

July 25, 2008

Jim McDonald
Senior Planner, Planning Department
New City Hall, 3rd Floor
915 I Street,
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: 2030 Draft General Plan

Dear Mr. McDonald:

Enclosed please find comments from the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates on the 2030 Draft General Plan. The vision for this long-range plan is commendable. Making Sacramento the most livable city in America will take a concerted effort between the city, businesses, and residents. The details of the plan largely support this vision, but some sections could use clarification and others need improvement. Our priorities concerned with complete streets, the Level of Service (LOS) standards, connectivity standards and bicycle parking.

Complete streets are extremely important for a livable, sustainable and vibrant city. The complete streets concept takes into account all modes of transportation. The city has shown its wisdom by including complete streets as a goal and we totally support it. We believe the lower LOS standards are a significant improvement. Changing the LOS standards in the manner proposed by the Mobility module of the plan will encourage people to carpool, use bicycles and transit. Lower LOS standards will make it easier to build smart growth projects.

The connectivity of the city is a prime issue for those using human-powered transportation. Pedestrians and bicyclists need short, direct routes. Numerous connections between key destinations, as well as from and between neighborhoods, should be emphasized. Unfortunately, these smaller scale connections, though vital, have often been overlooked.

As better connectivity, health issues, actions to combat global warming and rising energy costs result in an increasing number of cyclists, there will be a need to provide to secure bicycle parking at destinations. The city should support and fund bicycle parking in order to accommodate the growing usage of the bicycle as a mode of transportation.

SABA is a nonprofit corporation with more than 1,400 members. We represent bicyclists. Our aim is more and safer trips by bike. We're working for a future in which bicycling for everyday transportation is common because it is safe, convenient and desirable. Bicycling is the healthiest, cleanest, cheapest, quietest, most energy efficient and least congesting form of transportation.

Yours truly,

Walt Seifert
Executive Director

Attachment: SABA 2030 Draft General Plan comments

Comments on Sacramento Draft 2030 General Plan
Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates
July 25, 2008

Page 1-2 (Vision)

Point 4: SABA supports all transportation modes having easy, safe access to downtown and job locations. Safe, convenient and desirable access is key to encouraging non-automotive transportation.

Point 5: SABA supports the city being linked to the region in this way. Currently, there are limited non-freeway options for leaving the city. The City should encourage the building of this extensive network for use by all.

Page 1-11 (Sacramento Profile)

Says Sacramento is both the fourth and seventh largest city in California. Also “[...] the city has been routed [...]” should read “touted.”

Land Use and Urban Design Element

This Element should include a guideline for the use of central city developer fees. Developer fees from the central city cannot be used for roadway widening because there is no space. These fees should be diverted to bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities. For example, they could fund crosswalks or bike/bus lanes on streets such as J Street where the previous LOS C requirement limited their installation.

Page 2-23

LU 2.7.6 (Walkable Blocks)

Walkable blocks with mid-block pedestrian crossings help create a more livable, people-oriented area that is also easier to get around by bicycle. SABA strongly supports smaller block sizes. We suggest that this paragraph reference LU 4.5.5 which requires 300-400’ block sizes for new development. Smaller block sizes should be part of measures taken to implement greater connectivity within and between neighborhoods.

Page 2-53

LU 4.1.5 (Connecting Key Destinations)

Connecting the city in this way will promote the use of bicycles for everyday transportation. This is a desirable goal, and will benefit the health and well-being of the community. SABA recommends the development of specific connectivity policies and standards.

Gated communities, cul-de-sacs and other non-grid street systems, sound walls and superblocks are all impediments to connectivity.

Block sizes would be a key element of the standards as well as crossings of barriers such as rivers, RR tracks, canals and freeways. Standards should be established for the distance between crossings of such physical barriers. Other connectivity issues, such as

mandatory trail connections at the ends of cul-de-sacs (when cul-de-sacs are permitted), bicycle and pedestrian portals/short-cuts through sound walls or walls surrounding commercial areas should be covered. Signage can also help make bikeway connectivity clearer.

Equity of access must also be considered when planning connectivity. Certain areas of Sacramento have limited-access roadways and severed neighborhoods. Connecting these neighborhoods to destinations is critical to achieving goal LU 4.1.

Page 2-90

Goal LU 6.1 (Corridors)

This goal and the associated policies are commendable. Urban and Suburban corridors are at the same time desirable destinations and intimidating to non-automobile users of the road. Moving away from strictly auto-oriented corridors and to mixed-use streets shows wisdom and a true desire to meet the vision of making Sacramento the most livable city in America.

The Mobility Element

This Element should include a policy supporting the preferred use of roundabouts instead of signals. Roundabouts are an air pollution and CO2 reduction measure, safer for motorists and can be safer and more convenient for bicyclists.

Page 2-162

M 1.2.2 (LOS Standard)

SABA strongly supports the change of LOS standards from C to D and from C to E in Multi-Modal Districts.

The language in this section should be modified from a value-tinged to a factual description of LOS. A higher LOS is not necessarily “better” than a lower LOS, so that term (“better”) should be avoided. “LOS E or better” should be changed to “LOS A-E” and “LOS D or better” should be changed to “LOS A-D.”

SABA strongly recommends never allowing LOS standards to drive construction or expansion of roads to more than four lanes. Roads of four lanes or more are inherently undesirable for pedestrians and bicyclists. Having roads wider than four lanes conflicts with the intent of Complete Streets policy M 4.2 (which in M 4.2.6, for example, suggests lane reductions as a way of achieving Complete Streets). It should be clear that Complete Streets policy should take precedence over LOS policy.

Peak hour automobile LOS should not be the sole criterion when making decisions on transportation and land use projects. Peak hour LOS should be balanced by the consideration of bicycle and pedestrian impacts, average LOS, quality of life effects, safety, costs, aesthetics and other factors. Having flexible LOS standards is desirable for pedestrians and bicyclists. Lower LOS standards in multi-modal areas encourage road users to use modes of transport besides their automobiles. M 1.2.2 a. and b. “[...] unless maintaining this LOS would, in the City’s judgment, be infeasible and/or conflict with the achievement of other goals.” This is a key statement of this section, and must be enforced. Only if the safety, comfort and convenience of pedestrians and bicyclists will not be sacrificed should the LOS be maintained or raised to the minimum level.

As LOS on major roads goes down, more drivers will use parallel streets as alternative routes. The LOS of the neighborhood must therefore be taken into account – if a decrease in the LOS on one street causes a real or perceived danger to residents living in the neighborhood, this change creates a conflict with the vision of being a livable city. Traffic calming measures should be implemented in these areas to discourage these detours and encourage walking and bicycling.

Page 2-163

M 1.3.1 (Grid Network)

SABA supports a grid network of streets. Grids are vital elements in connectivity.

M.1.3.3 (Eliminate Gaps)

SABA supports the elimination of bikeway gaps, and notes that the term “well-connected” in M 1.3.1 should be defined or clarified by establishing connectivity standards.

M 1.3.3.b (Grade separated crossings)

Recommend including canals and other barriers (creeks, etc.) to this section so as not to limit the plan to railroad and freeway crossings.

Page 2-164

M 1.4 (Transportation Demand Management)

Recommend adding a goal to decrease Vehicle Miles Traveled.

M 1.4.2. (Commute Trip Reduction)

Retitle to “Automobile Commute Trip Reduction”.

Recommend adding parking cash-out programs and spelling out that bicycle facilities include bike parking, clothing lockers and showers.

Page 2-165

M 1.5.5 (Neighborhood EVs)

Encouraging street systems that support NEV use will also encourage use by bicyclists and pedestrians. NEVs may only be driven on streets with a speed limit of 35mph or lower. Slower speeds make pedestrian and bicycle use safer. Including NEVs in the General Plan helps assure that we have Complete Streets, provided that they are not separate facilities for the NEVs.

Page 2-171

M 3.1.1 (Transit for All)

Transit for All should include bicyclists more fully. Bicycle access to transit stations and stops vastly increases the “rider shed” for transit. The Federal Highway Administration’s Course on Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation points out the advantages to bicyclists as well as the advantages to the transit system. For example, cyclists are able to travel farther distances and overcome topographical barriers, and services to recreational destinations during off-peak periods can increase overall ridership and efficient use of

capacity. Accommodations for bicycles on transit should be included in these policies. Multi-modal transportation would be encouraged by this inclusion. Direct Access to Stations (M 3.1.12) and bicycle parking are both important, but many riders will want their bikes at the other end of their transit trips. For this reason, SABA suggests including bicycle accommodations on all modes of transit, and policies that ensure that any new transit options will include these accommodations in the future.

Page 2-180

M 4.2 (Complete Streets)

SABA strongly supports the idea of Complete Streets. The City of Sacramento is demonstrating leadership and wisdom in incorporating the idea of Complete Streets.

Page 2-169

M 2.1.11 (Speed Management Policies)

SABA supports development of speed management policies and notes that lower speeds benefit the safety of bicyclists and motorists as well as pedestrians.

Page 2-191

M 5.1

Add a goal for Sacramento to receive the Gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community award from the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). The city currently has Bronze-level status. This award provides a metric of how bicycle-friendly the city is. This could be used as one indicator for a general livability index.

M 5.1

Add a policy to provide bicycle parking as appropriate in the public right-of-way, as requested by businesses or citizens. Consider use of on-street bike parking. Offer incentives to businesses to install secure, long-term bicycle parking for employees and short-term bicycle racks for visitors.

M 5.1

Add a policy to link bikeways through the use of named routes and trails with dedicated signage and regional bikeway maps that include the routes.

M 5.1.2. (Appropriate Bikeway Facilities)

Add that the city will consider designating some streets as bicycle boulevards.

M 5.1.4. (Motorists, Bicyclists and Pedestrian Conflicts)

Add multi-use trails as locations where bicycle/pedestrian conflicts should be reduced.

Page 2-192

M 5.1.11. (Bike Facilities in New Development)

Change “bicycle racks” to the more inclusive term bicycle parking and distinguish between long term bicycle parking for employees and short term parking for visitors.

M 5.1.12 (Bicycle Parking at Transit Facilities)

Retitle “Bicycling and Transit” and add bicycle access to transit stations and stops.

Page 2-195

M 6.1.2. (Reduce Minimum Parking Standards)

Free or subsidized parking is a powerful encouragement of automobile use. We recommend that maximum parking standards be established and the city work on a regional basis to create parking policies that require motorists to pay the actual costs of supplying, maintaining and operating parking.

Page 2-187-188

Major Arterials are defined as:

High-speed/high-capacity roadways that provide access to regional transportation facilities. Access to parcels is a secondary function and should be limited to the extent feasible. Four lane to six-lane arterials have right-of-way widths of approximately 100 to 120 feet. Boulevards have right-of-way widths of approximately 90 to 160 feet. The chart on 2-188 (Table M1) suggests that such a highway would be a suitable mixed-use street. This is extremely unlikely to be the case. An arterial wider than four lanes is dangerous and intimidating to bicyclists and pedestrians, and creates intersections that are too wide for a pedestrian to easily or safely cross. While bike lanes do provide some measure of safety for thru-traffic of bicycles, they do not simplify making left turns onto a cross street or driveways, let alone access to what facilities are on the street. Wider six-lane streets also encourage higher traffic speeds. We recommend the city not construct or widen streets to more than four lanes.

Page 2-235

ERC 1.1.2 (Locational Criteria)

Safe and convenient access to schools, through proper location as described in this policy, is key to the safety of our children. Locating schools near bikeways and walkways helps to ensure this.

Page 2-282

PHS 5.1.7 (Healthy Communities) and 5.1.9 (Active Living)

This is a good example of one of the many benefits of Complete Streets. Walkable neighborhoods, combined with pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods and other areas, will help Sacramento improve its overall public health.

Page 2-309

Goal ER 6.1 (Improved Air Quality)

Bicycles are another alternative to zero-emission or low-emission automobiles. Bicycles are a type of zero-emission vehicle. In fact, it can be argued are the only true zero-emission vehicles since electric vehicles use power supplied from a grid that generates emissions elsewhere. This section should point out this fact, and allow for the accommodation and encouragement of bicycles. Bicycling as a transportation mode should be given priority over other zero-emission vehicles due to its extremely low negative impact on the environment as a whole and on air quality specifically. In

addition, bicycling, unlike other zero emissions vehicles, provides positive health impacts through physical activity.

[Return to list of letters](#)