Regional Pedestrian Committee
Regional Pedestrian Planning Assessment: Memo #1
3-Aug-07 (Jason Patton, Beth Thomas, Rochelle Wheeler)

THE REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PEDESTRIAN PLANNING

This memorandum organizes and summarizes the key points from the Regional Pedestrian Committee's first discussion session on regional pedestrian planning. The session was facilitated by Jason Patton, Beth Thomas, and Rochelle Wheeler to answer the following question: How are pedestrian issues of regional significance relevant to regional transportation planning? The discussion addressed the following three topics: regional policies related to pedestrians, regionally significant pedestrian facilities, and other regions with pedestrian plans. This memorandum is an interim work product that will be synthesized with five other memoranda as a white paper that assesses the need for regional pedestrian planning in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Regional Policies Related to Pedestrians

Regional policies on land use, transportation, public health and air quality, whether explicit adopted policies, or implicit policies that dictate how decisions are made, impact pedestrians regionally. Every year, more and more of these types of policies are being developed, and yet the pedestrian issues and ramifications are not being examined directly. Reviewing existing policies from the pedestrian perspective, and integrating walking into new policies, programs and procedures, has the potential to dramatically improve the pedestrian environment. Following is a list of categories of policies and practices that would benefit from being looked at through the pedestrian lens. Examples are given of how to make the connection between the policies and walking.

(1) *Smart growth/transit-oriented development:* Smart growth and TODs are entirely dependent on creating high quality pedestrian environments, although the focus on safe and convenient facilities may sometimes get lost. The Bay Area has many policies on the books to foster smart growth and increase TODs. *Making Connections:* The pedestrian district concept could be incorporated into Resolution 3434 (which directs regional transit expansion). The development of regional standards or best practices for pedestrian access and convenience would improve the quality of smart growth in the Bay Area.

(2) *Public Health/Physical Activity Policies and Promotions:* The link between public health and the transportation environment is being made at the local and countywide level, and should be recognized and formalized at the regional level. Transportation and the built environment impact the health of communities, from asthma rates, to traffic-related injuries, to obesity linked to physical inactivity, to personal security. Adding public health to the mix can provide further impetus to public officials and citizens to fund and build walking facilities. Regional promotional and policy efforts can make a larger impact than local efforts alone. *Making Connections:* The communities with the largest health disparities, and where public health efforts are focused, closely follow

those where MTC is funding Community-Based Transportation Plans for environmental justice reasons. More collaboration between MTC, ABAG and BARHII (Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative) would strengthen the efforts of all.

(3) *Traffic Injuries/Fatalities and Pedestrian Safety*: Local analysis of pedestrian collisions may miss areas and trends that could be seen only when looking at collisions regionally. Collisions along city, county, and/or special district borders may seem insignificant in one jurisdiction until viewed as a whole. Similarly, trends in collisions at and along regional roadways and rail lines could be seen and addressed systematically by the operating agency, perhaps by developing safety standards. Local agencies do not have good tools for collision reporting, analysis and assessing collision rates. Poor data leads to a lack of understanding of the significance of pedestrian collisions, since there are typically many fewer when compared to auto collisions. *Making Connections:* Uniform standards and guidelines, and improved walking rate data, could be developed regionally to help to prioritize improvements and highlight funding needs.

(4) *Regional Funding Decisions:* Today, the scope and cost of needed pedestrian facility improvements, and educational and enforcements programs, at the regional level are unknown. Without this information, decisions about limited regional transportation funds cannot equitably address pedestrian needs. Additionally, the existing funding sources are focused on capital infrastructure, while there is a large need for funding enforcement and education programs. *Making Connections:* Incentives, such as giving priority for funding, could encourage well-designed facilities using best practices. A funding policy could require that a percentage of every transportation project is dedicated to its pedestrian facilities.

(5) *Regional Air Quality Goals and Carbon Emissions:* All of the walking trips being made around the region now, either solo or linked with transit, are already improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions. *Making Connections:* This current benefit should be quantified to show the importance of the walking mode and the need to maintain current efforts (such as Marin's Safe Routes to School program). The air quality benefits of increasing walking and transit use can be identified. Replacing some of the many short auto trips with walk trips will have a large impact due to the proportionally high emissions generated by these trips. Reaching out to the Air District and the Congestion Management Agencies as partners will support this effort.

Regionally Significant Pedestrian Facilities

A pedestrian facility is a physical improvement that enables walking for transportation or recreation. Such facilities are regionally significant if (a) they serve a destination that generates cross-county walking and/or transit trips; (b) if the facility itself spans multiple counties; or (c) if the facility is responding to a pedestrian need caused by a regional roadway. The following list defines six categories of such facilities. For each category, illustrative examples are provided from around the region.

(1) *Pedestrian Connections to Regionally Significant Transit*: Pedestrian access to regional transit stations is a key component of successful transit and supportive land uses. The catchment area for walk trips in a station area depends upon the quality of that walking environment. Quality pedestrian facilities around regional transit stations will help capitalize on that transit investment by serving more people in a manner that is space efficient and helps to energize those station areas. *Examples*: Fruitvale BART Station, Hayward Downtown/BART Station connection.

(2) *Pedestrian Connections to Regionally Significant Destinations*: Airports, major sports facilities, and other regionally significant destinations are land uses that generate trips from across the region. With proper planning and coordination, such existing and future destinations could be better served by transit and pedestrian facilities, providing regional access that is not automobile dependent. *Examples*: BART SFO trips, AT&T Park (San Francisco).

(3) *Pedestrian Design and Mitigations on Regionally Significant Roadways*: Freeways, interchanges, state highways, and major arterials create barriers to pedestrian travel. Freeways and interchanges can divide areas that would otherwise be connected by pedestrian trips. Surface streets that are part of Congestion Management Programs have a mandate for moving vehicular traffic that can compromise pedestrian safety and access. Funding from pedestrian and bicycle grant programs is being directed at mitigating these problems with the regional roadway system. However, there is no regional mechanism for systematically addressing these issues.[1] *Examples*: El Camino Real (Peninsula), 19th Ave (San Francisco), International Blvd/E 14th St (East Bay), Interstate 80 (Emeryville, Berkeley, Albany, El Cerrito waterfront).

(4) *Trips Using Multiple Transit Agencies*: The integration of multiple transit agencies allows for pedestrian-based trips that span the Bay Area. However, there are significant needs for the physical integration of these services at intermodal stations. Key pedestrian facilities include coherent wayfinding signage and schedule information as well as waiting areas, shelters, and street crossings. *Examples*: Richmond Intermodal Station (BART, Capitol Corridor, AC Transit, Golden Gate Transit), Millbrae Station (BART, CalTrain, SamTrans), Oakland 19th St/20th St Transit Center (BART, AC Transit).

(5) *Cross-county Projects*: Pedestrian facilities are not inherently local. There are a growing number of pedestrian trails and bridges that are explicitly regional in nature. These projects require systematic planning at the regional level to ensure coordination between local agencies. *Examples*: San Francisco Bay Trail, San Francisco Ridge Trail, Golden Gate Bridge, Zampa Bridge, Eastern Span Bay Bridge Path.

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[1] For example, the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program has awarded approximately 30% of available funding—comprising 50% of funded capital projects---to such mitigation efforts on regionally significant roadways.

(6) *Areas with Significant Inter-county Pedestrian Trips*: In some areas, there is significant pedestrian activity that spans the boundary between two counties. Such areas could benefit from regional coordination to ensure that the jurisdictional boundaries don't perpetuate physical barriers that inhibit walking. *Examples*: Albany/El Cerrito (Alameda and Contra Costa Counties), San Francisco/Daly City (San Francisco and San Mateo Counties), and Palo Alto/East Palo Alto (Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties).

Other Regions with Pedestrian Plans

The Regional Pedestrian Committee conducted an informal survey of regional and state pedestrian plans in order to learn about their purpose and common elements. The following regional and state pedestrian plans were reviewed:

- Maricopa Association of Governments (Phoenix, AZ area), *Pedestrian Plan 2000*
- Washington State DOT, *Washington State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan* (in development)
- Puget Sound Regional Council, *Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Implementation Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region*, 2002
- New Jersey DOT, *New Jersey Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Phase 2*, 2004 (updates 1995 plan)
- Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, *OKI Regional Pedestrian Plan*, 2004

In addition to these plans, two other documents related to pedestrian planning were reviewed:

- Maricopa Association of Governments (Phoenix, AZ area), *Regional Pedestrian Program Overview*, 2003
- Wisconsin Pedestrian Planning Guidance (for MPOs & larger communities), 1993

The Regional Pedestrian Committee found a number of elements that were common to the regional and state pedestrian plans. These include:

- Public Participation
- Vision, Goals & Objectives
- Existing Conditions Analysis, Inventory & Performance Measures
- Implementation Strategies
    - Facilities & Capital Investment:
      - Policies & Design Standards
      - Regionally-Significant Pedestrian Links
    - Education & Enforcement
    - Regional Growth Policies/Incentives
    - Funding Sources
    - Monitoring Progress

The common purpose of these plans is providing leadership within the region or state in establishing the significance of walking as a mode of travel, setting policies and design standards to support it, and identifying regionally-significant pedestrian links and priority corridors. None of the plans provide a comprehensive list of capital projects for the region, which is better accomplished through individual city and county pedestrian plans due to the smaller geographic areas that they cover.

Perhaps the most intriguing of the plans surveyed is that of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), which covers the Phoenix area. Latent demand for pedestrian trips was modeled over approximately 1,000 miles of major roadways in the MAG region. Pedestrian activity districts were then classified based on this latent demand for pedestrian trips. Next, a pedestrian level of service classification system was developed based on roadside conditions, average daily traffic, percent of truck traffic, and posted speed limit. (This pedestrian LOS classification system could be improved upon by including intersection characteristics, which generally have a greater effect on pedestrian safety than roadside conditions unless sidewalks are simply missing on wide or heavily trafficked roads.) Finally, the established pedestrian district types ("district" area, "campus," "community" and "neighborhood") were assigned a desired level of service based on their pedestrian latent demand.

The San Francisco Bay Area has a growing need for such analysis as development density increases around transit nodes. Such development will create pressure to increase the capacity of intersections to maintain or improve auto LOS. Designating pedestrian activity districts with associated performance measures like pedestrian LOS is an example of how pedestrian planning could work as a component of multimodal planning to achieve regional goals.

Summary and Next Steps

This memorandum has assessed the need for regional pedestrian planning by providing an overview of regional policies related to pedestrians, defining regionally significant pedestrian facilities, and surveying pedestrian plans from other regions. It provides a basis for how pedestrian issues of regional significance are relevant to regional transportation planning. The subsequent memos in this series will each examine a specific topic that would comprise a chapter of a regional pedestrian plan: existing conditions, policies, facilities and programs, and implementation. These six memos will be synthesized as a white paper that explains the need for regional pedestrian planning, provides an outline for such a plan, and suggests approaches to future planning.