

Los Rios Transportation Connections Plan

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Los Rios Transportation Connections Plan is a plan to improve pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access to four Los Rios Community College campuses – American River College, Cosumnes River College, Folsom Lake College and Sacramento City College. This Plan is intended for use by the Los Rios Community College District, the Colleges, local jurisdictions, agencies and organizations to inform decisions on the development of future infrastructure projects, programs, and policies to meet the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

Creating more opportunities for the Los Rios College community to walk, bicycle, and take transit, requires a thoughtful, comprehensive, long-term approach. Identifying changes that will improve pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access is the first step. With the needs identified, the Colleges and the communities will be well positioned to take advantage of future funding opportunities.

This Plan includes a broad range of recommendations: from infrastructure to policy; from low cost to high cost. Some improvements can be implemented quickly; others will require years of planning. A few projects can be accomplished by a single entity; most require inter-agency collaboration.

This Plan identifies specific infrastructure needs such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, improved crossings, and pedestrian/bicycle bridges and gateways; as well as specific facility needs such as new bicycle racks and covered seating areas near transit stops. This plan also lays the groundwork for creating programs and policies that promote walking, bicycling, and riding transit to campus, for example, 1) the creation of college transportation advisory committees composed of students, faculty, and staff, to provide input on transportation issues, and 2) updating the college websites to provide information on pedestrian, bicycle, and transit routes to campuses.

Weaving together a cohesive combination of infrastructure, programs, and policies that complement each other, the Plan lays the groundwork for improving walking, bicycling, and transit access to the four Los Rios College campuses.

Plan Development

The Los Rios Transportation Connections Plan was developed by WALKS Sacramento in partnership with the Los Rios Community College District and the Sacramento County Department of Transportation. Sharing an interest in improving pedestrian, bicycle and transit access, the Sacramento County Department of Transportation joined with the Los Rios Community College District and WALKS Sacramento to apply for a California

Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Community-Based Planning Grant. From an initial focus on American River College, the project was expanded to include the four main Los Rios Community College campuses, American River, Cosumnes River, Sacramento City, and finally Folsom Lake.

Unique to this grant were stipends for college faculty and staff to help in the development of this Plan. Seven faculty and staff members formally participated, and many other professors and staff provided their input and support. The faculty and staff generously shared their expertise and on-site campus-specific knowledge to inspire all those who worked on this plan and each other. Many of their suggestions have been incorporated into the body of this plan. In fact, the Folsom Lake team's collaborative project has been incorporated as the Plan's recommendations for Folsom Lake College (Chapter 4 of this Plan). The faculty and staff issue papers are included as appendices of the Plan.

In the process of developing the plan, numerous meetings with campus governance bodies such as the academic senates, the classified senates and the student government bodies provided opportunities for input and feedback from the diversity of voices that make up each college.

From its inception, the development of the Plan has been based on collaboration between various entities. A Resource Advisory Committee was created, bringing together representatives of various agencies and organizations to share knowledge, resources, concerns, and ideas. Additional meetings with staff of the City of Sacramento, Sacramento Regional Transit, and the Arcade Creek Parks and Recreation District were also key in the development of this plan.

The development of the Plan benefited from the input of national experts including walkability expert Dan Burden, and urban designer David Evans. Early in the project, Dan Burden led a series of walkability audits and focus groups. David Evans worked with the WALKSacramento staff to advise and illustrate the Plan's key concepts and projects.

The Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates (SABA) provided a thorough assessment of the bicycling environment within two miles of each of the four campuses. SABA's assessment identified barriers to bicycling and proposed specific recommendations to improve bicycling conditions. These recommendations were incorporated into the Plan. SABA's full report is included as Appendix F of this Plan and is also available at SABA's website: www.sacbike.org.

The Los Rios Community College District's Office of Institutional Research worked with WALKSacramento to create an online travel survey to assess student travel behavior and attitudes. The District administered the survey and analyzed the results which were incorporated into the Plan's findings. Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

analysis of student resident locations was performed by faculty at both Cosumnes River College and American River College. This information provided a strong case for pedestrian and bicycle improvements – many students live within walking and bicycling distance of the colleges.

Community workshops held at the campuses and other community meetings brought views on how each college relates to its neighborhood environment providing important input to the Plan.

Partnerships

Working together to leverage community resources is important in gaining implementation of this plan. The idea of improving pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access is becoming more and more accepted. The concept of Complete Streets¹ (creating streets that are safe for all users, not just motorists) is becoming a key ingredient in transportation and land use planning. Many of our major roadways were not built to the “Complete Streets” model and now we must return to retrofit these roadways and networks of streets to make our communities walkable and bikable. These changes will require leadership and collaboration between various entities, including public agencies, private organizations, and multiple local jurisdictions.

Through community outreach, and by bringing together representatives of the colleges and various public entities, the development of this Plan has laid the foundation for the on-going collaboration that will be necessary to successfully implement the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements.

Opportunities to implement recommendations will come as part of the ongoing land use and transportation planning and implementation process. Early review of transportation infrastructure projects in the vicinity of the colleges offers the opportunity to incorporate the Plan’s recommendations. Similarly, review of land use development projects can introduce design and infrastructure features that support walkability and bikability.

¹ See Best Practices for Complete Streets, Sacramento County Transportation Air Quality Collaborative, October 2005, www.sactaqc/Resources/Agreements/CompleteStreets and the Sacramento Complete Streets Coalition at www.sacactive.com

Key Themes

Our region is in a time of growth and change. Many needs are converging to support the overall direction of this plan. Some key themes have emerged:

- **Transportation Access and Affordability**

The cost of driving to campus greatly increases the overall cost of a community college education. In some cases, the cost of transportation to campus can be the single greatest cost of getting a community college education – more than books, more than tuition, and quite possibly more than rent. Such costs, without other viable transportation alternatives, can be the factor that keeps some from being able to get a community college education.

Improved pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access will increase the number of students who can save money by walking, bicycling, or taking transit to campus. Furthermore, students who do walk, bicycle, and take transit to campus may choose not to own a vehicle at all, thus substantially reducing their expenses. According to the American Automobile Association (AAA), the cost of owning and operating a vehicle is 52.2 cents per mile which, based on 15,000 miles of driving, equals \$7,834 per year.²

- **Sustainable Transportation**

For an institution as large and as fast growing as the Los Rios Community College District, how students, faculty and staff travel to campus is a significant transportation and traffic congestion issue. Surrounding communities feel the impacts of these automobile trips, especially at the beginning of each semester.

As the network of Complete Streets grows and access to the colleges is improved for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit, more and more of the Los Rios College community will be able to choose non-auto modes for some of their trips thereby reducing their auto-related pollutant and climate change emissions.

- **Community Connectivity**

Despite big parking lots and the vehicle traffic they generate, college campuses in general, and the Los Rios college campuses in particular, are beautiful things and an important asset to the community. Improving pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access to the colleges not only benefits students and faculty who live near the campus or transit routes, but benefits those who live in the surrounding communities. By increasing the connectivity between the campuses and the community, neighbors can more easily attend events at the colleges and make use of college resources – thus bringing the “community” into “Community Colleges”.

² 2007 “AAA’s Your Driving Costs”, American Automobile Association

- **Physical Activity and Health**

Physical activity is a key ingredient of good health. Moderate amounts of daily physical activity such as 30 minutes of walking or bicycling have been shown over and over to make the difference between good health and chronic disease. Physical activity benefits an individual's education, as well, as it supports optimum mental activity. Blood circulation, enhanced by physical activity, is important to brain function.

Providing opportunities for people to get their daily exercise is important. Improved pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access will increase the number of students who can take advantage of the health benefits of walking, bicycling, or taking transit to campus. Such means of transportation makes physical activity a natural part of everyday life.

Key Recommendations

This plan examines the existing walking, bicycling and transit access conditions at the four college campuses. While each campus is unique with specific issues as well as opportunities, many similar conditions exist reflecting our auto-dominated planning of the last fifty years.

The Plan includes recommendations for

- Campus Institutions
- Transportation Information
- Roadway Improvements (Pedestrian & Bicycle)
- Intersections and Freeway Overcrossings
- Transit Access

How to use this Plan

This plan is organized to be used by many organizations and individuals with the hope and expectation that the findings and recommendations can be incorporated, as appropriate, into other plans and projects. While this plan is advisory, it is anticipated that some organizations will endorse its findings and recommendations wholeheartedly and others will pick and choose the findings and recommendations that are relevant to their endeavors.

- **Chapter 1 – Introduction** – provides an overview of the development of this plan.
- **Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5** provide the findings and recommendations for the four Los Rios colleges. Each of these chapters is complete in itself; providing findings about

the walking, bicycling and transit environment and recommendations for improvements.

- **Chapter 2 – American River College**
- **Chapter 3 – Cosumnes River College**
- **Chapter 4 – Folsom Lake College** – The Folsom Lake College chapter is the work of the faculty-staff team at Folsom Lake College; Tim McHargue, Steven Hozberg, and Chris Olson. Its format varies from the other three colleges.
- **Chapter 5 – Sacramento City College**
- **Chapter 6 – Los Rios Community College District** provides policy recommendations for the Los Rios Community College District and its Board of Trustees.
- **Chapter 7 – Related Plans, Policies, Projects & Funds** outlines the many and varied plans and funding programs that can be resources for implementing the Plan’s recommendations. This chapter identifies agencies and organizations that can be important partners with the Los Rios Community College District and its colleges to achieve the goals of the Plan.
- **Chapter 8 -- Summary of Recommendations** outlines the Plan’s recommendations and identifies the agencies with primary responsibility for implementation.
- **Appendices A - D** are the papers prepared by the Los Rios faculty and staff on issues relevant to the Los Rios Transportation Connections Plan.
- **Appendix E** is the Los Rios student travel behavior survey and analysis prepared by Betty Glycer-Culver of the Los Rios Community College District’s Office of Institutional Research.
- **Appendix F** is the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates report: “Los Rios Community College District College Bicycle Access Report” including findings and recommendations.