic counts taken.]
- Does the model account for the impact on travel from technology changes such as telecommuting? [Mr. Welch responded that the model will look at autos, bikes, transit, walking, and TDM (Transportation Demand Management) strategies such as carpooling and telecommuting. First the impact from existing policies is considered, then the change in impact resulting from changes to policies. In defining alternative policies, cannot mix too many factors at once.]
- What is the cost of one model run later? [Mr. Welch noted that up front, there are costs for software licensing and initial training, and periodic costs for updating software. Then there is a smaller incremental cost of staff time and paper to do individual runs.]
- Can the model do subarea analysis, such as improvements on the Mesa? [Mr. Welch responded affirmatively. For example, analysis may be done by one street or by TAZ.]

Committee Member Bradley:

- With respect to blind spots, how does the model handle peak spreading and time of day? People tend to adjust the time of their travel based on traffic levels. [Mr. Welch responded that the model considers factors such as how long the trip is; whether it is direct or indirect, etc., which provides for dynamic traffic assignments that reflect unique Santa Barbara conditions.]
- Transit is not as capacity constrained as auto traffic. How is it addressed in the model? [Mr. Welch noted that there is good information for bus ridership.]
- Are outside factors such as economics, fuel prices, and incomes accounted for in the model? [Mr. Welch responded that such factors can be accounted for with identification of a reasonable set of assumptions. There is a lot of debate going on among modelers about how to address gas prices.]
- How does the “4-Ds” process address how land use affects travel, and support assumptions in the model? [Mr. Welch responded that there is more hard empirical data now about how various factors, such as density or sidewalks, affect travel. A Caltrans study this year is identifying that development around transit has less trips per dwelling unit.]
- Will potential developments along the Upper State Street corridor be included in the analysis? [Mr. Dayton responded that proposed projects along Upper State Street would be included as part of potential future development.]

Public Comment

Chair Tabor opened the hearing for public comment.

Patricia Hiles. Comments were emailed today. She requested that the Transportation Department be friendlier to autos.

Alex Pujó. Historic Landmarks Commission member. He referred to the core historic business district 1924 drawings for a pedestrian town, with some buildings two- and three-story, narrow, detailed, and no driveways and curb cuts.

Cathy McCammon, League of Women Voters. She asked when the public will know the assumptions going into the model. She asked whether the model will be interactive. She suggested that within the model and EIR, the Living Within Our Resources policy and associated findings for non-residential development also be applied to mixed use projects. She asked about estimating potential future “phantom trips” in under-utilized sites. She expressed concern about estimated demand versus actual demand after building. She noted that most mixed-use development near transit has been luxury condos, with two parking spaces. She noted that transit doesn’t go to desired destinations, and there is not hard evidence that location near transit results in use of alternative modes, citing *LA Times* article and 2001 EPA document. She commented regarding various factors, including population versus urban footprint; and demographic factors and changes versus land use patterns.

Dr. Richard Birkman, Concerned about air emissions associated with increased travel.

Chair Myers noted that he has also received public comments with concerns about disaster planning, and the need for more robust press and information updates on evacuation routes.

Mr. Dayton discussed the ITE trip generation rates and potential trips, noting that the ITE rates are the most conservative approach and generally overestimate trips. The ITE trip rates are the starting point; they are adjusted with estimates of alternative mode use, to be more realistic for Santa Barbara. He explained that this process will identify policy options and the model will test the policies, for example for non-residential/residential land use mix.

Commissioner Jacobs commented that we’ll need to test the “no change” scenario of land use policies. She noted that land prices continue to rise and we have migration out and employees can’t afford rents. The Circulation Element policies state that alternative modes should be available and convenient so that auto use is a choice; the question is how to achieve this. Measure A funding is a factor. Luxury units increase service worker needs, but no affordable housing is provided. Healthy community factors, global warming, dense housing along transportation corridors, noise, air quality issues need consideration in regard to traffic effects. Demographics include retired persons, and persons with income outside of the City. Regional transportation is needed for employees going to work, as well as for tourists, shopping, adult education, medical facility trips. There is also a need to identify the number of trips if employee housing is here versus if employees commute.

Steve Yates, APA subsection director. Submitted written comments. He commented that underlying trip generation assumptions haven’t changed for 50 years, which has been a problem since the 1980s. Since then, the Vehicle Miles Traveled factor has grown three times the rate of population growth. He recommended that we need to evaluate housing types and housing locations to recognize the advantages and disadvantages of options. He suggested another PC/TCC meeting in late July to review baseline calibration of the model. He noted that it will be great to calibrate ITE trip rates to Santa Barbara reality.

Chair Tabor closed the public hearing.

Commissioner and Committee Member Comments

Committee Member Coffman-Grey agreed with the idea of another meeting in July.

Committee Member Boyd proposed to close the meeting in honor of Barry Siegal. He noted that it was good that the model is being developed.

Committee Member Bradley commented that the travel model method here is better than the general state of modeling in the country, especially with regards to land use inputs, which will help us get to preferred policies.

Commissioner Bartlett commented that the model will be a tool to focus out the windshield ahead, rather than looking back at unintended consequences, allowing us to test assumptions first.

Committee Member Cooper noted that the model looks great.

Committee Member Pritchett commented on the extensive public attendance and comments, and suggested that a CD of the work session be provided to the consultants. He requested to see model assumptions before they are set; it will be important to nail down key variables. He commented that we need to integrate transportation and housing policy with respect to urban density and location and price of housing, family income, family size, etc. He noted that rich people and others behave differently and that transportation choices depend on affordability of housing. Santa Barbara will still be a car-dependent city regardless of great bus routes or alternative transportation.

Committee Member Maas commented that the model looks good.

Commissioner Larson requested to hear status from staff in the interim before the next meeting on this topic.

Commissioner Myers commented that the model is an exciting tool to provide informed data for Plan Santa Barbara. He noted that traffic will be a big factor in looking at how the future will unfold, and the model will be needed for future analysis as well.

Chair Tabor related an example of a traffic study in 1970s for the Robinson's Store on Upper State Street, noting the importance of socio-economic factors. He commented that the model will be an important tool.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Tabor adjourned the meeting at 8:39 P.M.