



City of Palo Alto

(ID # 6241)

Planning & Transportation Commission Staff Report

Report Type:

Meeting Date: 11/18/2015

Summary Title: Recommend Adoption of a Complete Streets Resolution

Title: Review and Recommend Adoption of a Resolution Adopting a Complete Streets Policy to Maintain the City's Eligibility for Regional Transportation Funding

From: Sarah Syed, Senior Transportation Planner

Lead Department: Planning & Community Environment

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission review and recommend that City Council approve the attached resolution adopting a Complete Streets Policy to ensure the City remains eligible for regional transportation funding. The proposed policy is consistent with the City's adopted *Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and the California Complete Streets Act of 2008*.

Executive Summary

AB1358 from 2008 requires that local agencies address the concept of complete streets in local planning and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has indicated that to remain eligible for regional transportation funding, local agencies in the Bay Region may comply by adopting their commitment within their general plan (called the Comprehensive Plan in Palo Alto) or by adopting a model resolution provided by the agency. Because the City's Comprehensive Plan Update is not ready for the Council's review and approval, the model resolution has been provided for the Council's adoption and has been amended to recognize the City's longstanding commitment to the issues it addresses.

Background

Metropolitan Transportation Commission's initial One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG1) established program commitments and policies for investing roughly \$800 million over the four-year Cycle 2 period (FYs 2012-13 through 2015-16), funded by federal funds authorized by the United States Congress in the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century* (MAP 21) transportation funding legislation.

The One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG1) integrated the region's federal transportation

program with California's climate law (Senate Bill 375, Steinberg, 2008) and the Sustainable Communities Strategy. The funding distribution formula considered progress toward achieving local land-use and housing policies by:

- Rewarding jurisdictions that accept housing allocations through the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) process and produce housing using transportation dollars as incentives.
- Supporting the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area by promoting transportation investments in Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and by initiating a pilot program that will support open space preservation in Priority Conservation Areas (PCA).
- Providing a higher proportion of funding to local agencies and additional investment flexibility by eliminating required program investment targets. The OBAG program allows flexibility to invest in transportation categories such as Transportation for Livable Communities, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, local streets and roads preservation, and planning activities, while also providing specific funding opportunities for Safe Routes to School (SR2S) and Priority Conservation Areas.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission set two pre-screening criteria for local agencies to be eligible for funds through OBAG 1, which Palo Alto satisfied at the time. One of these criteria was a complete streets requirement. The Transportation Element of the City of Palo Alto's *Comprehensive Plan* (1998-2010) complies with the *California Complete Streets Act of 2008* (AB 1358), as verified by VTA, and satisfied this requirement for OBAG 1.

OBAG 2

The development of a subsequent One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG 2) is currently underway. OBAG 2 is the second round of the successful federal funding program designed to support the implementation of *Plan Bay Area*, the region's first Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The program will establish commitments and policies for investing roughly \$800 million over the five year period from FY 2017-18 to FY 2021-22, funded by federal funds authorized by Congress in the reauthorization of *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century* (MAP 21).

Considering the positive results achieved to date in OBAG 1, Metropolitan Transportation Commission staff is recommending only minor revisions for OBAG 2. A proposal for OBAG 2 was presented to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Policy Advisory Council on May 13, 2015 and to the Programming and Allocations Committee on July 8, 2015. Staff has been seeking feedback from stakeholders and technical working groups over the last several months. The preliminary timeline for development and approval of OBAG 2 is included below. A call for projects is anticipated between December 2015 and October 2016.

Complete Streets Compliance

As a condition to access One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG 2) funds, local jurisdictions must

comply with California's Complete Streets Act of 2008 (Assembly Bill 1358, Chapter 657, Statutes of 2008). Jurisdictions have two options for demonstrating compliance, which must be met by January 31, 2016:

1. Adopt a complete streets resolution incorporating MTC's nine required complete streets elements.
2. Adopt a significant revision to the circulation element of a General Plan after January 1, 2011 that complies with the *California Complete Streets Act of 2008*.

Agencies may meet the requirement by adopting a resolution by January 31, 2016 that incorporates, at minimum, the elements listed in the sample complete streets resolution developed by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The general language in the sample gives agencies flexibility to develop their own policy. Jurisdictions are encouraged to develop the best policy that fits within the context of their local area, in consultation with affected departments and stakeholders, and to go beyond the required elements to accommodate all users of the roadway network.

Jurisdictions may also meet the requirement with an adopted General Plan that complies with the *California Complete Streets Act of 2008* (AB 1358, Chapter 657, Statutes of 2008). The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has issued guidance in the Update to the General Plan Guidelines: Complete Streets and the Circulation Element. For compliance, a substantial revision of the circulation element, passed after January 1, 2011, shall "...plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan," while complying with the other provisions of *CA Government Code Section 65302* and *California Complete Streets Act of 2008*.

According to Metropolitan Transportation Commission staff, self-certification that the general plan meets the requirements of the *California Complete Streets Act of 2008*. or adoption of a circulation element update prior to January 1, 2011, does not satisfy this requirement.

Summary of Key Issues

In order to be eligible for the One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG 2), the City of Palo Alto must adopt a complete streets resolution incorporating MTC's nine required complete streets elements. The City's is no longer permitted to self-certify the circulation element of its Comprehensive Plan under the newly developed guidelines from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. This resolution must be adopted and submitted to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority by January 31, 2016 to be eligible to receive OBAG 2 funding.

Policy Implications

The Transportation Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan embraces the concept of complete streets by incorporating goals, policies, and programs regarding the mobility needs of all users. For example:

Goal T-3: Facilities, Services, and Programs that Encourage and Promote Walking and Bicycling

Goal T-4: An Efficient Roadway Network for All Users

Policy T-25: When constructing or modifying roadways, plan for usage of the roadway space by all users, including motor vehicles, transit vehicles, and pedestrians.

The City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, adopted in 2012, also supports the development of complete streets for all roadway users and is consistent with this resolution. Objectives from the plan that are relevant to this resolution include:

Objective 1: Double the rate of bicycling for both local and total work commutes by 2020 (to 15% and 5%, respectively).

Objective 2: Convert discretionary vehicle trips into walking and bicycling trips in order to reduce City transportation-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 15% by 2020.

Objective 3: Develop a core network of shared paths, bikeways, and traffic-calmed streets that connects business and residential districts, schools, parks, and open spaces to promote healthy, active living.

Objective 4: Plan, construct, and maintain 'Complete Streets' that are safe and accessible to all modes and people of all ages and abilities.

Objective 5: Promote efficient, sustainable, and creative use of limited public resources through integrated design and planning.

In addition, the Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and programs that are consistent with this resolution include:

Goal T-1: Less Reliance on Single-Occupant Vehicles

Goal T-3: Facilities, Services, and Programs that Encourage and Promote Walking and Bicycling

Program T-22: Implement a network of bicycle boulevards.

Policy T-25: When constructing or modifying roadways, plan for usage of the roadway space by all users, including motor vehicles, transit vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Policy T-34: Implement traffic calming measures to slow traffic on local and collector residential streets and prioritize these measures over congestion management. Include traffic circles and other traffic calming devices among these measures.

Resource Impact

The attached resolution and policy are consistent with both the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan and the Comprehensive Plan and will not result in the need for additional resources or require major modification of any existing City policies or procedures. Adoption of the resolution and policy will ensure the City remains eligible for regional transportation funding.

Timeline

This resolution must be adopted and submitted to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority by January 31, 2016 to be eligible to receive OBAG 2 funding. A call for projects under OBAG 2 is anticipated between December 2015 and October 2016.

Environmental Review:

The proposed resolution is a statement of policy that is consistent with the City's adopted plans. For this reason, adoption of the proposed resolution is exempt from review pursuant to *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3)*.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Resolution Adopting Complete Streets Policy (PDF)

NOT YET APPROVED

Resolution No. _____
Resolution of the Council of the City of Palo Alto
Adopting the Complete Streets Policy

R E C I T A L S

A. The term “Complete Streets” describes a comprehensive, integrated transportation network with infrastructure and design that allows safe and convenient travel along and across streets for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, users and operators of public transportation, emergency vehicles, seniors, children, youth, and families.

B. The Palo Alto City Council has long acknowledged the benefits and value for the public health and welfare of reducing vehicle miles traveled and increasing transportation by walking, bicycling, and public transportation.

C. The City Council also recognizes that the planning and coordinated development of Complete Streets infrastructure provides benefits for local governments in the areas of infrastructure cost savings; public health; and environmental sustainability.

D. These concepts are inherent in the adopted Transportation Element of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan, although not explicitly stated as desired by the regional transportation agency, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

E. The State of California has emphasized the importance of Complete Streets by enacting the California Complete Streets Act of 2008 (also known as AB 1358), which requires that when cities or counties revise general plans, they identify how they will provide for the mobility needs of all users of the roadways, as well as through Deputy Directive 64, in which the California Department of Transportation explained that it “views all transportation improvements as opportunities to improve safety, access, and mobility for all travelers in California and recognizes bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes as integral elements of the transportation system”.

F. The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (known as AB 32) sets a mandate for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in California, and the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (known as SB 375) requires emissions reductions through coordinated regional planning that integrates transportation, housing, and land-use policy, and achieving the goals of these laws will require significant increases in travel by public transit, bicycling, and walking.

G. Numerous California counties, cities, and agencies have adopted Complete Streets policies and legislation in order to further the health, safety, welfare, economic vitality, and environmental well-being of their communities.

NOT YET APPROVED

H. The City Council therefore, in light of the foregoing benefits and considerations, wishes to improve its commitment to Complete Streets in the ongoing Comprehensive Plan Update and desires that its streets form a comprehensive and integrated transportation network promoting safe, equitable, and convenient travel for all users while preserving flexibility, recognizing community context, and using the latest and best design guidelines and standards.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council of the City of Palo Alto, State of California, RESOLVES as follows:

SECTION 1. That the City of Palo Alto adopt the Complete Streets Policy provided by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, attached hereto as Exhibit A, and made part of this Resolution, and that said exhibit is hereby approved and adopted.

SECTION 2. That the ongoing Comprehensive Plan Update shall incorporate Complete Streets policies and principles consistent with the California Complete Streets Act of 2008 (AB 1358) and with the Complete Streets Policy adopted by this resolution.

INTRODUCED AND PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

APPROVED:

Senior Assistant City Attorney

City Manager

Director of Planning and Community Environment

Exhibit A

This Complete Streets Policy was adopted by Resolution No. _____ by the City Council of the City of Palo Alto on _____ 2015.

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY OF THE CITY OF PALO ALTO

A. Complete Streets Principles

- 1. Complete Streets Serving All Users.** Palo Alto expresses its commitment to creating and maintaining Complete Streets that provide safe, comfortable, and convenient travel along and across streets (including streets, roads, highways, bridges, and other portions of the transportation system) through a comprehensive, integrated transportation network that serves all categories of users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, users and operators of public transportation, seniors, children, youth, and families.
- 2. Context Sensitivity.** In planning and implementing street projects, departments and agencies of the City of Palo Alto shall maintain sensitivity to local conditions in both residential and business districts as well as urban, suburban, and rural areas, and shall work with residents, merchants, and other stakeholders to ensure that a strong sense of place ensues. Improvements that will be considered include sidewalks, shared use paths, bicycle lanes, bicycle routes, paved shoulders, street trees and landscaping, planting strips, accessible curb ramps, crosswalks, refuge islands, pedestrian signals, signs, street furniture, bicycle parking facilities, public transportation stops and facilities, transit priority signalization, and other features assisting in the provision of safe travel for all users, such as traffic calming circles, transit bulb outs, and other similar features.
- 3. Complete Streets Routinely Addressed by All Departments.** All relevant departments and agencies of the City of Palo Alto shall work towards making Complete Streets practices a routine part of everyday operations, approach every relevant project, program, and practice as an opportunity to improve streets and the transportation network for all categories of users, and work in coordination with other departments, agencies, and jurisdictions to maximize opportunities for Complete Streets, connectivity, and cooperation. The following projects provide opportunities: pavement resurfacing, restriping, accessing above and underground utilities, signalization operations or modifications, and maintenance of landscaping/related features.
- 4. All Projects and Phases.** Complete Streets infrastructure sufficient to enable reasonably safe travel along and across the right of way for each category of users shall be incorporated into all planning, funding, design, approval, and implementation processes for any construction, reconstruction, retrofit, maintenance, operations, alteration, or repair of streets (including streets, roads, highways, bridges, and other portions of the transportation system), except that

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specific infrastructure for a given category of users may be excluded if an exemption is approved via the process set forth in section C. 1 of this policy.

B. Implementation

1. **Plan Consultation and Consistency.** Maintenance, planning, and design of projects affecting the transportation system shall be consistent with local bicycle, pedestrian, transit, multimodal, and other relevant plans, except that where such consistency cannot be achieved without negative consequences, consistency shall not be required if the head of the relevant department provides written approval explaining the basis of such deviation. Palo Alto's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee will be consulted early in the planning and design stage of transportation projects to review deviations from relevant plans.
2. **Street Network/Connectivity.** As feasible, the City of Palo Alto shall incorporate Complete Streets infrastructure into existing streets to improve the safety and convenience of users and to create employment, with the particular goal of creating a connected network of facilities accommodating each category of users, and increasing connectivity across jurisdictional boundaries and for existing and anticipated future areas of travel origination or destination.
3. **Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Consultation.** Palo Alto's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee will be consulted early in the planning and design stage of transportation projects to provide comments and recommendations regarding Complete Streets features to be incorporated into the project.
4. **Evaluation.** All relevant agencies or departments shall perform evaluations of how well the streets and transportation network of Palo Alto are serving each category of users by collecting baseline data and collecting follow-up data on a regular basis.

C. Exemptions

1. **Leadership Approval for Exemptions.** Projects that seek Complete Streets exemptions must provide written finding of why accommodations for all modes that were not included in the project and signed off by the Public Works Director or equivalent high level staff person. Projects that are granted exceptions must be made publically available for review. Federal guidance on exceptions can be found from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/design_guidance/design.cfm