

7. GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENTS, ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW, AND CITYWIDE COORDINATION

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENTS, ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW, AND CITYWIDE COORDINATION GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal:

Adopt Bicycle-Friendly Practices and Policies

Objective:

Integrate consideration of bicycle travel into all roadway planning, design and construction.

INTRODUCTION

The General Plan is a comprehensive planning document that guides City decision-making on land use issues for both public and private property. San Francisco's General Plan contains the following major elements: air quality, arts, commerce and industry, community facilities, community safety, environmental protection, housing, recreational and open space, transportation and urban design. The General Plan also contains 11 Area Plans, which focus on specific geographic regions within the City.

In conjunction with the completion and adoption of this Bicycle Plan, a number of amendments are proposed to San Francisco's General Plan, particularly the Transportation Element and the Area Plans that currently contain sections on bicycling, in order to consistently achieve the goals of the San Francisco General Plan and the 2009 Bicycle Plan. The proposed amendments to the San Francisco General Plan include specific mention of and reference to the 2009 Bicycle Plan. This chapter recommends that consideration be given to updating the San Francisco General Plan, including its individual Elements and Area Plans, if it is deemed appropriate, when considering making updates and revisions to the 2009 Bicycle Plan and bicycle route network proposed in the Bicycle Plan.

This chapter also recommends that the “Planning Department’s Guidelines for Environmental Review: Transportation Impacts” be amended to ensure impacts of new projects consider bicycles and that City transportation or development studies account for bicycles. Finally, this chapter recommends coordination among public agencies in the planning of future bikeways.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS TO THE TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN

Action 7.1

Reference the 2009 Bicycle Plan in the San Francisco General Plan and consider amending sections of the General Plan that are relevant to bicycling, including the Transportation Element and relevant Area Plans, according to the goals of the 2009 Bicycle Plan.

Action 7.2

Ensure adequate and appropriate environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act for the Bicycle Plan and all discretionary actions under the Bicycle Plan that may have a direct or indirect physical environmental impact.

Action 7.3

Work with the Planning Department to coordinate updates to the General Plan, if necessary, as subsequent amendments and updates to the Bicycle Plan and bicycle route network occur.

The Transportation Element of the General Plan contains sections dealing with important components of the local and regional transportation system. Section 7 deals with Bicycle Transportation. The introduction to this section states:

The bicycle is a desirable alternative to the automobile as a means of urban transportation in San Francisco. It can successfully be used for most transportation needs, including commuting, shopping, errands and recreation. Active encouragement of bicycle use as an alternative to automobile use, whenever possible, is essential in light of the continually increasing traffic congestion caused by motorized vehicles which aggravates air pollution, increases noise levels and consumes valuable urban space. The bicycle is a practical and economical transportation alternative that produces no emissions or noise. In addition, each bicycle user enjoys health benefits through increased physical activity.

To enable a large number of San Franciscans to use the bicycle as a transportation option, several significant needs must be met. The needs include, among others, safe and comfortable space on the roadway for bicyclists, a properly signed Bicycle Route Network that directs bicyclists to major destinations, safe and secure bicycle parking and education of both bicyclists and motorists about the safe sharing of the roadways.

The Transportation Element was last amended and adopted in 1995. This amendment process was concurrent with the 1997 Bicycle Plan planning process and many of the 1997 Bicycle Plan's recommendations for changes to the Transportation Element were incorporated during the General Plan amendment process. However, these amendments did not include specific mention of, or reference to, the Bicycle Plan as an adopted complementary component of the City's General Plan. Based upon the 1997 Bicycle Plan, a map of the bicycle route network was included and designated within the San Francisco General Plan's Transportation Element. As changes to the bicycle route network occur, periodic updates of the Bicycle Route Network Map within the San Francisco General Plan should occur.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS TO OTHER AREA PLANS

Action 7.4

Work with the Planning Department to ensure that all current and proposed Area Plans' objectives and policies on balance are consistent with the goals of the San Francisco Bicycle Plan. Whenever updates or revisions are considered to existing Area Plans, especially those that do not now contain sections on bicycling, these Area Plans should include sections on bicycling consistent with the goals of the Bicycle Plan.

While the Downtown Area Plan already contains a section that deals specifically with bicycling, several of the General Plan's Area Plans do not now address bicycling or do not address it fully. When undertaking updates or revisions to existing Area Plans (including planning efforts meant to supplement or replace existing Area Plans), or when adopting new Area Plans, the Planning Department should ensure that their goals and objectives are generally consistent with the goals and objectives of the San Francisco Bicycle Plan and include sections on bicycling as appropriate.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS TO GUIDELINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS

Action 7.5

Work with the Planning Department as transportation impact guidelines are updated to ensure impacts of new projects consider bicycles.

The "Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for Environmental Review," published by the Planning Department for consultants who are conducting transportation analyses for both Environmental Impact Reports and Negative Declarations, should be amended. The Guidelines were last updated in 2002 and cite the 1997 Bicycle Plan as a source. The Guidelines include Section E, Bicycle Impacts in the Transportation Impact Analysis portion of the Study Report Preparation Guidelines:

The existence of current or future bicycle facilities in the area should be identified from the San Francisco Bicycle Plan and by consultation with the Department of Parking and Traffic. The analysis should examine possible impacts on bicycle traffic on the streets in the vicinity of the project. This would include potential conflicts between auto, truck and bus traffic serving the project during loading and unloading, and potential conflicts due to turning movements across bicycle lanes or routes. Potential barriers or hazards to safe bicycle operations near the project should also be identified. Other conditions that may have a notable negative or positive impact on use, such as bicycle parking or the provision of shower facilities, should also be stated. Details regarding the location and access to any bicycle facilities included in the project should be described in the textual discussion and clearly shown on the site plan included in the background transportation report. The information provided needs to be sufficient to ascertain whether the proposed bicycle facilities would be secure and practical for bicyclists to use.

If sufficient bicycle traffic exists or is anticipated on a study area street, it may be necessary to include a quantitative analysis of the impacts using the methodology in the 2000 Highway Capacity Manual or some similar technique.

The Guidelines state that if “sufficient bicycle traffic exists or is anticipated on a study area street, it may be necessary to include a quantitative analysis of the impacts...” The Guidelines should be updated to specifically define “sufficient bicycle traffic,” using a quantifiable standard.

The Guidelines require that a Transportation Impact Report be prepared if a proposed project has elements that have the potential to adversely affect bicycle safety or the adequacy of nearby bicycle facilities.

The Transportation Impact Report Project Description Section must include:

- Identification of the location, number and type of bicycle parking spaces provided and Illustration of all designated bicycle routes in the study area

The Transportation Impact Report Project Setting Section must include:

- Illustration of all designated bicycle routes in the study area

- Description of existing treatments for bicycles and any proposed treatments for bicycle routes, as well as general characterization of the extent of bicycle usage

The Transportation Impact Report Transportation Impact Analysis Section must include:

- Comparison of the amount of parking to be provided for bicycles with Code requirements, as well as the access to, safe and secure character of, and provisions for associated showers and lockers for all bicycle parking spaces whenever required or provided
- Possible impacts on bicycle traffic on the streets in the vicinity of the project, including potential conflicts between auto, truck and bus traffic serving the project during loading and unloading; potential conflicts due to turning movements across bicycle lanes or routes; identification of potential barriers or hazards to safe bicycle operations near the project and other conditions that may have a notable negative or positive impact on use, such as bicycle parking or the provision of shower facilities

Action 7.6

When City transportation or development studies include non-automated traffic counts, work with the responsible San Francisco agencies to collect appropriate bicycle counts, inventories of existing bicycle parking within a two-block radius of the study site and the project's potential impacts on any existing or proposed bikeways.

The City's "Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for Environmental Review" should be amended to include the following items where appropriate:

- All non-automated traffic counts conducted as part of the study should include bicycle counts
- An inventory of existing bicycle parking must be conducted within a two-block radius of the study site
- The project's potential impacts on any existing or proposed bikeways must be evaluated

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) reviews transportation impact analysis reports prepared as part of environmental review documents. Proposed street changes that could result from new development, including parking modifications and changes to roadway configurations, such as the addition or elimination of turn lanes at a specific intersection, and impacts on

the bicycle route network, are assessed by the SFMTA as part of the review process. The impacts of street changes are specifically addressed and recommendations are often made to improve conditions for all travel modes including bicycling. The review of proposed street changes includes review of:

- Bicycle parking supply and demand
- Provision of bicycle parking as required under the Planning Code
- Potential conflicts between bicyclists and other modes of transportation including cars, transit and trucks that are loading or unloading freight
- Consistency with the General Plan and Bicycle Plan
- Impacts on the existing bicycle route network
- Safety of bicycle operations based on the proposed street changes' conformity to accepted design standards and guidelines

RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION CODE AMENDMENTS

This section deals with portions of the San Francisco Transportation Code (SFTC) that relate specifically to the bicycle route network. Among these items, the ones of most immediate and lasting importance to bicyclists deal with the planning, design, and maintenance of roadways.

LEGISLATION

Traffic law is regulated by the California Vehicle Code (CVC). Cities and counties may not regulate traffic on their streets, except where they are expressly authorized to do so by the CVC. As part of this regulation, bicycles are generally required to obey the same rules of the road as motor vehicles. To the extent that San Francisco is allowed to regulate bicycle traffic, it does so through the SFTC.

SAN FRANCISCO TRANSPORTATION CODE

To provide clear, useful and uniform regulation with simple administrative procedures to implement policies, portions of the SFTC should be amended¹.

¹ Several sources offer guidance for this examination, such as the Model Traffic Ordinance (MTO) of the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances (NCUTLO) and the model ordinance published by the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers (NIMLO), an association of city and county attorneys. California Senate Concurrent Resolution 47 of 1973 created a Statewide Bicycle Committee – often referred to as the SCR 47 Committee – to review California bicycle law and recommend revisions, many of which were subsequently adopted. This committee's report includes a Model Bicycle Ordinance (MBO) – also called a Uniform Bicycle Ordinance (UBO) – for the guidance of local jurisdictions. This ordinance is patterned after and is intended to supplement the League of California Cities' Uniform Traffic Ordinance.

SFTC Division II, Section 201, Procedures for Implementing Parking and Traffic Controls, (added by SFMTA Board Resolution 08-120, July 2008) specifies that certain changes related to bicycling may not be implemented without action by the SFMTA Board of Directors².

BICYCLING ON SIDEWALKS

Bicycling on the sidewalk is generally inappropriate, as the Caltrans HDM indicates¹. Only under the following special considerations should sidewalk bikeways be considered:

- (a) To provide bikeway continuity along high speed or heavily traveled roadways having inadequate space for bicyclists and uninterrupted by driveways and intersections for long distances
- (b) On long, narrow bridges. In such cases, ramps should be installed at the sidewalk approaches. If approach bikeways are two-way, sidewalk facilities should also be two-way

To determine the feasibility of allowing bicycling on sidewalks, studies will be necessary and should be conducted on a case-by-case basis. If such a review recommended a location for sidewalk bicycle riding, an amendment to the existing San Francisco codes prohibiting sidewalk bicycle riding would be required. In the absence of a legislative change, bicyclists over the age of 13 years are legally required to dismount when traveling on a sidewalk. Children under the age of 13 are legally allowed to ride their bicycles along sidewalks, but should always exercise due care.

² SFTC Division II, Section 201c, SFMTA Board of Directors' Action Required. The following Parking and traffic measures may not be implemented without prior approval of the SFMTA Board of Directors, taking into consideration the recommendation of the City Traffic Engineer:

- (4) Install or remove bicycle lanes and regulate the location and use of motor vehicles and bicycles with respect to each other
- (5) Implement the following changes within the bicycle route network, as defined in the most recent update of the Transportation Element of the San Francisco General Plan:
 - (A) The narrowing of right-hand travel lanes with parking, including turn lanes to less than 22 feet or the narrowing of right-hand travel lanes without parking, including turn lanes to less than 14 feet
 - (B) The narrowing or elimination of any bicycle lanes, bicycle paths or bicycle routes
 - (C) The addition of traffic lanes, except where such lanes consist of left-turn or right-turn pockets
 - (D) Subsections (c)(5)(A) through (c)(5)(C) shall not apply to construction zones involving temporary changes to lane widths or lane configurations

COORDINATION WITH OTHER JURISDICTIONS WITHIN SAN FRANCISCO

Action 7.7

Work with public agencies with jurisdictions or rights of way within San Francisco to ensure coordination of any proposed bicycle facilities.

The SFMTA Bicycle Program meets as necessary with staff of other agencies that have jurisdiction or rights of way within San Francisco or make funding decisions related to such facilities to discuss proposed bicycle plans and facilities within San Francisco. These agencies include the Association of Bay Area Governments (San Francisco Bay Trail), the California Department of Transportation, the Caltrain Joint Powers Board, City College of San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Port of San Francisco, the Presidio Trust, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, San Francisco State University, the San Francisco Unified School District and the University of California. The SFMTA Bicycle Program also meets as necessary with various non-profit groups working on bicycle planning issues in San Francisco.

The SFMTA Bicycle Program, as the City's liaison to other agencies on San Francisco bicycle planning, projects and programs, should continue to meet with these agencies' staff members. The staff of these other agencies should include SFMTA Bicycle Program staff in all discussions and review of any proposed bicycle projects in San Francisco.

i California Highway Design Manual can be viewed online at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/oppd/hdm/hdmtoc.htm>.