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PROJECT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

3.1 COMMUNITY PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives for the El Camino Project stated below are the result of several rounds of review and discussion among members of the Advisory Committee. Refinements were also made following the two Community Workshops on June 1st, 2002 and September 30th, 2002, and the Council Study Session on July 15th, 2002.

Project Goals

The following “Primary Goals” are an adaptation of the “overall goal of this project” as stated in Palo Alto’s request for proposal and grant application to Caltrans. The “Other Goals” resulted from input received at the Community Workshops and through the Advisory Group.

Primary Goals

The overall goals of the future design are to change the character of El Camino Real from a highway designed primarily for motor vehicle mobility to:

- A fully multi-modal urban thoroughfare that maintains mobility and improves safety for transit, trucks, and autos, while improving safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- A center of community activity rather than a barrier between activities on either side of the street; and,
- An aesthetically attractive corridor that projects a positive image of Palo Alto.

Other Goals for the Future of El Camino Real

- Improve quality of life along El Camino Real while protecting its adjacent neighborhoods and districts;

- create economic benefits for both businesses and property owners along El Camino Real and for the City of Palo Alto; and,
- make positive changes soon with full development occurring incrementally over time.

Project Objectives

The following paragraphs define the objectives of the project and the ultimate redesign of El Camino Real.

Objective: Provide Equity and Balance for All Modes



Re-design El Camino Real to reduce potential conflicts between, and balance the needs of, all modes of transportation: local and sub-regional auto, transit, and truck traffic; bicyclists of varied skill levels; and all pedestrians (including seniors, school children, and the disabled).

Objective: Improve Safety for All Modes



Improve El Camino Real to be a safer place for all pedestrians (including seniors, school children, and the disabled), bicyclists, transit riders, buses, autos, and trucks.

Objective: Design the Street to Encourage Motorized Traffic to Drive at Safe Speeds and not Exceed the Speed Limit

Redesign El Camino Real to encourage traffic to drive at safe speeds that do not exceed the speed limit and to allow aesthetic and multi-modal improvements to El Camino Real.

This objective will be balanced with the need for traffic and transit to move efficiently along the length of the Corridor.

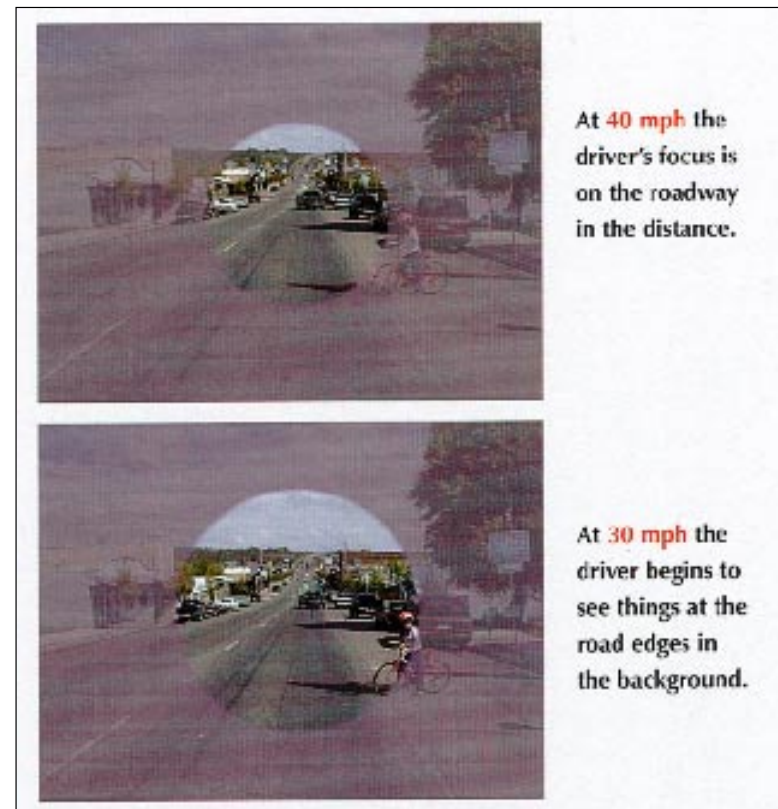


Figure 3.1: Drivers' awareness of others rises with lower speeds.

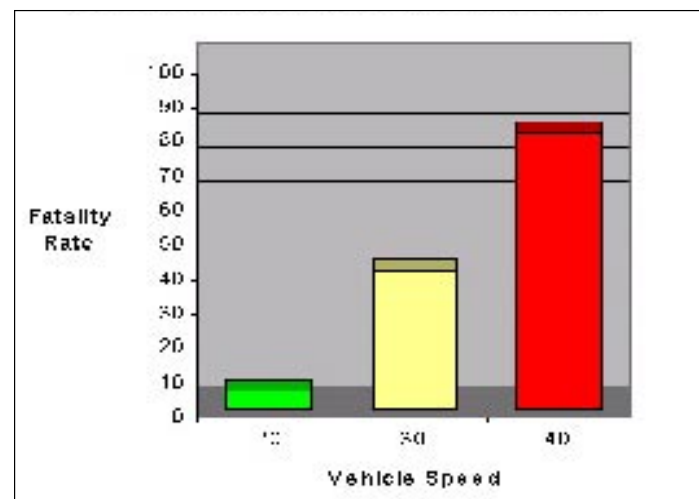


Figure 3.2: Pedestrian fatality rates significantly rise with vehicle speeds exceeding 30 mph.

Objective: Improve the Ability to Cross the Street



Make El Camino Real safer and more convenient for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross by improving intersections and possibly adding one mid-block crossing.

Objective: Create a Street and Streetscape that Complement Community Character



Redesign El Camino Real with a character and function that is more directly related to the existing and desired future character and function of the community along it.

Objective: Minimize Direct and Indirect Impacts on Quality of Life and the Environment

Minimize direct and indirect impacts on quality of life along the street and in adjacent neighborhoods and districts through the design, construction, and function of the new El Camino Real. Design the roadway and associated improvements so as to avoid the diversion of traffic into adjacent residential neighborhoods. In addition, reduce impacts on the environment, particularly relating to water and air quality and the solar “heat island” effects associated with larger areas of pavement in urban settings.

Objective: Improve Landscape Quality and Quantity



Increase the amount of land area within the r.o.w. for landscaping, and the number, health, and size of trees and other landscaping along the edges of the street and in the median, to achieve a shaded, tree-lined streetscape.

Objective: Improve Aesthetic Quality of Street Design

Improve the quality and condition of streetscape elements (lighting, benches, bus stops, etc.) and the paving of the roadway and sidewalks. Public art and new landscaping must also contribute to this objective.

Objective: Create Cost Effective Improvements



The improvements to El Camino Real will be of the highest quality feasible. Consider and compare both cost to benefit and initial cost to life-time cost.

Objective: Define Some Immediate Improvements

Identify a set of improvements that can be implemented as soon as possible to incrementally build towards the ultimate vision for the future of El Camino Real, particularly in regards to planting trees and making other landscape improvements in the near term.

3.2 CALTRANS PROJECT GOALS

A. Office for Community Planning

The El Camino project was financed to a large extent by a grant from the Demonstration Grant Program of the Office for Community Planning (OCP), a division of Caltrans established in the year 2000. OCP was “...established to address a statewide need for community-sensitive approaches to transportation decision-making.” The following is the Office of Community Planning’s Value Statement: “To promote and participate in community based planning that integrates land use, transportation and community values.” Some of the broader goals of the OCP include:

- Affect and change existing Caltrans processes and functions to reflect relevant community values.
- Develop partnerships to enhance community based transportation planning approaches at local, regional and state levels.
- Develop technical and program expertise in community based transportation planning and public participation techniques.
- Enhance Caltrans leadership role in planning by integrating community based transportation planning approaches in the department’s planning processes.
- Provide incentives that further support community-based transportation planning at all levels.
- Allow the development of transportation projects that enjoy public support and are easier to develop and deliver because of consistency with community values...”

In light of this statement, the community project goals outlined in the previous chapter stand as a good example for the expression of community values and the desire of communities to provide input at the local level that will impact the design of a key element within the neighborhood environment. In the past, this level of contribution and opportunity for participation has been beyond the reach of local communities.

The objectives of the OCP, as stated above, and the desire of people to influence and partake in the design of urban highway facilities, therefore, point in the same direction. However, as witnessed by this project, “affecting change in existing Caltrans processes” is a step that goes well beyond that of establishing the OCP and requires the involvement of all Caltrans divisions (*also see Chapter 9: Lessons Learned*).

B. Director’s Policy

In November of 2001, Jeff Morales, Director of the Department of Transportation, published Director’s Policy #22, entitled “Context Sensitive Design Solutions” (*for full policy document, see Appendix*), applicable to “All employees and others involved in the planning, development, construction maintenance, and operation of State transportation and support facilities.” In summary, the policy emphasizes the importance of solutions that use “innovative and inclusive approaches that integrate and balance community aesthetic, historic, and environmental values with transportation safety, maintenance, and performance goals.” It also outlines for all Caltrans employees their share of responsibility in employing the concept of Context Sensitive Design to their work in designing, constructing, maintaining, and operating the State transportation system.

The Director’s Policy is directly applicable to El Camino based on the street’s particular shortcomings as a main street, its location at the heart of several neighborhoods, and the fact that the community has expressed clear goals for improvements of the street. The project can, therefore, serve as an excellent example for the implementation of Context Sensitive Design, as well as the need for its application at all levels of responsibility within the Caltrans organization.

C. Shared Multi-modal Goals

Making El Camino a street that serves not only vehicular traffic but also accommodates the needs of transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists, is an expressed goal of the Palo Alto’s Comprehensive Plan and was emphasized within the goal setting process for this project. In addition, Caltrans has begun to formulate and publicly express goals for its transportation facilities that include multi-modal goals. Following are a few examples of such goals.

In March of 2001, Caltrans issued the Deputy Directive: “Accommodating Non-Motorized Travel.” The Directive states: “The Department fully considers the needs of non-motorized travelers (including pedestrians, bicyclists, and persons with disabilities) in all programming, planning, maintenance, construction, operations and project development activities and products. This includes incorporation of the best available standards in all of the Departments practices. The

Department adopts the best practice concepts in the US DOT Policy Statement on Integrating Bicycling and Walking into Transportation Infrastructure.”

In addition, Caltrans recently completed the “2025 California Transportation Plan,” which sets broad goals for the transportation system in the State of California. Each general goal includes several strategies for implementation, several of which are consistent with goals and objectives generated for this project. The following are key applicable goals and strategies from the “2025 California Transportation Plan” :

Goal 1 - Enhance Public Safety and Security

Consider the safety needs of bicyclists and pedestrians, and ensure educational programs include components focusing on bicyclists and pedestrian safety.

Goal 3 - Improve Mobility and Accessibility

Improve connectivity among all modes to help mobility and accessibility, and improve balanced use of the system, and

Integrate bicycle and walking facilities into transportation, design, and circulation plans.

The document also contains several policies that are applicable to this study:

Policy 3 - Develop, manage, and operate an efficient, interconnected, and inter-modal transportation system. People, goods, services, and information must travel by the most efficient means possible to foster economic prosperity. Different modes of travel should interconnect seamlessly to allow convenient and efficient movement between modes.

Policy 5 - Enhance system capacity and provide viable transportation choices. Some key strategies for accommodating increased demand are developing new facilities and expanding existing ones, promoting alternative fuel vehicles, and improving operational characteristics and system management practices.

Finally, to quote the Caltrans’ Director’s introduction to the July 2002, “Main Streets: Flexibility in Design and Operations” booklet: “Caltrans remains committed to the notion that people live, work and play in the communities through which our facilities pass. It is our duty, by recognizing the needs of both non-motorized and motorized modes of transportation, to assure that living space is good space in which to live. We are committed to full

cooperation with the citizens and elected officials of those communities to find transportation solutions that meet both our duty to protect the lives and mobility of travelers, as well as making main streets a good place to be.”

