

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

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*Serious Drought.  
Help save water!*

December 8, 2014

Mr. Ken Chin  
Project Manager  
City of San Mateo  
330 W. 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
San Mateo, CA 94403

Dear Mr. Chin:

**City of San Mateo Sustainable Streets Plan**

Thank you for meeting with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to discuss the Sustainable Streets Plan (Plan). We understand that this is a conceptual plan and that any projects resulting from this Plan will need to be analyzed further. Caltrans commends the City of San Mateo (City) for planning for the future of El Camino Real (State Route 82) and we look forward to working with the City as a partner. The following are our general comments on the plan:

1. Before reducing traffic lanes on El Camino Real, a traffic operational analysis will be needed to determine the impacts and whether this would be a viable alternative. If demand volumes are assumed to be shifted to other routes, then these routes will also need to be studied and any impacts disclosed. The analysis should include the opening year analysis along with the 20 year design analysis. Planned Bus Rapid Transit and the Smart Corridor operation should also be analyzed to ensure that they will operate efficiently.
2. While midblock uncontrolled crossings are generally discouraged, they are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be allowed depending upon the pedestrian demand and the distance to the closest controlled crossing on either side. Should the City decide to pursue a midblock crossing, the City will need to meet with the Caltrans District 4 Office of Traffic Safety together with the Office of Transit and Community Planning to determine the crossing locations and treatments.
3. Intersection corner radii should accommodate the design vehicle based on the type of traffic regularly expected to turn at a corner. This could range from small single-unit delivery trucks for some corners in the commercial area to semitrailer trucks, where the roadways are terminal access routes to the national network.

4. Left turns and u-turn movements will need to be evaluated to ensure that left turn pocket queues do not spill back into through lanes and u-turns movements do not encroach into bicycle lanes and/or parking spaces.
5. In regard to cycle tracks, Caltrans currently does not have design standards for cycle tracks so the City would need to get a design exception. However, there are projects within Caltrans right-of-way currently in the design phase that incorporate cycle tracks. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide and Urban Bikeway Design Guide have guidance for cycle tracks. Caltrans' April 2014 endorsement of the NACTO guidelines means that we can use these as another source of information in documenting design exceptions, along with the California Highway Design Manual (HDM) and other sources, for evaluating the suitability of cycle tracks and the design details in the local context. Also, Assembly Bill 1193, which was recently signed into law, categorizes cycle tracks as Class IV bikeways and, among other items, requires Caltrans to develop design criteria (standards and guidance) for this new bikeway classification. Caltrans has until January 1, 2016, to complete this per the statute. As this draft guidance is developed, it will provide information for evaluating design exception fact sheets in the interim until the guidance is adopted.
6. On the topic of sustainable streets, the Caltrans Main Streets Guide has a discussion of "green streets" under the heading, Sustainable Main Streets, on page 81. The section addresses Storm Water Quality and Low Impact Development. Here is a link to the document: [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/mainstreet/main\\_street\\_3rd\\_edition.pdf](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/mainstreet/main_street_3rd_edition.pdf). Also, Caltrans has guidance on how to integrate Low Impact Development design strategies in street and parking lot design. Here is the link: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/ec/lid/index.htm>
7. Regarding trees in the median and median standards, see the CA HDM Chapter 900 Landscape Architecture and also see Topic 305 - Median Standards within Chapter 300. Tree selection is handled by the project landscape architect.
8. For lane width and curb extension (bulbout and busbulb) standards, see CA HDM Chapter 300 Geometric Cross Section. If the City intends to design a busbulb with a bike lane, this will need to be approved by Caltrans District 4 on a case-by-case basis and will require a design exception.
9. Bike boxes and two-stage left turn queue boxes (other than for jughandle left turns at T-intersections) are still considered an experimental treatment by the Federal Highway Administration. Installing them would therefore require approval of a request to experiment from the California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC). Several requests to experiment with bike boxes have been approved by CTCDC in recent months. Caltrans staff is available to assist the City with this request.

The following are comments on specific sections of the Plan:

10. Congestion and Emissions, page 1-5 and Figure 1-3, page 1-6: The document states that road diets (*reduced capacity*) on arterials can help spread reasonable volumes across the network. In doing this, as Figure 1-3 shows, congestion can spread to other routes which are typically residential streets. These residential street intersections may not have the capacity to handle this diverted volume. The future traffic analysis will need to assess whether traffic will spill back onto El Camino Real.
11. Public Health Impacts, page 1-8: The document states that an added benefit to lower vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is lower overall congestion. This statement is not necessarily true. If reduced capacity causes congestion and fewer vehicles are getting through the streets, then VMT will also be lower as miles traveled could be lower due to the congestion. This congestion could lead to worse local air quality though the reduced VMT would offset this and may result in overall lower carbon/greenhouse gas emissions.
12. Economic Impacts, page 1-10: This section states that the vehicle miles driven per year will be reduced by 7.7 million if the Bicycle Master Plan is built out. Please provide more detail in the Plan regarding how this number is derived.
13. Transportation and Private Development, page 4-8: The document shows "LOS F (at capacity)". LOS F is when demand volumes exceed capacity.

Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please call Aprile Smith at 510-286-5518 or [aprile.smith@dot.ca.gov](mailto:aprile.smith@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



ERIK ALM, AICP  
Acting District Office Chief  
Office of Transit and Community Planning

*CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION  
SAN MATEO*

November 26, 2014

Mr. Ken Chin  
Project Manager  
Public Works  
330 W. 20th Avenue  
San Mateo, CA 94403

RE: Comments on Draft Sustainable Streets Plan

Dear Mr. Chin,

We know there will be increased growth of Downtown San Mateo and the surrounding areas. CNA's proximity between the arterials that lead to 101 and 92 will potentially add more pass through traffic to our neighborhood. We would like to suggest that in the long term there are holistic traffic solutions considered to ensure that our neighborhood is safe and traffic does not use our Central Neighborhood residential streets as a cut-through to the 101 or the Downtown.

We would like to submit our comments on the Draft Sustainable Streets Plan:

1. We support the median on S. Grant between 5th Avenue and 9th Avenue in the Central Neighborhood. We have been waiting patiently for 15 years for our green pedestrian street lights in the darker areas of the Central Neighborhood and this would be a great step in improving our neighborhood. These pedestrian level lamps would enhance safety and promote walking to the Downtown at night, reducing the need to drive and find parking. Also with this major change we ask that under grounding of electrical is considered to further beautify the street scape.
2. We support a mid-block cross walk or stop sign at 7th Avenue and S. Delaware so pedestrians can cross safely at this intersection. Every intersection on 7th Avenue has a Stop Sign. Making a left turn going south is difficult at this intersection. We would also like to protect the single family homes on the west side of S. Delaware from 5th to 9th Avenue. We want to preserve the residential character of our neighborhood on both sides of the street. We do not want the west side of this residential block of Delaware between 5th and 9th Avenue included in the Commercial Downtown. Please recheck for increased speeds on S. Delaware between 5th and 9th Avenues. The large and noisy SamTrans buses bring impacts for the residents along S. Delaware. We need smaller buses with clean fuel. These buses are empty.
3. Raise the 8 ft sound wall on S. Amphlett so that the Central and Sunnybrae residents can have adequate noise mitigation from the 101 Freeway traffic. We support sidewalks along S. Amphlett with ADA - handicapped curbs. An 8 ft sound wall is not adequate for the Central and Sunnybrae Neighborhoods.
4. We support a narrow traffic circle or oval at 5th at S. Humboldt. We will need traffic calming on residential streets between S. Amphlett and S. Delaware as traffic speeds and volumes increase in the future.
5. We support smaller trucks on residential streets and in the Downtown. Delivery time from 8 to 11 am on weekdays and not during peak hours or weekends. Large trucks are too dangerous for the pedestrians and children on 5th Avenue.

6. The outdated 2008 Truck Routes map indicates a future Truck Route on 5th Avenue from S. Humboldt to S. Amphlett and the 400 block of S. Humboldt. The Central Neighborhood went through the process for 3 years and 15 hearings on this issue. The City Council ruled no designated Truck Routes on 5th Avenue, S. Humboldt, or 9th Avenue. Please remove these locations for truck routes on 5th and S. Humboldt. The turning radius is too narrow for large trucks on 5th Avenue. We do not want any parking removed in front of our homes.
  7. Zoning is currently Industrial on S. Amphlett from 5th Avenue to Folkstone and direct access for trucks from the 101 Freeway does not exist on either end. S. Amphlett is a very narrow street and not a designated truck route. It is time to change the zoning from Industrial to low density Residential on S. Amphlett from 5th Avenue to 9th Avenue. Town Homes like Arbor Rose in Sunnybrae and Marble Bay in Bay Meadows along the 101 would be more compatible with the Central Neighborhood.
  8. Extend the Greenway Pedestrian Network on 5th between S. Humboldt and S. Amphlett. Currently these two blocks have been excluded. We have many children, pedestrian and bicyclists who live in this area of 5th Avenue, Amphlett Alley, and S. Idaho. We have many large sycamore trees and green street lamps on these two blocks. These two blocks are residential on both sides of the street. We have families with children who live on these two blocks from S. Humboldt to S. Amphlett. We are a residential neighborhood.
  9. We need to address increased traffic volumes on local streets. Traffic circles are not allowed at 4 way stop intersections although they have worked at 5th at Eldorado and San Mateo Glendale Village. The current measures in the traffic calming program are inadequate to address increasing volumes on local streets.
  10. The current traffic volume is more than double the range of 1000 vehicles per day, and we need to reduce the the traffic volume on 5th Avenue. These vehicles are trying to by-pass the traffic signals on 4th Avenue. Why not close off the non-residential traffic so that the streets are safer for the pedestrians and bicyclists? We need a planter barrier at 5th at S. Delaware to address the cut-through traffic to 101. We would like to have our Class III bike signage on 5th from S. Delaware to S. Humboldt installed with the green bike box at Humboldt and 4th Avenue. We need to follow the Bicycle Master Plan.
  11. We support bus stop placements closer to the commuter parking lots on 4th Avenue and the Transit Centers. We are impacted with commuter parking on 4th, 5th, Idaho, S. Humboldt, and Grant with the FX on 101 and 250 bus stops. This 250 bus stop is in front of a convenience liquor store and generates litter at the stop. The 250 bus has to cross two lanes of traffic to turn at the fire station within a 1/2 block distance. This is not safe. This bus stop can be removed. There is bus stop at 4th near S. Claremont and the Transit Center which is in walking distance with available parking.
- Other Comments:
12. The future metering lights at 4th and 101 will produce more back-ups into our neighborhood. When there is an accident on the 101 on a Friday evening, this turns into a dangerous situation. The cars back-up and redirect to 5th Avenue and S. Idaho. Please do a trial close of this on-ramp at 4th and Idaho to check the traffic numbers to see what the impacts will be to the other streets. The traffic currently backs up on North and South Humboldt, and the 900 block of 5th during peak times. 4th Avenue residents will not be able to back out of their driveways when the metering lights go on.
  13. Residents on 4th Avenue would like a flashing crosswalk or a stop sign at 4th at S. Grant to address the number of vehicular accidents at this intersection. At the intersection of 4th at S. Humboldt, the street trees are hit frequently on the south side of the 1000 block of 4th Avenue (across from the Fire Station). This area is very dark and needs a green street lamp in the planting strip near the sound wall. There is a lot of broken glass in this planting strip when there is an accident. We need to make sure surrounding streets including 5th Avenue are protected if future changes are made on 4th Avenue.

14. We would like to see an effective street cleaning process that incorporates street cleaning signs with posted street cleaning times that more closely align times when people are at work (i e. 9 am - 4 pm). Street cleaning signs would help promote green streets in the Sustain Streets Plan. Today, there are neighborhoods with high vehicle ownership and through observations residents do not move their vehicles on street cleaning days. Today, the street sweepers drive down the middle of the street and quality sweeps are not possible when residents do not move their vehicles. The trash, leaves, tire dust, and cigarette butts collect in the curbs. These items flow into the storm drains and the bay waters become more polluted. We need a solution between the cleaner streets with less vehicles and the impacted streets that need more convenient street sweeping times with signage.

15. We would like to see the west side of S. Claremont between 4th and 9th Avenue used as smaller offices for start-ups. Small parcels can be converted to small offices with lofts and tenants need to be part of the TDM. The west side of S. Claremont south of the WRC and 9th Avenue can be small office for start-ups or low density town homes with TDM and on-site parking. The Kinko's and WRC lot is ideal for a future City Hall with no free parking. If housing is proposed on top we want a development that is in scale with our neighborhood character with car shares, zip cars, doubling the secure bike storage units, unbundled parking, and market rate residential parking fees, and transit passes. There needs to be an agreement signed with tenants that they will not park in the residential neighborhoods.

We support the Draft Sustainable Street Plan, the VMT (vehicle miles travelled), and Vision Zero - no loss of life.

Sincerely,

Steve DeAndre  
Maurine Killough  
Stoddard Lambertson  
Central Neighborhood Association

11/25/14

City of San Mateo  
Department of Public Works  
330 W 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
San Mateo, CA 94403  
Attn: Mr. Kenneth Chin  
Project Manager

Sustainable Streets Public Draft Plan, October 2014

Mr. Chin:

Great job Ken, you and your staff should be highly commended for this visionary document that will help turn San Mateo into a more sustainable community.

The basis of the package being set on safety and the vision zero concept are excellent ways to steer the implementation of the plan. The sustainable portions as it pertains to storm water, filtration and landscape are great to see.

For me the key to making the system work city wide is based on job creation here in San Mateo. My own personal take is that most of the automobile traffic in our city is based on trips by workers either entering or leaving the city for employment. With the creation of local high paying jobs, the VMT will be substantially reduced thus allowing families to eliminate the number of cars they need. A key part of this is to address a decent working wage for the service sector workers. This in turn will allow the implementation of street dieting and meeting the projected level of walking and biking goals much more attainable. For us to reduce vehicular traffic in the city we need to control this segment of the equation. We can control the built environment inside the city, but having an influence on how and why the streets are used will be critical in the success or failure of the program.

When I see plans like this it always gives me the sense that we have one set of criteria for the area of the city east of the Alameda and most of the hills are left out. I think we need to find ways to incorporate the entire city in changing how we get around. To me, some of this ties into affordable housing for seniors. The question is how do we get the seniors to move into higher density areas with the services they need and in turn who is going to buy their houses thus allowing the seniors to move? Again this all gets back to high paying local jobs that allow us to have a sustainable community.

Another concern of mine is gentrification as the improvements are made. We cannot put more pressure on the lower economic sector of the population thru higher rents and land values because of improvement to the city's infrastructure. The balance between more sustainably built infrastructures and lower cost housing needs to be part of the discussion.

On that note, the north central district of San Mateo is unfortunately underserved in many aspects. This area of the city has a lot of foot and bicycle traffic. The streets are narrow, the sidewalks are not well lit and the sight lines are detrimental for all modes of conveyance. I think this neighborhood needs to be given consideration as one of the higher priorities in terms of safety and mobility upgrades.

The unbundling of and setting maximum parking requirements could go a long way in decreasing the dependence on cars. I think that a hybrid approach needs to be used when accessing new developments. I understand that level of service is an outdated and counterproductive tool, but I think to use the best aspects of that matrix with other regulations needs to be utilized. Congested streets don't serve any of us at all.

With the time line of this plan covering decades, I also think we need to look at as many funding sources as possible. The economy will expand and contract as it always has and to stop work based on reduced collections of tax funds or city mandated fees being generated at any given time would be short sighted. To insulate the work from economic growth would be key to getting the improvements in place.

Turf wars for fees and project pecking order within competing city department's will also need to be addressed and avoided. With making the complete streets a driving force within budget allotments, a mindset change within the cities allocation decisions will need to occur. Open and complete discussion of the changed priorities will be paramount to the successful way of changing our streets and lives from the 1950's model to the 21<sup>st</sup> century's realities.

This plan also needs to be looked at as a constantly changing and evolving document that will need to be measured, adjusted and updated on a regular basis. Our city is always changing and we will need to recognize the impending changes prior to them coming to fruition so we can work proactively and not reactively.

Again great job Ken and I look forward to seeing this work implemented over the next couple of decades.

Thank you,



John Ebnetter

San Mateo Sustainability Vice Chair

San Jose Office  
111 W. St. John St., Suite 420  
San Jose, CA 95113  
(408) 983-0856

November 17, 2014

Mayor Robert Ross and Council  
City of San Mateo, City Hall  
330 West 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
San Mateo, CA 94403

Honorable Mayor Robert Ross and Members of the San Mateo City Council,

Greenbelt Alliance appreciates the opportunity to share our enthusiastic support for San Mateo's Draft Sustainable Streets Plan. Greenbelt Alliance is the champion of the places that make the Bay Area special. We defend natural and agricultural landscapes from development while helping create great cities and neighborhoods to make the Bay Area an even better place to live. This visionary document is designed around the concept that streets should be safe, accessible and comfortable for all users, while also contributing to a sense of community and addressing environmental issues.

Streets are an integral part of every city and can be designed to address multiple goals. As a region, we are moving towards more compact, walkable neighborhoods that are close to transit, shops, jobs and parks. Designing cities around people has enormous benefits for our community, our health, our economy, and our planet. Each city is rich in roads, the largest part of the public realm, and this resource is often untapped. The City of San Mateo is demonstrating leadership in re-imagining its roadways to be vital places that enhance our collective quality of life.

The conceptual designs for the recommended projects on North San Mateo Drive, South Grant Street and portions of El Camino Real are exciting, visionary and necessary to ensure that San Mateo responds well to opportunities and challenges on the horizon.

### The Community

A community thrives when it plans for the future. While our car culture grew post World War 2, recent demographic shifts point to the need to create streets that are safe for people who choose to walk, ride their bike and take transit. This is a result of an aging population where driving is either no longer an option or desirable, and the preferences of the largest generation in history, the Millennials, who seem to

be [shunning cars](#)<sup>1</sup>. The Draft Sustainable Streets Plan, when implemented, will meet the needs of an evolving city. Streets are for all users, ages 8 to 80 (and beyond), and many of these people do not use a car, so the Plan is inclusive by focusing on people trips in addition to car trips.

Over the course of a year, the City of San Mateo held community workshops and the educational series, Taste and Talk. Well-attended and robust, these gave people an opportunity to understand the numerous benefits of complete, green streets. The Plan's website is [informative](#) and easy to navigate, and the resources can be shared with other cities. San Mateo has done an excellent job of informing the community of the process and Plan and staff should be commended for this.

### Healthy Places

Cities that are designed around people tend to be healthier places. According to [Smart Growth America](#), the U.S. spent **\$83 billion**<sup>2</sup> caring for diabetes patients in 2008 alone. Crosswalks, bike paths and other measures to increase more walking and cycling trips can lower obesity rates and diabetes risk.

The [San Mateo County Health System](#) has made increasing physical activity a cornerstone in their efforts to improve public health. Some of the worst traffic congestion comes in the morning when parents drive their kids to school. Ensuring safer routes to schools and parks can allow more kids to walk or ride their bike, which addresses childhood obesity. In San Mateo County, 25% of all children are overweight or obese. The City of San Mateo has an opportunity to say yes to streets that make the healthy choice- walking and riding a bike- the easy choice.

### Strong Economy

Not only do more walkable streets create healthier communities, they are good for business too. [Realtors use Walk Score](#) to demonstrate the increased value of their properties. Wider sidewalks, street trees and pedestrian-scaled lighting in business districts attract new businesses and increase sales tax revenue, as [various studies](#)<sup>3</sup> continue to report.

And [bicycling means business](#)<sup>4</sup>: bike lanes have been connected to an increase in sales receipts all over the country, including in a Memphis neighborhood where residents took matters into their own hands by painting bike lanes. Six months later, all of the storefronts- half of which had been vacant- were full. And when it comes to a smart, economical investment, bike infrastructure is a far better value than car parking. Implementing the Draft Plan is something the City can afford to do and will reap the rewards in return!

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Badger, *The Chicago Tribune: Why millennials are shunning cars*, Oct. 15, 2014

<sup>2</sup> Blaire Briody, *Kaiser Health News, Diabetes: Hospital Bills Cost U.S. \$83 Billion a Year*, August 19, 2010

<sup>3</sup> Sara Hammerschmidt, Urban Land Institute, *The Economic Value of Pedestrian Infrastructure and Amenities*, June 12, 2014

<sup>4</sup> Tanya Snyder, *Streetsblog USA, Bicycling Means Business: How Cycling Enriches People and Cities*, March 8, 2013

### Caring for our Environment

Living in more compact, walkable neighborhoods is good for the planet; something that Greenbelt Alliance began promoting decades ago. According to city planner [Jeff Speck](#)<sup>5</sup>, “changing all your light bulbs to energy savers saves as much energy in a year as moving to a walkable city does in a week.” He also addresses the environmental health connection in that, “Fourteen Americans die each day from asthma, three times what it was in the 1990s, and it’s almost all coming from car exhaust. American pollution does not come from factories anymore, it comes from tailpipes.” Reducing the need to drive and making walking and cycling more pleasant has a ripple effect across the environment.

At the same time, green streets help filter storm water runoff, thereby protecting creek and bay health. They also add urban green space, provide wildlife habitat and improve air quality. The Draft Plan addresses all of this and more. One would be hard pressed to find a reason as to why this would be bad for San Mateo.

### Conclusion

Green, complete streets serve multiple functions, from managing storm water to providing healthy transportation options to increasing foot traffic and sales tax revenues. The Draft Plan lays out the benefits well. Greenbelt Alliance applauds the City of San Mateo for being a regional leader on this issue. We encourage the City Council’s support of the Draft Plan as it carefully and artfully lays out the vision for safe, green, attractive streets for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Beasley".

Michele Beasley  
Regional Director

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<sup>5</sup> Jeff Speck, TED talk, *The Walkable City*, Sept. 2013, (14:15 and 9:27 respectively)