

Goal 3 *INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY AND USE OF TRANSIT*

Support the increased use and availability of transit. This will be accomplished by augmenting resources, planning, and funding to promote the development, expansion and use of transit, such as buses, shuttles, rail, and vanpools (see Glossary).

BACKGROUND

This chapter focuses upon the enhancement and expansion of transit services in the City of Santa Barbara and the surrounding region. The purpose of the Policies and Implementation Strategies in this chapter is to increase the choices available for travel.

Improvements to the transit system could increase the number of riders, reduce reliance on the auto, decrease the need for street capacity improvements, make more efficient use of the existing street system, reduce the demand for parking, provide greater independence for youth and others who cannot or choose not to use cars, improve air quality, increase interaction among people, create local jobs, and enhance the quality of life in Santa Barbara.

The following transit systems currently exist and provide service to the City:

- Metropolitan Transit District (MTD) - the public bus system for the South Coast, including both conventional buses, electric buses and shuttles,
- Clean Air Express - subscription commuter services to Santa Barbara and Goleta from northern Santa Barbara County and Ventura,
- Downtown/Waterfront Shuttle (MTD) - a City subsidized MTD service which provides short distance connections in and around the Downtown and Waterfront on short headways,
- Easy Lift Transportation - pre-scheduled door-to-door service for the elderly and disabled individuals,
- Greyhound - regional and nationwide bus service,
- Amtrak - regional and nationwide rail service,
- Private bus and taxi operators, and
- School bus systems.

CONSTRAINTS

The City does not directly operate and has limited control over any of the transit operations in the City. This means that the City's ability to affect change is limited. However, through funding, coordination, and participation, the City can help to influence transit operations.

The policies of this Circulation Element are designed to offer incentives to use alternative forms of transportation whenever possible. This means that efforts to increase ridership on transit are

focused on incentive based options.

The most successful method to increase transit ridership is to increase service. However, the operating costs involved with increased service and the competition for subsidies is the major constraint to expanded and improved public transit.

OPPORTUNITIES

To be attractive and successful, public transit in Santa Barbara must be frequent, reliable, comfortable, and affordable. With adequate funding, targeted improvements to existing transit services could considerably increase ridership in the City. These improvements include increasing the number of smaller, quieter, cleaner, more frequent electric buses, vans and shuttles. Improving the aesthetics, safety and comfort of transit stops could also result in increased ridership. Focus should also be placed on increasing the service frequency on major corridors, including linking neighborhoods and major commercial and activity centers. An optimal situation would be that during morning peak hours, noontime and afternoon peak hours, riders would expect a shuttle/bus to pass by every 7 minutes on major corridors. This would dramatically increase the convenience of public transit throughout the City. By making transit more convenient and attractive, the opportunity exists to help reduce the amount of single-occupant vehicle trips and traffic congestion. In turn, this may reduce automobile emissions and help improve air quality.

Identification and analysis of travel characteristics will help identify changes with the highest benefit/cost ratio. It has been shown in many communities that simply putting more buses on the street will not mean an increase in ridership.

The City has control over land development and associated infrastructure. The type and design of land development directly influences transit attractiveness and efficiency. Circulation system features such as bus shelters and priority bus access/movement can also influence function and ridership.

POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Please note: for purposes of this chapter, “support” refers to funding, coordination, and participation.

TRANSIT SERVICE

- 3.1 The City shall promote the development, improvement, expansion, and increased ridership of transit within the City, including the development of new forms of transit as they become available.**
- 3.1.1 Encourage and support transit providers, in increasing the number of vehicles and reducing waiting times on selected popular routes. Explore the possibility of adding additional transit vehicles or creating new routes where it is suspected that use is low due to extended time periods between buses.
- 3.1.2 Help transit providers explore the use of "on demand" service, either by providing additional buses for expanded service or by other means such as jitneys, paratransit, shuttles, taxis and Dial-A-Ride operations.
- 3.1.3 Work with transit providers to serve new types of routes such as one that would connect grammar schools with major employers. This would provide parents the ability to take their child to school and then continue on to their place of employment.
- 3.1.4 Encourage and support MTD in expanding shuttle service to other routes within the City which have the potential to have a sustainable ridership.

- 3.1.5 Help identify and fund fare subsidies or transit pass programs. Consider the following options:
- fare subsidies that could increase ridership on newly introduced routes,
 - a system whereby employers can choose to pay an annual fee to be dedicated to a secured transportation fund to increase transit in lieu of providing employee parking spaces,
 - a transit pass program for employers and employees,
 - a transit pass program for schools or other groups,
 - a Downtown employee subsidized bus pass program,
 - senior and youth discount passes, and
 - youth ridership programs for expanded weekend and nighttime ridership.
- 3.1.6 Identify and implement opportunities to give the movements of transit vehicles, such as buses, a priority over other vehicles through methods such as:
- allowing transit vehicles to make turning movements that are prohibited to other vehicles,
 - allowing transit vehicle traffic signal pre-emption, and
 - providing transit vehicle only lanes that may occur during selected times and would not prohibit vehicular traffic flow.
- Improvements for transit only movements will be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council when service levels increase and the need is determined to be appropriate.
- 3.1.7 Work with transit providers to evaluate the impact of a centralized transfer system (spider web) against a potential for dispersed route interchange points (grid).
- 3.1.8 Encourage transit providers to establish programs for corporate sponsorship of vehicles.

- 3.1.9 Assist transit providers in the development of a strategic plan for service, including:
- links to State Street along Mission and/or Micheltorena,
 - shuttle service between the Westside to the Eastside, Downtown, and Waterfront areas,
 - shuttle service connecting the Lower with the Upper Westside,
 - improved two-way or loop shuttle service for the Mesa, Northside, Westside, and Downtown,
 - visitor destinations,
 - Downtown grid,
 - Downtown - Northside and La Cumbre Plaza,
 - Downtown – Waterfront, and
 - improved service between the Airport and other areas of the South Coast.
- 3.1.10 Support the continuation of frequent, inexpensive transit service in areas with high numbers of transit dependent persons.
- 3.1.11 Implement policies in the Land Use chapter of the Circulation Element and the General Plan Land Use Element that encourage the use of transit.
- 3.1.12 Coordinate and participate in transit master planning in order to achieve a comfortable, convenient, efficient, and affordable transit system that accommodates all users, including residents, commuters, shoppers, students, visitors, youth, seniors, and the transit dependent.
- 3.1.13 Support the expansion of the hours of operation for transit providers along routes or areas where there is a need.
- 3.1.14 Support transit providers in the provision of shuttle/bus services to and from special events in areas such as the Waterfront, Downtown, Mission/Museum, County Bowl, Oak Park, and City College.
- 3.1.15 Regulate taxi operations in order to ensure fair pricing, safe and qualified drivers, efficient service, and service to heavily traveled areas such as tourist destinations or the Airport.

- 3.1.16 Provide for appropriately sited taxi loading zones where needed.
- 3.1.17 The City shall support transit through funding, coordination, and participation, including but not limited to:
- including transit improvements in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP),
 - using discretionary funds to support transit operations and maintenance,
 - sponsoring a monthly roundtable of agencies representing various modes of travel to coordinate planning and implementation, and
 - maintaining strong policies that encourage citywide transit system improvements.

TRANSIT STOPS, SHELTERS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- 3.2 The City shall improve and develop safe, convenient, and protected transit stops that are compatible in design, color, and material with the surrounding area.**
- 3.2.1 Give bus stops a priority over on-street parking when there is a demonstrated conflict or need.
- 3.2.2 Encourage transit providers to provide or continue to provide clear and easy to understand route information and maps or other computerized transit information systems at transit stops.
- 3.2.3 Provide and regularly maintain amenities such as benches, shelters, lighting, newsracks, and decorative trashcans at transit stops.
- 3.2.4 Expand the Bicycle Locker Program at transit stops and other strategic locations.
- 3.2.5 Employ a portable transit shelter that can help in the evaluation of new demonstration routes in residential neighborhoods.
- 3.2.6 Develop a program that, at the request of the property owner, would allow the City to install and maintain additional landscaping adjacent to transit stops to address neighborhood concerns.

- 3.2.7 Work with transit providers to improve and expand the transit route and signage program by showing connections between major attractions such as schools, museums, places of worship, institutions, shopping and recreation areas.
- 3.2.8 Work with transit providers and property owners to provide transit stops within parking lots of large shopping centers and other major visitor destinations.
- 3.2.9 Work with transit providers to develop and maintain the transit infrastructure, such as transit stops, in a clean, safe and cost effective manner.

REGIONAL TRANSIT SERVICE

3.3 The City shall support increases in regional transit services.

- 3.3.1 Mandate the coordination of local transit services with regional transit providers and regional transit master plans.
- 3.3.2 Coordinate and encourage public participation in discussions with transit providers, Santa Barbara County, local cities, and transit users in the creation of a Regional Transit Master Plan that addresses regional transit needs (see Implementation Strategy 3.1.9 for related policies).
- 3.3.3 Study and identify the means of providing improved transit service to the Milpas area, including, but not limited to, converting the Milpas Street post office building to a transit center which includes transportation services such as buses, vanpools, carpools, shuttles, and park and ride options, as well as post office boxes.
- 3.3.4 Encourage the continuation and expansion of commuter subscription bus service, such as the Air Pollution Control District's (APCD) Clean Air Express.
- 3.3.5 Explore the creation of designated areas for tour bus parking, drop-off and pick-up, as well as routes.
- 3.3.6 Encourage the creation of light rail and metrorail connections between Santa Barbara, Oxnard, San Luis Obispo, and points in-between.

INTERMODAL CONNECTIONS

3.4 The City shall work to improve and expand intermodal connections.

- 3.4.1 Support programs and policies that maintain or expand the level of passenger rail and bus service. Bus service shall be considered in any development in the vicinity of the Union Pacific Railway Depot.
- 3.4.2 Assist transit providers in the placement of bike racks on all buses and secure storage at selected stops.
- 3.4.3 Promote and expand the employee shuttle bus service to and from the parking lots at the intersections of Carrillo St. and Castillo St. and Santa Barbara St. and Cota St.
- 3.4.4 Participate in and coordinate with efforts of the Technical Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC) and Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) to develop vital links between their different services. In addition, the City shall provide information on popular bike and walking routes to the transit providers so their services can be linked with these routes (see 14.2.3 and 3.1.17).
- 3.4.5 Provide improved service and hours of operation of transit and door-to-door transit service to and from the Santa Barbara Municipal Airport.
- 3.4.6 Continue to support transit connections to other airports, such as but not limited to, Los Angeles International Airport.

EDUCATION/OUTREACH

3.5 The City shall work to increase public awareness of and cooperation with the City's transit planning goals.

- 3.5.1 Work with local businesses and transit providers to develop transit incentive programs.
- 3.5.2 Train City appointed MTD Board Members, Council Members, City Staff, and MTD Staff on the functions and working of transit services to ensure the consideration of City transit issues, and conduct joint work sessions with the City Council and directors of transit providers.

- 3.5.3 Encourage area schools to expand education programs about the benefits and advantages of the use of transit.
- 3.5.4 Develop and work with transit providers, regional rideshare programs, and others to expand existing transit marketing programs.
- 3.5.5 Market the City's transit system, through organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Convention and Visitors Bureau.