



December 31, 2009

Ms. Kathilynn Carpenter, Chair and Members  
Sacramento County Planning Commission  
827 7th Street, Room 230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Draft Sacramento County Circulation Element

Dear Chairperson Carpenter & Commissioners:

WALKSACRAMENTO and the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates (SABA) appreciate the effort the County is undertaking to incorporate Complete Streets into its policies including the proposed General Plan. However, we have a number of remaining concerns related to the proposed Circulation Element of the General Plan. The current draft does not adequately provide safe facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists as legitimate users of the roadway. We are working with the Sacramento County Department of Transportation on these concerns and potential policies and implementation mechanisms to address them.

Increased walking and bicycling can have significant benefits for the County including:

- Lower road construction and maintenance costs.
- Reduced air pollutant emissions and climate changing carbon emissions.
- Reduced vehicle travel that reduces congestion and the need to widen roads.
- Better health through increased physical activity.

#### **Problems & potential solutions:**

- 1. Peak hour motor vehicle traffic should not be the primary guide for the Transportation Plan:** Currently, peak-hour motor vehicle traffic is the major factor guiding the Transportation Plan. This leads to roads with greater capacity than they need at most other times of the day and to unsafe speeds and "incomplete streets" during non-peak hours. High speeds discourage people from walking and bicycling because of the difficulty in crossing and the fear of fatal collisions.

#### **Recommendations for policy and implementation:**

- Designate motor vehicle LOS as only one of several criteria for the design of roadways and not the primary criterion.
- Develop and adopt a County-wide Multi-modal Level of Service.

2. **General Plan designated road widenings lead to dangerous overcapacity:** The proposed Circulation Element includes designated widening for numerous major roads in the County. Historically, widening designations become mandates that are nearly impossible to change and lead to roads that are unsafe for walking and bicycling. Designated widenings require developers to allocate additional land reducing the land available for development.

**Recommendations for policy and implementation:**

- Adopt a flexible widening designation for major roads.
- Adopt a policy that 4 through lanes be the preferred maximum number of lanes on major roadways with 6 lanes only as exceptions.
- Adopt a process for determining future roadway design that involves the community, County departments of transportation, planning, and health, and other stakeholders.

3. **High speed roadways are dangerous for all users:** High vehicle speeds lead to more collisions and more severe injuries for all users. Research indicates that “Road Diet” approaches that reduce the number of lanes also reduce collisions.

**Recommendations for policy and implementation:**

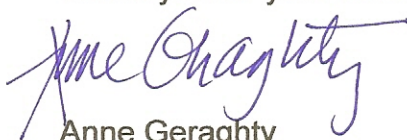
- Design roadways for speeds that are safe for all users.
- Design arterials and urban thoroughfares for speeds of 35 MPH or less.

4. **Lack of connectivity leads to the need for multi-lane roads.** The County’s current roadway network is based on a widely-spaced grid of arterials. Collectors are generally within the arterial grids but not between them. This means that most traffic must go to the arterials increasing traffic on those roadways. A study of California communities has shown that denser street grids are safer.

**Recommendations for policy and implementation:**

- Adopt connectivity policies and implementation measures in the Circulation and Land Use Elements.
- Develop a denser road network of collectors and arterials.
- Revise the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to implement connectivity policies including design of subdivisions to include streets that connect to adjacent subdivisions and across arterials.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.



Anne Geraghty  
Executive Director  
WALKSacramento  
909 – 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 122  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
916 – 446-WALK (9255)



Walt Seifert  
Executive Director  
Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates (SABA)  
909 – 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 116  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 444-6600



cc: Mike Penrose, Sacramento County Department of Transportation  
Robert Sherry, Sacramento County Department of Planning  
Dave Defanti, Sacramento County General Plan Update Outreach