

Chapter 3

Planning and Coordination

History of Bicycle Planning in Santa Clara County

During the 1970's, many local jurisdictions in Santa Clara County implemented bicycle plans. However, statewide design criteria and guidelines were not established until the publication of the Caltrans *Planning and Design Criteria for Bikeways in California* in 1978. Prior to the Caltrans criteria, city and county staff lacked experience and guidance for bicycle planning, and in many cases, planning efforts focused on separating bicycles from auto traffic. Therefore, some of the bikeways constructed before 1978 are now considered outdated and unacceptable. Some of the cities' bikeway plans still in effect may also be based on outdated planning approaches or travel patterns.

In the past decade, many cities have once again focused attention and effort in developing bicycle plans. There is a growing recognition that the bicycle is a bona-fide mode of transportation, and serious consideration is merited in integrating bicycle facilities with the rest of the roadways that constitute the conventional transportation system. In California, the congestion management agencies have become an instrument for bicycle planning at the county level and provide coordination between city-level plans. Bicycle planning has expanded beyond its role as a minor element in local general plans or park/open space plans. In addition, more regional, state and federal funding has become available for bicycle projects, which can be better leveraged if an adopted bicycle plan is in place.



Countywide Trails Planning

A number of parks and open space preserves in Santa Clara County provide trails for hiking and bicycling. While many of these multi-use trails are predominantly associated with recreational activities and nature appreciation, they also serve as bicycle transportation facilities removed from the urban setting and street traffic.

History of Trails Planning in Santa Clara County

Planning for trails has been an integral part of land use planning in Santa Clara County for at least the past 30 years. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, plans were developed to provide hiking and bicycling trails as part of park chains proposed along most of the major streams that flow through the Santa Clara Valley, including Coyote Creek, the Guadalupe River, and Stevens Creek. Some of these proposed trails and parkways are only now becoming realities. Trails have been a part of the Santa Clara County General Plan since 1980.¹

The 1978 *Trails and Pathways Master Plan* encompassed both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county, as well as adjacent county boundaries. The 1978 Trail Plan cited the existing and growing network of hiking, bicycling, and equestrian trails located in the foothills and mountains, baylands, and the valley floor. The 1978 Trail Plan also addressed many trails to meet the recreational needs of the ever-increasing population.

Pertinent Policies and Actions and Planning Documents

The "Regional Parks, Trails, and Scenic Highways Element" of the County's *1980 General Plan* was created by combining the *1972 Plan of Regional Parks for Santa Clara County* with the *1978 Trails and Pathways Master Plan for Santa Clara County*.

The *1980 General Plan* map for trails envisioned an interconnected, countywide network of hiking, bicycling, and equestrian trails and pathways that linked parks and public open space lands with one another and provided access from the urbanized valley floor to hillside reservoirs, and mountain parks and open space lands.

In 1990, the Board of Supervisors initiated a review of the *1980 County General Plan* and established a General Plan Review Committee. One of the Committee's responsibilities was to develop and implement a public process to define ambiguous trail routes on the *1980 General Plan Trails and Pathways Map*.

In 1992, the Board of Supervisors adopted the "Trail Easement Dedication Policies and Practices" which provide County staff, Commissions and the Board with directives regarding the requests of trail easements in conjunction with land subdivision and development. Due to public interest and concern about trail routes and the easement policies, the Board of

¹ State law does not mandate that trails be included in a General Plan. The fact that Santa Clara County includes trails in its General Plan is exactly the type of expression about "local conditions and circumstances" that General Plan guidelines reference. It is up to the decision makers to decide what are desirable and reasonable goals to establish for the County relative to the provision of the public good, including trails.

Supervisors approved a recommendation by the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission to review and update the trails portions of the General Plan elements being reviewed by the General Plan Committee.

In 1995, the *Countywide Trails Master Plan Update* comprehensively reviewed all trail policies and the trails map contained in the County General Plan. The recommendations of this plan update were presented to the Board of Supervisors as an amendment to the General Plan.

1995 Countywide Trails Master Plan Map

Approximately 535 miles of off-street countywide trail routes are proposed within Santa Clara County. Of these, approximately 105 miles exist today. An additional 120 miles of on-street bicycle routes are also part of the plan.

Trail routes are categorized into three hierarchies. These are:

- Regional Trails: that are of national, state, or regional recreation significance and extend beyond the borders of Santa Clara County;
- Sub-Regional Trails: that provide regional recreation and transportation benefits by providing continuity between cities and convenient, long-distance trail loop opportunities that link two or more Regional Trails; and
- Connector Trails: that provide convenient means of access from urban areas to the trail network of Regional and Sub-regional Trails or that connect County Parks.

Trail Priorities

Approximately 18 miles of trails are identified as high priority within unincorporated Santa Clara County and 75 miles within the County's Urban Service Areas. These trails generally emphasize urban and urban fringe areas where the need for trails and the usefulness of trails are the greatest. The trails of most significance to bicyclists include portions of the Bay Trail, De Anza Historic Trail, Los Gatos Creek Trail, Coyote Creek Trail, Guadalupe Trail, Stevens Creek Trail and San Tomas Aquino Trail. A comparison of the 1995 *Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Master Plan Update* and the Cross County Bicycle Corridors is covered in Chapter 4.

Trail Guidelines

The *Uniform Interjurisdictional Trail Design, Use, and Management Guidelines* were developed and published in 1999 as a separate document which serve as mitigation to potential environmental impacts or which provide further guidance about the design, use or management of trails shown on the Countywide Trails Master Plan Map.

Multi-agency Involvement

The policies and Trails Master Plan Map are also intended to provide a coordinated vision for linking the existing trail plans and implementing efforts of individual jurisdictions and agencies within the County rather than pre-empt them. In addition to the 15 cities and the

County Parks and Recreation Department, the following agencies and special districts also plan, develop, operate, and manage public trails within Santa Clara County:

- Santa Clara County Open Space Authority
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- National Parks Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

In addition, there are other public agencies, such as the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Department of Forestry, the County Roads and Airport Department, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) who are participants in the process to implement trails.

Countywide Bicycle Plans

The first countywide bicycle plan was generated in 1974 when the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors adopted the *Arterial Bikeways Plan*. The routes identified in the *Arterial Bikeways Plan* represented corridors rather than specific streets. The county was not authorized to implement the plan on a city street without that city's agreement, and the plan did not obligate the cities to implement the routes.

Subsequently, several documents were produced that addressed bicycle transportation. The *Transportation 2000 Plan* (T2000), adopted by the Board of Supervisors in May 1987, was a comprehensive look at the transportation system. The "T2000 Working Paper #11: Bicycle Element" examined options that could facilitate bicycle travel in Santa Clara County.

The 1994 *Santa Clara County Bicycle Plan* by the Santa Clara County Transportation Agency (predecessor to the VTA) described the existing bicycling environment and recommended numerous policies to improve the level of bicycle use and to serve the needs of all members of the bicycling community. The policies in the 1994 Plan provided the basis for the Policy Framework for this Countywide Bicycle Plan (see Chapter 1).

The *1997 Countywide Bicycle System T2010 Update Working Paper* was developed in response to the policy of the 1994 plan to "develop a countywide bikeways system that is continuous across city boundaries and provides for intra-county connections." This document identified ten preliminary cross-county bicycle routes and the major gaps involved in implementing them. The ten corridors were the basis for the sixteen Cross County Bicycle Corridors developed in this Plan.

Citywide Bicycle Plans

While most cities include bicycle considerations in the Circulation Elements of their General Plans, several cities in Santa Clara County also have adopted bicycle plans. Three cities (San Jose, Sunnyvale, and Santa Clara) developed bicycle plans in the early 1990's and are in various stages of implementing the plans. Sunnyvale also completed a Bicycle Opportunities Study, which is a planning study for capital improvement projects, in 1998. Two cities have adopted bicycle plans within the last three years, (Cupertino and Milpitas) and four cities are currently in the process of developing their plans (Gilroy, Palo Alto, Morgan Hill and Los Altos). The City of Milpitas developed a Master Trails Plan in 1999. The City of Saratoga updated and amended their Master Trails and Paths Plan in 1991. The status of each city's bicycle plan and bicycle maps is summarized in Figure 3-1.

Figure 3-1 Bicycle Plans of Santa Clara County Cities

Jurisdiction	Last Adopted (or Updated) Bike Plan	Map of Existing Bikeways
Campbell	Circulation Element of General Plan	None
Cupertino	1998	1998
Gilroy	In progress	Update in Progress
Los Altos	In progress	1987; update in progress
Los Altos Hills	None	1970's
Los Gatos	None	Yes
Milpitas	1999	1999
Monte Sereno	None	None
Morgan Hill	In progress	Update in progress
Mountain View	Circulation Element of General Plan, 1992	1997
Palo Alto	In progress	Update in progress
San Jose	None	1999
Santa Clara	1992 (will update in 2001)	1997
Saratoga	Circulation Element of General Plan; update in progress	1995
Sunnyvale	1993	In progress

Planning for Specific Trails in Santa Clara County

Santa Clara County's many creeks provide great potential for trail development. Many of these creek trails are in the 1995 *Countywide Trails Master Plan Update*. In many cases, they are also part of, or run closely parallel to the Cross County Bicycle Corridors.

Several creek trail studies have been conducted in recent years. Most of the master plans and feasibility studies were conducted as multi-agency efforts where cities along a creek corridor sought to coordinate trail development. Feasibility studies may include preliminary design, as well as the delineation of potential alignments. The following creeks and trails have been subjects of planning studies.

Coyote Creek

Designated as a sub-regional trail route in the 1995 *Countywide Trails Master Plan*, the Coyote Creek Trail is a 35 mile corridor that extends from the Bay Trail at the San Francisco Bay, through north San Jose and Morgan Hill, to the Llagas Creek Trail in Gilroy. Proposed bicycle lanes on Bailey Avenue will facilitate cross-valley connections to the Coyote Creek Trail from the west side of Monterey Highway and Highway 101. The County Parks and Recreation Department has jurisdiction over the Coyote Creek Parkway multi-use trail, extending 14 miles from Hellyer County Park in South San Jose to Anderson Lake County Park in Morgan Hill. The City of San Jose has jurisdiction over Coyote Creek between Hellyer County Park and Highway 237

Guadalupe River Trail

Designated as a sub-regional trail route in the 1995 *Countywide Trails Master Plan*, the Guadalupe River Trail is roughly 25 miles long, extending from Highway 237 in Santa Clara through downtown San Jose to Almaden Lake Park and Guadalupe Reservoir. The downtown portion of the Guadalupe River Trail will be improved as part of a joint collaboration between the San Jose Redevelopment Agency, Guadalupe River Park and Gardens, Santa Clara Valley Water District, and US Army Corps of Engineers on the Downtown Guadalupe River Flood Control Project. The project will also address a section of the Los Gatos Creek trail which will eventually connect to the Guadalupe River Trail system. The *Guadalupe River Park and Gardens Master Plan Revision Preliminary Study*, which was most recently revised in April 2000, show these trail improvements.

Los Gatos Creek Trail

Designated as a sub-regional trail route in the 1995 *Countywide Trails Master Plan*, the Los Gatos Creek Trail is roughly an 11.5 mile trail corridor extending from downtown San Jose through Campbell and Los Gatos to Lexington Reservoir County Park. The December 1985 *Los Gatos Creek Trail Master Plan* studied the 3.5 mile reach in San Jose and proposed recommendations that the City of San Jose Parks and Recreation and Public Works Department will implement.

It should be noted that Coyote Creek, Guadalupe and Los Gatos Creek roughly merge around downtown San Jose. Therefore, these trail corridors are important connections for bicyclists.

San Tomas Aquino Trail

The *San Tomas Aquino/Saratoga Creek Trail Master Plan* and the environmental documents were completed in June 1999 in a collaborative effort between the County and the cities of Santa Clara, San Jose, and Cupertino. The San Tomas Aquino Trail extends from the San Francisco Bay Trail for to Prospect Road in San Jose. The Master Plan covers 12 miles of primary trail alignment and spur trails, traversing approximately 7 miles of Santa Clara Valley Water District creek corridors and 5 miles of local streets. The trail is divided into six reaches which will provide a continuous pedestrian and bicycle system that includes grade-separated crossings of many major roadways, including Highways 237, 101 and 280, Central Expressway and Caltrain tracks. It includes a discussion of crossing locations and conceptual engineering solutions to assist cities with their implementation and design guidelines to establish minimum trail development requirements. The Plan also offers recommendations that will establish a consistent character for the trail as it is developed by multiple agencies. Reach 1 (State Route 237 to Agnew Road) is currently under development with an anticipated completion of summer 2001.

Stevens Creek Trail

The City of Mountain View developed the *Stevens Creek Trail and Wildlife Corridor Feasibility Report* in 1991, in coordination with local agencies and stakeholders. The study examined the feasibility of constructing a pedestrian and bicycle trail along approximately six miles of the creek corridor located within city limits from Shoreline Mountain View to the city's boundary with Los Altos at Fremont Avenue. Reaches 1-3 from Shoreline Park to Dana Street have been completed, mostly as Class I trails. Updated feasibility and environmental studies are underway for Reach 4.

The City of Cupertino is undergoing its Feasibility Study planning process for their portion of the Stevens Creek Trail from Highway 280 to Stevens Creek County Park.

Regional Trails

Bay Area Ridge Trail

The most comprehensive trail is the Bay Area Ridge Trail, which is a 400-mile regional trail system that will eventually link parks and recreation areas along the first ridgeline of the nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area. In Santa Clara County, it will run through the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. Portions of the Coyote Creek and Penitencia Creek Trail corridors have been designated as part of the interim alignment of the trail.

Bay Trail

The Bay Trail, encircling the San Francisco and San Pablo Bays, will be a 400-mile regional hiking and bicycling trail. The South Bay portion of the Bay Trail Plan will involve the following projects:

- Dumbarton Bridge (east end) to Dixon Landing Road in Milpitas
- Dixon Landing to Alviso Environmental Education Center
- Alviso Environmental Education Center to Gold Street (North San Jose) (completed)
- Gold Street to Sunnyvale Baylands Park (mostly complete)
- Lockheed/Moffett boundary to Shoreline Park in Mountain View
- Mountain View/Palo Alto to Dumbarton Bridge (west end) (mostly complete)

The completion of the Bay Trail will serve both transportation and recreation purposes. The Bay Trail will represent a trail system made up of three elements: spine trails, spur trails, and connector trails. The basic framework of the trail system is created by the spine and spur trails. The spine trail will provide a continuous corridor connecting the nine Bay Area counties. Depending on location, spine trails may be multiple use trails (hiking and biking), or strictly for hiking or bicycling only. Approximately 215 miles have been completed as Class I paths or Class II bicycle lanes.

Coordination

Given the many local jurisdictions and public agencies involved with bicycle facility projects, it will take a concentrated effort to ensure coordination and cooperation between partnering agencies to implement a well-connected and consistent bikeway system to serve bicyclists between widespread origins and destinations.

As discussed above, there are major trail corridors that cross multiple jurisdictional boundaries. Chapter 4 focuses on the 16 Cross County Bicycle Corridors which were designated in consideration of transportation and trip attraction/generation, cutting across city limits. Coordination between adjacent jurisdictions will be critical to succeed in implementing bicycle facilities on these types of corridors.

In addition there are also overlaying jurisdictions where cooperation will be necessary. For instance, the County Roads and Airport Department owns and maintains the expressway network operations, but each city controls bicycle access on the segments within their limits, as well as traffic enforcement for all vehicles (except in high occupancy vehicle lanes). Similarly, the County Parks and Recreation Department administers the Los Gatos Creek Trail that runs through Los Gatos Creek County Park and Vasona Lake County Park. But several capital improvements along that corridor are developed and implemented by the cities.

Local agencies may have different needs and foci, depending on their responsibilities to their constituents. For instance, the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) will have a significant role on many potential trail projects. SCVWD is charged with maintaining water supply and flood control in the County, and as such, has authority to grant permits and right of way easements for trail projects along levees and other flood control areas. SCVWD's capital/infrastructure projects, such as the planned lower and upper Guadalupe River Flood Control Projects, will also affect the geometry and location of the creek trails.

While the Countywide Bicycle Plan identifies projects and locations where multi-jurisdiction coordination and cooperation will be needed to implement bicycle projects, there are no specific policies or recommendations to enforce partnering between agencies for regional benefit. Instead, it is expected that strategies for multi-jurisdictional coordination will vary, depending on the nature of the project and partners. VTA will also facilitate coordination, as appropriate opportunities arise, as well as pro-actively encourage cooperation and partnerships for projects that seek and receive funding from funding programs under VTA's oversight.