

SOUTH COAST LIVABLE COMMUNITIES TRANSPORTATION PLATFORM

MARCH 2004



The mission of the South Coast Livable Communities is to promote and support livable communities on the South Coast of Santa Barbara County through sound planning, good design, consistent implementation, and broad-based, informed public participation and civic engagement. South Coast Livable Communities is a broad coalition of individuals who are active in a variety of South Coast community-based organizations, businesses and government agencies.

This Transportation Platform has been compiled by Ralph Fertig, Rachel Grossman, Nancy Hancock, Dennis Allen, Grant House, Vijaya Jammalamadaka, Paul Nay, Alex Pujo, Eva Inbar, and Dennis Story.

Introduction

The people of the South Coast are entrusted with a place of rare natural beauty. We all know it is a privilege to live here, and with that privilege comes a responsibility. How do we preserve this unique place for our children and grandchildren? How do we meet the challenges of high housing costs, traffic congestion and population pressures?

South Coast Livable Communities was created to preserve and enhance the social, environmental, and economic health of our region. It holds as a principle that land use and transportation planning must be integrated. It holds that development should be organized in the form of compact communities with a range of transportation options. By focusing the forces of development inward rather than allowing them to spread outward, we will enable people to walk more and drive less. Older people, children, the poor, and the handicapped will gain in independent mobility and quality of life. Indeed, all of us stand to gain by investing in walkable communities that are rich in social interaction and economic activity. We tread more gently on the environment and our quality of life improves.

Taken together, this transportation platform recommends guidelines and policy direction for Goleta, Santa Barbara, Carpinteria and the surrounding communities with the goal of creating more walkable and livable places. It contains the following chapters:



Santa Barbara's "Beachway" offers commuters, visitors, and residents a place to travel and enjoy the waterfront.



South Coast farmers' markets bring people together nearly every day.

- Land Use and Transportation
- Street Design
- Pedestrian Design
- Bicycling
- Automobile Use
- Parking
- Local Public Transportation
- Regional Transportation
- Appendix: Glossary and Online Resources

Land Use and Transportation

Introduction

The way we use our land and the modes of transportation we choose affect our quality of life. Urban sprawl and the increasing time spent in the private automobile has resulted in a myriad of societal ills such as poor air quality, obesity, isolation of children and elderly. Reducing dependence on the private auto for everyday trips and enhancing the use of local transit service, bicycles and walking require changes in current land use patterns. Land use policies should support transit-, bicycle- and pedestrian-oriented development while not excluding the automobile. This can be done by encouraging, within existing urban areas, compact, transit-oriented developments within easy walking distance of transit stops, and can include a mix of residences, schools, employment and shopping opportunities. See also the Parking section.



Casa de Las Fuentes brings affordable downtown housing to downtown workers.

Recommendations

Appropriate Location: Encourage infill, redevelopment and reuse of vacant or underused parcels within an adopted Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). UGBs delineate where development ends and open space begins. They are an effective way to reduce sprawl, preserve agriculture, and environmentally sensitive resources.

Density: Rezone land within a quarter mile of major transit corridors to accommodate appropriately designed, neighborhood-compatible, compact development. Compact development can also facilitate the preservation of historical and environmental resources and provision of public spaces.

Mixed Use Development: Encourage development that brings residences, shops, restaurants, schools, parks and employment opportunities within walking distance of each other and to transit stops in order to reduce the need for single occupancy vehicular trips.



The design of Isla Vista encourages trips by foot and bicycle.

Connections: Require street patterns that connect with one another to reduce driving distances. Encourage open, rather than gated communities. Provide direct, safe and friendly pedestrian and bike path connections to transit stops, schools, parks and employment. Provide streets that have sidewalks, are narrow, well-lit and landscaped, and are designed to allow automobiles, buses, bicycles and pedestrians to move safely and efficiently.

Summary

Well-designed communities with transit oriented development reduce dependence on the automobile, facilitate transit use, bicycling and walking, and also have strong market appeal for people from all walks of life, incomes and mobility levels.

Street Design

Introduction

Street design includes traffic lanes, curbside parking, bike lanes, crosswalks, sidewalks, and beautification. Good street design encourages walking and biking while getting cars to their destinations faster at a slower speed. Community benefits include universal access, enhancement of quality of life, improved safety, and vibrant commercial activity. The overarching goal is to balance the needs of all users.

Recommendations

Mobility plans: Design Mobility Plans for identified neighborhoods.

Mend sprawl: When possible, mend the design restrictions inherent in sprawl, strip, cul-de-sac, and walled-off development patterns that harm connectivity, isolate neighborhoods, separate activities, and support auto dependency.

Street safety: Provide safe and efficient choices of travel by the use of “traffic calming” tools to manage motorized traffic. These tools include alteration of street width and lane surface material, and installation of safety zones, mini circles, roundabouts, and street-scape beautification. Use projecting sidewalk sections that narrow the street at pedestrian crossings (“bulb-outs”) to slow traffic, add interest to street layout, and improve safety.

Street dimensions: Where feasible, construct narrower residential streets, and narrow the traffic lanes of arterial streets. Widen bike lanes. Emphasize short city blocks.

Intersections: Where needed, correct intersection design so lanes meet at 90°. Plan for tight corner radii. Increase use of traffic circles and roundabouts at intersections to slow traffic but keep it flowing steadily.

Paving materials: Change paving materials of parking areas and color of “keep clear” lanes for beautification and traffic efficiency.

Bus stops: Locate stops to provide pedestrian access to businesses, services and other destinations. Design them for convenience and provide appropriate signs.

Buffer strips: Wherever possible, place planting strips between traffic zones and sidewalks.

Street amenities: Install street furniture (benches, planters, sitting walls, newsstands, drinking fountains, lighting fixtures, bike racks, etc.), especially as a buffer between traffic and pedestrian walkways. Provide changing exhibits of public art such as sculpture. Encourage sidewalk cafés.

Connections: Install paths, alleys and lanes to link streets together for recreational travel and non-car trips to business areas. Connect cul-de-sacs with sidewalks for pedestrian and bicycle travel. Require all developments to have pedestrian routes connecting points within the development and to areas outside it. Discourage gated communities.

Mid-block crossings: Provide mid-block crossings where appropriate to encourage walking and provide safety.

Summary

Street design can create a self-enforcing mechanism for slowing traffic and reducing accidents.



Mid-block crosswalks are made safer with on-demand traffic signals.

Pedestrian Design

Introduction

Walking is the most basic, affordable, and environmentally friendly form of transportation. It is healthy for the individual, treads lightly on the urban infrastructure, and gives ample opportunity for social interaction.

Pedestrians provide the reason for design and use of commercial and public space. People on foot promote community within each neighborhood. All livable communities are walkable.

Recommendations

Pedestrian master plans: Craft pedestrian master plans within each jurisdiction. Provide a network of convenient sidewalks, paths and crossings that lead to destinations and accommodate people of all ages and abilities. Ensure that they become an integral part of all relevant projects.

Existing policies and ordinances: Review current codes, zoning, and practices so they support the goals of local Pedestrian Plans.

Development: Balance the needs of pedestrians and motorists. Provide public spaces with amenities like benches, water fountains, trees, lighting, and kiosks. Integrate them with dining, shopping, entertainment, and cultural activities. Design automobile parking and travel so they don't impede pedestrian traffic.

Promotion: Encourage governments, civic groups, and neighborhood groups to lead walks and promote all pedestrian activities.



Wide sidewalks offer space for sitting, dining, and strolling in groups.



The Paseo Nuevo shopping center fills two city blocks in downtown Santa Barbara.

Review process: Create a process to monitor pedestrian program effectiveness in each jurisdiction. Use public input to prioritize programs and maintenance.

Safe routes to schools: Establish, expand and promote Safe Routes to School activities such as: the "walking bus", improvements at intersections for traffic calming and the "Missing Link" sidewalk program.

Summary

Because pedestrians are essential for urban social, cultural, and economic vitality, they must be considered in plans for all community projects and programs.

Bicycling

Introduction

Bicycling is a basic mode of transportation enjoyed by thousands on the Santa Barbara South Coast. Like walking, it provides exercise and the convenience of point-to-point travel—but it's three times faster and more energy-efficient. If more people simply chose to bicycle within our region, today's traffic congestion, noise, roadway expenses, and oil consumption would be reduced.

Bicycling is not for every person or trip, but it's fine for half of most people's trips—those under five miles—and ideal for longer trips that combine bicycling with bus, vanpool and train. Access to better bicycling conditions will level the playing field of transportation, provide social equity, and conserve our resources.



El Colegio bikepath at UCSB provides a convenient and popular route to campus.

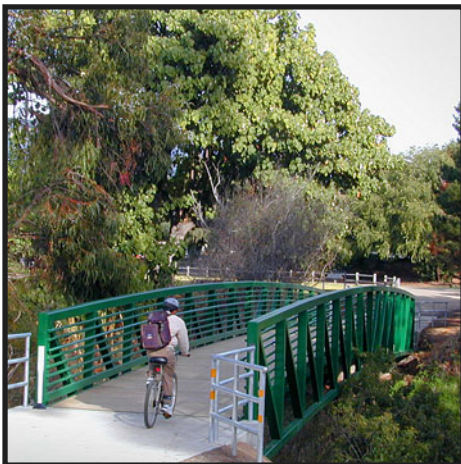
Recommended Policies

Trip conditions: Provide and maintain bike paths or bike lanes that offer a network of convenient connections to popular destinations.

Destination accommodations: Provide appropriate short-term and long-term facilities at destinations for people who bicycle. This includes bike racks, bike lockers, dedicated storerooms, and showers for employees.

Education: Offer a formal bicycling education program for both children and adults who bicycle. It will provide the knowledge and confidence required for years of safe bicycling and self-sufficient transportation.

Laws and ordinances: Enforce laws that pertain to safe bicycling. Educate motorists and bicyclists about the applicability of the California Vehicle Code and local ordinances.



Bicycle commuting in Goleta was improved when this new bridge was installed on the Maria Ygancia path.

Promotion: Craft community bicycle master plans and circulation elements that promote bicycling as a normal, healthy, responsible, and convenient means of travel. Provide funding to implement these plans and ensure that they become part of all development and capital improvement projects.

Mobility data: Monitor on a periodic basis how frequently people use modes of travel. Track mode, date, distance and purpose for each trip.

Summary

Bicycling provides healthy travel at low public and personal cost, along with unchallenged energy efficiency. Bicycling can move us closer to a healthier, more livable, more sustainable, more human community.

Automobile Use

Introduction

Private vehicle use offers flexibility, privacy, weather protection, ability to carry personal goods and people with mobility problems (including elderly and the very young) and access to far away places. However, the universal and unrestricted use of automobiles for all daily activities, anywhere and everywhere, creates an environment that limits the quality of life for everyone, and the resulting congestion impairs the use of road based alternatives

Recommendations

Transportation Demand Management programs:

Establish, expand and promote TDM programs that create incentives and disincentives to discourage the use of Single Occupant Vehicles during peak hours (e.g. carpooling, vanpooling, free bus passes, etc.).

Car-share programs: Encourage and facilitate the development of Car-Share programs, which allow a number of people to share a single vehicle, and are parked in pods near members work or residence.

Responsible vehicles: Give preferential treatment to smaller, quieter, and less-polluting vehicles (e.g. hybrid or electric cars, buses, trucks, and other vehicles).

Local trips: Encourage the use of local roads as an alternative to freeways for short, local trips.

Vehicle rental: Encourage the development of rental businesses for specialty vehicles like trucks and vans.

Specialized transit: Encourage the use of cabs, vans, taxis, hotel shuttles, senior housing shuttles, school buses, employer shuttles, and other forms of specialized transit.

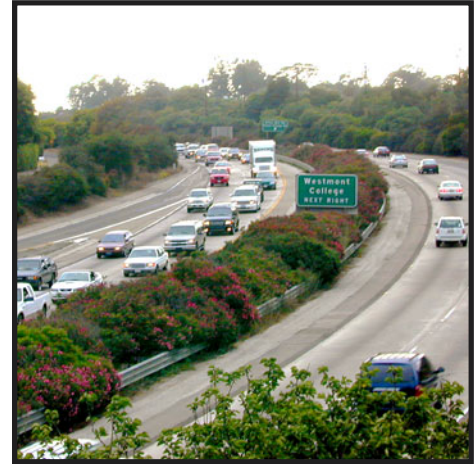
Congestion pricing: Develop a plan that would charge a fee for driving at congested times of the day.

Employee cash-out: Encourage employers to offer employees a cash-out for leaving their home, and riding transit, or a cash equivalent.

Viable alternatives. Ensure that no one is compelled to drive due to a lack of viable alternatives.

Summary

There are a myriad of solutions to people's mobility needs. By using the "appropriate" mode, congestion and pollution are minimized, resulting in an improved quality of life for everyone.



Highway 101 is the main artery for South Coast motorists.

Parking

Introduction

Few policies affect the character of a development as much as parking regulations. Parking requirements and design determine the shape of streets, setbacks and buildings, and they greatly influence human behavior.

Local planning agencies should endorse the concept of managing the supply of automobile parking as a means to support and promote the use of alternative transportation modes and efficient land use. It is also important to consider the type of parking versus the amount of parking provided. The amount of parking required should vary by land use type and location.

A key strategy for creating attractive higher density neighborhoods and discouraging single occupancy vehicle use is to keep the amount of land devoted to parking to a minimum.

Regulating parking supply is probably the most cost-effective action a community can take to increase the use of alternative transportation.

Recommendations

Curbside parking: Encourage curbside parking because it offers many benefits: it forms a protective barrier that shields pedestrians from moving traffic; it brings pedestrian activity to the sidewalk; and it accommodates the maximum number of vehicles in the smallest paved area. It is considered a “friction factor” that slows down traffic. However, it can also be unsightly, and dangerous to bicyclists. Curbside parking is an important community resource that must be regulated and monitored to avoid abuse by private parties.

Public lots and structures: Allocate parking space efficiently by encouraging public parking over restricted use parking because vehicles, as they come and go, share a common space.

Restricted use parking lots: Discourage the allocation of parking to specific users because spaces are vacant most of the time.



Car parking (entrance in center) is integrated into the Paseo Nuevo stores.



Curbside parking in Carpinteria features bulb-outs that allow sidewalk dining.

Personalized parking: Minimize dedication of parking spaces to particular vehicle owners (“John Smith” or “Employee of the Month”), whereby others cannot use those spaces and overall efficiency is reduced.

Parking requirements: Review parking requirements with respect to location and demand. Downtown locations are completely different from distant foothills where every trip is, by necessity, a car trip.

Off-street parking: Offer incentives to limit off-street parking to one space per dwelling in high density developments. Provide shared, non-resident parking.

On-street parking: Allow on-street parking where appropriate and useful as a traffic buffer. Allow a

Parking

portion, or all of the available on-street parking, to count toward the minimum parking required.

Overparking: Discourage developers from providing more parking than required. Location and design of parking space should be carefully reviewed to minimize blight and disruption to pedestrian activity. Amend zoning regulations to reduce the number of parking spaces.

Commercial incentives: Allow substantial reductions in parking for commercial sites that have prepared trip reduction plans, like the “Car Share” program.

Conjunctive use: Encourage shared parking arrangements where neighboring activities have different peak use periods.

Peak-hour pricing: Provide for peak-hour pricing for use of parking spaces.

Parking location: Require surface parking to be located behind buildings, beneath buildings, or interior to the block.

Parking garages: Encourage first floor retail shops on the street sides of parking garages.

Alternative fueled vehicles: Encourage the use of hybrid and alternative fueled (e.g., electric, compressed natural gas) vehicles by providing free or reduced parking rates or preferential locations for them.

Permeable parking: Encourage permeable parking surfaces and grass-incorporated paving systems to reduce water run-off. Use filters and catch-basin inserts to mechanically trap coarse sediment and debris. Use bioswales to organically neutralize pollutants through use of plants and filters.

Parking air rights: Explore the use of air rights over parking lots for commercial and residential uses.

Summary

There are many strategies, both public and private, that can facilitate the reduction of space used to store vehicles during the 95% of the time they are not in use.



Diagonal parking in Montecito slows motorists and increases parking density.

Local Public Transportation

Introduction

The optimization of local transit service is an important component of a livable community. The Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD) can expand the usage of transit by adopting policies to make transit more convenient, timely, pleasant to use, and desirable to the community.

Recommendations

Schedule: Optimize the frequency of buses and strive to maintain a clock-face schedule on appropriate services to make transit more appealing and responsive to people's daily needs.

Routing: Promote the routing of bus service along major transportation corridors to provide citizens with an alternative to the private automobile. Strive to provide service connecting major areas of interest that is time-competitive with the automobile. Tailor routes to specific markets to improve efficiency of the bus system.

Bus allocation: Optimize the number of low emission vehicles on all routes and refrain from the use of 40-foot buses on neighborhood routes. Citizen feedback has shown that individuals prefer low emission vehicles that are generally quieter and less polluting. In addition, on neighborhood routes, area residents prefer less imposing, smaller vehicles.

Financial incentives: Encourage employers to subsidize bus passes for their employees and provide incentives (such as an extra vacation day) if employees use alternative transportation to commute to work.

Location and design of stops: For local, trunk and feeder service, attempts should be made to locate bus stops at least every two blocks in densely populated areas. For express service, stops should be minimized to speed travel, but located in such a way as to conveniently serve the largest number of individuals. Stops should be located in well-lit, pedestrian-friendly areas that provide a pleasant and safe atmosphere for passengers to wait for a bus, with amenities such as shelters, benches, trash receptacles, and bicycle lockers, news racks, coffee stands and convenience stores where feasible.

Public information: Signage should be uniform, easily recognizable, easy to read, and bilingual. The public should have access to bus schedule information through a variety of media including posted schedules, schedule books, MTD staff, and the MTD web site. Public meetings should be held any time a significant service change is proposed.

Local funding: Provide new, dedicated, local sources of transit funding. Continue local current sources of transit funding, and reauthorize Measure D in 2009 with a substantial amount of revenue dedicated to local transit.

Summary

The optimization of transit can result in improved convenience of alternative travel modes, increased individual health resulting from a more active lifestyle, improved air quality, decreased need for new roadways, less congestion on existing roadways, decreased need for automobile ownership, and a more connected community accessible to all.



MTD bike racks offer multi-modal travel.

Regional Transportation

Introduction

The South Coast is a small coastal plain isolated from neighboring communities. The area's pronounced jobs/housing imbalance has strained the limited transportation links connecting the South Coast with its neighbors. Tens of thousands of South Coast workers commute daily, most of them driving alone.

U.S. Highway 101, State Highway 154, and the rail line constitute the only links with more populous neighboring communities to the north and south. The underdevelopment of rail, transit and other alternatives have stretched the capacity of Highway 101 to its limits.

If Highway 101 is widened to 6 lanes between Milpas Street and Ventura, latent demand would quickly fill the added capacity and, as Caltrans has stated, 8 lanes would be necessary soon after completion. The additional vehicles would need to be accommodated at their destinations, requiring additional parking, wider streets and intersection improvements. Increased traffic on surface streets would make other modes of transportation (walking, bicycling) less safe, thus generating additional automobile use and environmental impacts.

Currently there is no commuter rail in the South Coast. Union Pacific, a private company, owns the track right-of-way from Moorpark north through our area. Amtrak, a federal agency, runs two daily trains from the south, and one from the north, between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo. These trains are not scheduled for commuters.



Amtrak's Surfliner trains stop in Goleta, Santa Barbara, and Carpinteria.

Recommendations

High occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes: If lanes are added to Highway 101, dedicate them for High Occupancy Vehicles during heavy use periods in order to encourage higher vehicle occupant loads.



The Clean Air Express bus service brings people from Buellton, Lompoc and Santa Maria to their South Coast jobs.

Commuter buses and vans: Expand availability of commuter buses and vans to eliminate some peak hour trips by private vehicles. Increase the frequency of service of Clean Air Express and Coastal Express. "Clean Air Express" is a subscription system for commuters from Lompoc, Santa Maria, and the Santa Ynez Valley to the South Coast. The Coastal Express is an express bus line from Oxnard and Ventura to Carpinteria, Santa Barbara and Goleta. Expand express bus service to North county, such as proposed MTD service to Santa Ynez Valley.

Metrolink service: Extend the Southland commuter rail agency, Metrolink, from Montalvo (near Oxnard) to Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, and Goleta. Local, regional and state authorities have expressed a willingness to serve our area if a workable plan is put together.

Regional Transportation

Coastal commuter rail: Explore other commuter rail solutions for Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, using the existing heavy rail owned by Union Pacific Railroad.

Intermodal connections: Improve connections between the Amtrak stations and the Santa Barbara airport. Create transfer centers in Goleta and Carpinteria between express and local systems. Identify other opportunities to develop this type of interface throughout the region to facilitate the integration of intercity and intra-city carriers.

Public Information: Provide information to the public about the true costs and benefits of different transportation systems, e.g., car versus transit and rail use.

Funding: Utilize existing funding and provide new sources of funding to operate an expanded fleet of commuter buses and vans, and rail. Reauthorize Measure D (due to expire in 2009) to establish a reliable, dedicated fund for transit and rail operations.

Innovative concepts: Encourage exploration of creative and innovative regional transportation concepts, such as Regional Ferry Service.

Summary

Regional cooperation is needed to accomplish the recommendations put forth here. SBCAG, our Regional Transportation Authority, is the agency in charge of funding and coordinating these programs and Ventura County is a necessary partner in this process.

Appendix

Glossary of Terms

Amtrak. Supported by private and government funding, Amtrak is a corporation whose mission is to offer safe and reliable passenger service. It provides heavy rail service in more than 500 communities, in 46 states, throughout a 22,000 mile track system

Arterial Streets. Streets designed to serve longer vehicle trips to, from, and within urban areas.

Bicycle Master Plan. A formal city or county document that describes existing bicycle use, and sets out goals and actions that the government plans to do to increase bicycling as a means of travel.

Bioswale. The use of native plant life to remove pollutants from runoff water.

California Vehicle Code. One of California's 29 sets of standards, requirements, and behavior under existing laws and regulations. It deals with motorized and non-motorized vehicles.

Caltrans. California Department of Transportation. The agency responsible for state-wide transportation programs in California, and the California Transportation Plan. Caltrans is the implementing agency for most state highway projects and for the intercity rail program.

Car Share. A program organized by a public or private entity for the purpose of sharing the use of a number of vehicles between a number of individuals. For a nominal fee, the individual is able to reserve use of a vehicle as needed (usually by the hour), without actually being responsible for the maintenance, storage, insurance, etc. of the vehicle.

Circulation Element. A plan adopted by a city or county to describe how people and goods should move.

Diesel Multiple Units (DMU) Service. These are self-powered rail cars that can pull additional rail cars. They have been successfully tested across the U.S., and at approx. \$2.9 million each, they carry 92 people seated (200 including standees). This offers an opportunity to put an independent commuter rail service together that could be administered by the regional participants.

Express service. Service designed to connect high volume destinations, using the freeway where possible.

Feeder service. Service designed to connect low-density areas, usually residential, with trunk or other lines. Feeder services are quite similar to local service.

HOV. High Occupancy Vehicle. A vehicle which is transporting more than one person. HOV lanes are segments of roadway which are restricted to HOV vehicles.

Infill. Development that focuses on the rehabilitation or redevelopment of land within an existing urban or town boundary rather than the conversion of previously undeveloped open space.

Local Service. Service connecting residential areas with central business districts.

Measure D. A 1/2 cent sales tax referendum approved by the voters in 1989 to fund local and regional transportation facility maintenance and improvements in Santa Barbara County. Measure D sunsets in the year 2009.

Appendix

Metrolink. A five-county, Southern California commuter rail service using existing heavy rail corridors. It is governed by representatives from regional transportation commissions.

SBCAG. Santa Barbara County Association of Governments. SBCAG is a thirteen-member board consisting of a city council representative from each of the eight cities in the county and the five members of the county Board of Supervisors. SBCAG is the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (state planning mandate) and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (federal planning mandate) for Santa Barbara County.

Sprawl. Dispersed development outside of compact urban and village centers along highways and in rural countryside.

Street Furniture. Items that add interest and convenience to the pedestrian street environment including benches, planters, newsstands, drinking fountains, lighting fixtures and bike racks.

TDM. Transportation Demand Management. The implementation of measures that encourage people to change their mode of travel, or not to make a trip at all, e.g., ridesharing, pricing incentives, parking management and telecommuting.

UGB. Urban Growth Boundary. Boundaries that delineate where development ends and open space begins.

Zoning. The public regulation of the use of land. It involves the adoption of ordinances that divide a community into various districts or zones. Each district allows certain uses of land within that zone, such as residential, commercial, or industrial. Typical zoning regulations address building height, bulk, lot area, setbacks, parking, signage, and density.

Online Resources

City of Santa Barbara's Circulation Element. This 1997 document describes means of moving people and goods throughout the City. At the page, scroll to the bottom and click on "Circulation Element." www.ci.santa-barbara.ca.us/departments/public_works/transportation/alternative

Coalition for Sustainable Transportation (COAST). This group promotes travel by bike, foot, train, and bus throughout Santa Barbara County. They have a program that promotes safe routes to school by walking and bicycling. www.coast-santabarbara.org

Livable Streets Coalition. They promote a balanced approach to transportation planning and people-friendly streets with equal access for people of all ages. www.livablestreetscoalition.org

Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition. This countywide organization has been promoting better and safer conditions for bicyclists since 1991. Their section on bike commuting is especially inspiring. www.sbbike.org

Santa Barbara Car Free. This site encourages visitors and residents of the County's South Coast to leave their cars and explore our area by foot, train, bike, bus or other non-automobile means. www.santabarbaracarfree.org

Traffic Solutions. The Santa Barbara County Association of Government's Traffic Solutions encourages workers to use alternatives to driving alone. trafficsolutions.info