

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Policy Framework

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### Background

Santa Clara County's spectacular economy has generated equally spectacular increases in traffic congestion. Congestion is no longer limited to morning and evening commute hours, it occurs midday and on weekends. It is a feature of cross-county trips, as well as trips to the local supermarket.

Historically, capacity expansion tends to induce more motor vehicle traffic demand so that the congestion relief is only temporary. In many cases, there is little or no remaining right-of-way for roadway expansion. The public is also increasingly sensitive to loss of open space and the effects of motor vehicle traffic on noise levels, air quality, water quality and community life. Providing more viable choices and options for people to get around without an automobile relieves some of the impacts of congestion as well as congestion itself. Bicycling is a pollution-free, economical and healthy method of transportation and recreation. Creating an environment where bicycling can be a viable alternative to the automobile can have a significant and positive impact on the quality of life in Silicon Valley. Those individuals who bike to work, school, shop, and play improve not only their own quality of life but those of others, because they are not contributing to vehicular congestion or air pollution.

Bicycles have been used for transportation in Santa Clara County since the turn of the century. The County's year-round temperate climate, low rainfall and flat terrain in the developed areas are ideal for bicycling. While the level of bicycling declined from the 1920's through the 1950's due to increased use of the automobile, bicycling for both transportation and recreation gained a resurgence in popularity among adults in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Along with the increase in bicycling came the problem of motorists and cyclists sharing the road. The competition for the use of the roadways led to the development in some communities of bike paths to separate the cyclists from the motorists. However, it was soon learned that bike paths were not a workable solution for serious cyclists. For the most part, serious cyclists viewed poorly designed bike paths as an inconvenience and often encountered safety problems on them. It is now recognized that a comprehensive bicycle network is composed of both on-street and off-street facilities. To implement a successful bicycle network, it is essential to improve existing roadways to accommodate cyclists.

Valley Transportation Plan 2020 (VTP 2020) is the twenty-year plan to guide the development of the county's transportation systems. The goal of VTP 2020 is to provide transportation facilities and services that support a high quality of life for the county's residents and continued health of the county's economy. VTP 2020 therefore takes a multi-modal approach towards transportation planning by considering roadways, transit, land use, intelligent transportation systems, pedestrians, and bicycles.

The Countywide Bicycle Plan is VTP 2020's Bicycle Element. It is a 20-year plan to integrate bicycle transportation into the total transportation system, with a 10-year Bicycle Expenditure Program to assure funding for the most critical bicycle infrastructure links in the County. The Countywide Bicycle Plan establishes, protects, and enhances bicycling as a viable transportation mode and seeks to assure that bicycling is a practical and safe mode of travel, by itself and in combination with other modes in Santa Clara County. VTP 2020 and the Countywide Bicycle Plan are two separate documents, but both will be updated every two years.

The Countywide Bicycle Plan has a regional emphasis. Local jurisdictions' bicycle plans' and general plans' circulation elements cover their areas in greater, more comprehensive detail. The Countywide Bicycle Plan will function as a regional framework for local plans, and will identify coordination possibilities between the local bicycle plans. The purpose of this Bicycle Plan is to assemble in one document all the pertinent elements of past bicycle plans and working papers, identify the final cross-county bicycle corridor network, including gaps and needed projects, and include other elements to help local agencies responsible for projects to secure funding and plan effectively for the future.



This Plan consists of the following chapters:

**Chapter 1** begins with the **vision** and the **policy framework**.

**Chapter 2** describes **current conditions** and **setting** for cycling in Santa Clara County, as well as existing bicycle mode share and usage statistics.

**Chapter 3** describes coordination efforts with **other plans** and planning activities.

**Chapter 4** covers the **Cross County Bicycle Corridors** and compares them with existing facilities.

**Chapter 5** discusses the **bicycle projects** considered in the Plan, the prioritization process and the Evaluation Criteria.

**Chapter 6** covers the **funding** programs and strategies, along with the Bicycle Expenditure Program.

**Chapter 7** describes and makes recommendations for bicycle **parking, intermodal access and support facilities**.

**Chapter 8** describes bicycle **promotion** and **education** strategies and plans. It also provides references for other resources.

## **Vision of the Countywide Bicycle Plan**

*To establish, protect and enhance bicycling as a viable transportation mode and to assure that bicycling is a practical and safe mode of travel, by itself and in combination with other modes.*

## **Policy Framework**

The following policies were approved by the VTA Board of Directors in February 1999. The status of each policy is described in italics and is also indicated as follows:

- ✓ Done
- On-going
- Not yet implemented

The recommended policies fall into five categories:

- A. Transportation Planning and Programming
- B. Land Use Planning
- C. Local Ordinances and Guidelines
- D. Design and Construction
- E. Complementary Policies that Encourage Bicycling

The Policy Framework is shown in full detail in Figure 1-1.

**Figure 1-1 Policy Framework for the Santa Clara Countywide Bicycle Plan**

<b>Implementation Status</b>	<b>Policy</b>
	<b>A. Transportation Planning and Programming</b>
<input type="radio"/> 16 Cross County Bicycle Corridors have been designated. <input type="checkbox"/> A pedestrian plan will be developed later.	1. Plan and implement a seamless bicycle and pedestrian travel network that is continuous across city boundaries.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Bicycle Technical Guidelines</i> have been adopted by VTA. <input type="checkbox"/> A pedestrian plan will be developed later	2. Develop a standard checklist of bicycle and pedestrian access guidelines to be used in the planning and programming of all VTA funded transportation projects.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Encourage implementation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities as part of the improvement of all transportation facilities.
<input type="radio"/> Fund programming coordinated through VTA for various local, regional, state and federal fund programs.	4. Coordinate with other federal, state, regional, county and local agencies to plan, design, fund and construct bicycle projects.
<input type="radio"/> Racks are provided on all VTA revenue service vehicles. Lockers are provided at most rail stations. However, more racks are needed at stations and stops.	5. Fully integrate bicycle access to and within the transit system.
<input type="radio"/> Developers are requested to include bicycle facilities in their projects. Tier 2 and Tier 3 projects are included in the <i>Countywide Bicycle Plan</i> to fulfill fund application requirements.	6. Proactively seek diverse and alternative funding sources for projects.

✓ Done    ○ On-going    □ Not yet implemented

**Figure 1-1 Policy Framework for the Santa Clara Countywide Bicycle Plan**

<b>Implementation Status</b>	<b>Policy</b>
<p>✓ VTA's CMP model currently predicts bicycle and pedestrian trips based on MTC's Baycast 90 model.</p>	<p>7. Utilize multi-modal transportation demand models that are based on person-trips and that can forecast bicycle trips, pedestrian trips and transit trips in addition to motor vehicle trips.</p>
<b>B. Land Use Planning</b>	
<p>☐</p>	<p>1. Encourage existing developments to provide bicycle/pedestrian connections to link neighborhoods and residential areas with schools, commercial services, employment centers, recreational areas and transit centers.</p>
<p>○ VTA provides comments through the Development Review process. The Best Practices Program is being developed as part of VTP 2020.</p>	<p>2. Encourage new developments to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as trails and bicycle lanes.</p>
<p>○ VTA provides comments through the Development Review process. The Best Practices Program is being developed as part of VTP 2020.</p>	<p>3. Encourage new developments to provide mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists by providing non-motorized connections and access ways such as cul-de-sac connections, pathways and other short-cuts to schools, transit centers and other adjacent destinations.</p>
<p>○ VTA provides comments through the Development Review process. The Best Practices Program is being developed as part of VTP 2020.</p>	<p>4. Discourage existing bicycle access from being negatively impacted.</p>

✓ Done    ○ On-going    ☐ Not yet implemented

**Figure 1-1 Policy Framework for the Santa Clara Countywide Bicycle Plan**

<b>Implementation Status</b>	<b>Policy</b>
	<b>C. Local Ordinances and Guidelines</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Member Agencies can and are encouraged to adopt the <i>Bicycle Technical Guidelines</i> . VTA staff will assist Member Agencies in drafting appropriate language for ordinances and guidelines.	1. Establish guidelines that encourage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bicycle parking ordinances</li> <li>• bicycle parking facilities</li> <li>• provisions for showers and commuter clothing lockers in new and renovated developments.</li> <li>• mileage reimbursement when bicycles are used on official business when travel time is equivalent to an automobile trip.</li> </ul>
<input type="radio"/> VTA provides comments through the Development Review process.	2. Ensure that Transportation Demand Management programs include bicycle and pedestrian components.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. To reduce bicycle accident rates, improve public awareness of bicycling and increase bicycle mode share, encourage bicycle safety education programs targeted to the following audiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adult cyclists</li> <li>• elementary school students</li> <li>• junior high and high school students</li> <li>• motorists</li> <li>• general public</li> </ul>
	<b>D. Design and Construction</b>
<input type="radio"/> <i>Bicycle Technical Guidelines</i> have been distributed to all Member Agencies.	1. When and where appropriate include bicycle and pedestrian facilities when a Member Agency proposes to construct or rehabilitate a roadway.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Implement proactive strategies to identify and remove obstacles and hazards to bicycle travel.
<input type="radio"/> <i>Bicycle Technical Guidelines</i> have been distributed to all Member Agencies.	3. Consider roadway designs, and/or implement traffic calming or other measures to enhance traffic safety.

✓ Done    ○ On-going    □ Not yet implemented

**Figure 1-1 Policy Framework for the Santa Clara Countywide Bicycle Plan**

<b>Implementation Status</b>	<b>Policy</b>
<p>✓ <i>Bicycle Technical Guidelines</i> have been distributed to all Member Agencies.</p>	<p>4. Establish guidelines for and encourage the use of bicycle safe and friendly roadway design such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-speed right turn designs and limit double right turn lanes</li> <li>• Wide curb lanes</li> <li>• Discourage five or more lanes per roadway direction</li> <li>• High standards for pavement surface quality in construction, renovation and maintenance (e.g. street sweeping, roadway and utility trenching repair, and smooth longitudinal gutter joints)</li> <li>• Properly designed and located drainage grates, gutter joints, and utility covers (e.g. bicycle safe grates, minimized gutter widths, grates and utility covers which are placed outside bicyclists' travel path)</li> <li>• Bicycle safe and friendly signal timing and detection</li> </ul>
<p>☐ Procedures to be developed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain safe bicycle access during road work (e.g. signwork, traffic controls)</li> </ul>
<b>E. Complementary Policies That Encourage Bicycling</b>	
<p>○</p>	<p>1. Increase institutional encouragement of non-motorized travel (e.g. support and/or implement parking cash out programs and VTA's EcoPass program.)</p>
<p>☐</p>	<p>2. Facilitate and encourage inter-jurisdictional cooperation in the development and implementation of non-motorized projects.</p>
<p>☐</p>	<p>3. Develop a countywide bicycle route suitability rating system.</p>
<p>☐</p>	<p>4. Encourage the development and updating of regional and sub-regional bicycle maps for both commuters and tourists.</p>
<p>☐</p>	<p>5. Promote bicycle planning and engineering training programs for Member Agency staff.</p>

✓ Done    ○ On-going    ☐ Not yet implemented

## Future Steps and Issues

This Plan does not cover all the issues that came out during the development of the Plan. VTA has identified the following areas to address before the next plan updates in two years:

- **Route Numbering:** There is a great deal of interest in coordinating a countywide route numbering and designation system such that the signage will be uniform, and readily understood by cyclists (and other users) as they travel through cities and towns of the county. VTA will coordinate with the local jurisdictions to develop guidelines for route numbering and signage information. Signage design has already been addressed in the *Bicycle Technical Guidelines*. The route numbering coordination should be completed prior to the revision of the *Santa Clara County Bikeways Map*, in order to be included on the map.
- **Update of the Existing Bikeways Map and Development of the Suitability Map:** The *Santa Clara County Bikeways Map* will be updated to include many bikeways and bicycle/ pedestrian crossings that have been constructed since the previous publishing of the map. The update will include ratings of facilities for different levels of bicycling, i.e. moderate vs. advanced. It will also indicate the level of volume of traffic on many of the streets commonly used by bicyclists.
- **Bicycle Parking:** Funding has been made available for a demonstration bicycle parking program, which VTA will work with the local jurisdictions to develop. Parking is a very important complement to the expansion of bikeways, for without adequate and secure parking, people who have moderate bicycling inclinations and valuable bicycles will be deterred from using their bicycles for purposeful trips.
- **Bicycle Safety Program:** VTA will develop a campaign to promote bicycle safety awareness among bicyclists and motorists.
- **Data Collection:** Solid data on counts and bicycle usage is very meager. Better data collection is needed for planning, developing, and funding bicycle projects, as well as for fully integrating bicycles into mainstream transportation models for long range planning and forecasts. VTA will explore ways to expand bicycle data collection.
- **Pedestrian Issues:** This Plan includes very little discussion on pedestrian issues. However, VTA is developing the Best Practices program as part of VTP 2020, which focuses attention on pedestrian-scaled development and closely-related issues.