

# POLICY TOPIC PAPER 4.0: COMPLETE STREETS



## BACKGROUND

Complete streets are streets that are designed for safe and accessible use by all users and all modes of transportation. A well-designed complete street acknowledges that transportation may include not only vehicles, but also pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit, and that these streets will be traveled by individuals of all ages with a wide variety of needs, destinations, and abilities.

The State of California passed the Complete Streets Act in 2008, requiring cities and counties to include complete streets policies when making significant revisions to the circulation element of their general plan. The Act acknowledges that the specifics of such policies should accommodate local context and priorities, and therefore does not contain a rigid regulatory format. The act establishes a mandate to plan for a multimodal transportation system “that meets the needs of all users ... in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context,” allowing flexibility and local control of policymaking and design.<sup>1</sup>

*For a more thorough analysis of transit services in Elk Grove, refer to the Policy Topic Paper 5.0: Fixed Transit.*

The City of Elk Grove adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2013, which contains policies to reduce the demand for personal motor vehicle travel for local trips, provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle travel, and establish an employee incentive program to encourage the use of transportation alternatives.

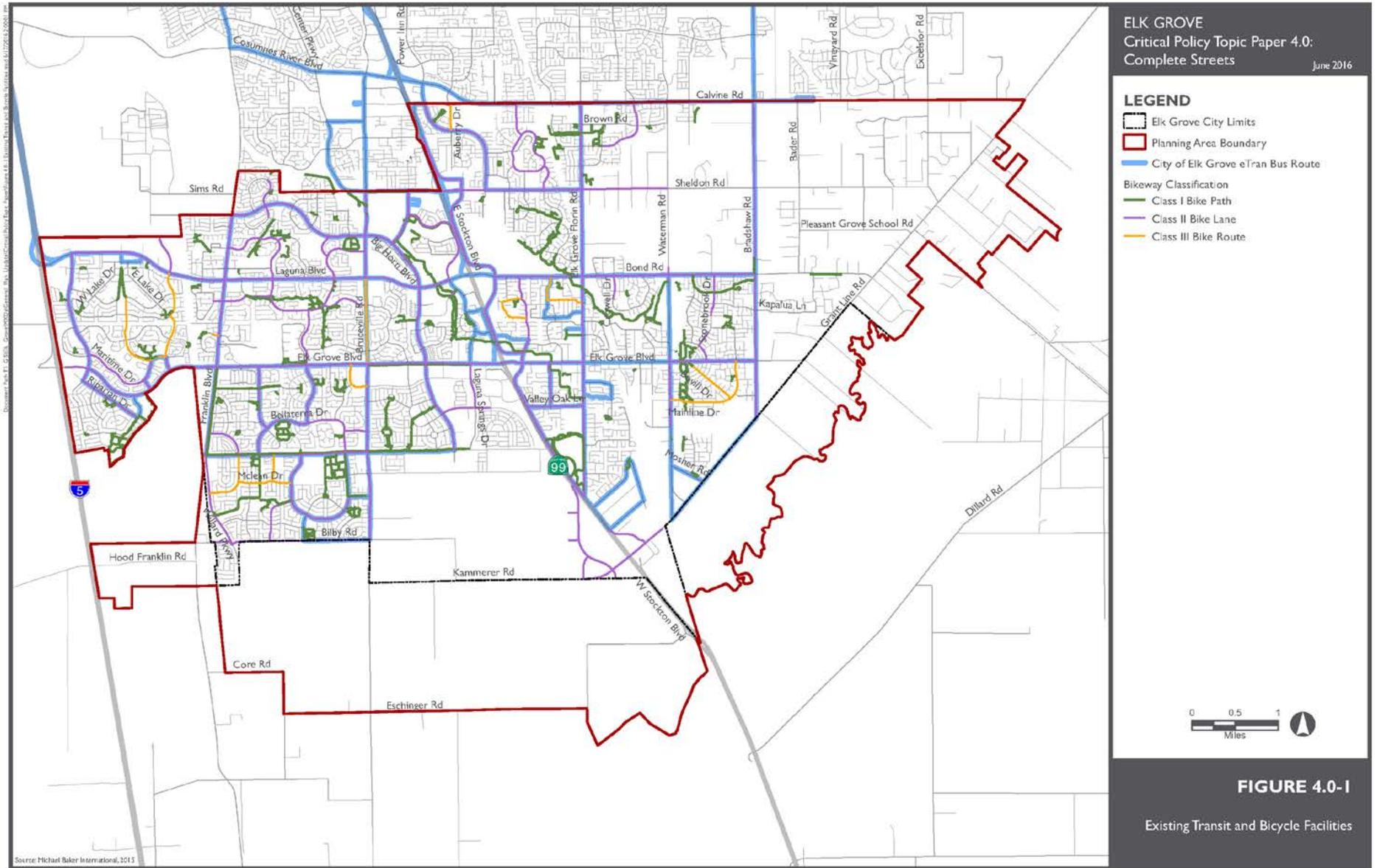
Complete streets offer a multitude of benefits to a community, including healthy and sustainable transportation modes, access and street design improvements, enhanced mobility and safety, and an increase in choices for travel. When implemented efficiently, complete streets can reduce traffic congestion by providing additional methods of travel and moving a larger number of people in an existing space. In addition, complete streets provide economic benefits to a community, reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance community vitality.

Recent planning practice and legislation has placed emphasis on active transportation in an effort to increase the use of human-powered transportation methods such as walking and bicycling. Senate Bill (SB) 375 in particular furthers these goals as a component of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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<sup>1</sup> Assembly Bill 1358 (2008)

FIGURE 4.0-I EXISTING TRANSIT AND BICYCLE FACILITIES



## Existing Conditions in Elk Grove

Elk Grove has a combination of bike lanes, pedestrian facilities, and public transit options throughout the City. Facilities are more limited in the eastern, more rural portion of the City, where population density is lower.

During a series of General Plan update mobile workshops in 2015, a total of 509 participants were surveyed to determine their priorities for the update. Multimodal transportation was the second highest priority for both individual neighborhoods and the community as a whole.

In 2012, the American Community Survey compared the modes of travel for commuting to work in Elk Grove, Sacramento County, and California (see Table 4.0-1). More people in Elk Grove carpool than in both Sacramento County and California, indicating this may be a method of travel to encourage. Commuting rates by public transportation and active transportation, however, are lower than County and State rates. Physical and environmental factors such as lack of regular, connected transit routes, connected and/or dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and the weather could be barriers to alternative transportation. Addressing these factors through improved infrastructure and facilities could increase travel by these modes.

**TABLE 4.0-1: COMMUTING TO WORK COMPARISON, 2012**

Commuting to Work	Elk Grove	Sacramento County	California
Car, truck, or van – drove alone	74.8%	76%	73.4%
Car, truck, or van – carpooled	16.9%	11.9%	11.1%
Public transportation	0.9%	2.4%	5.2%
Walked	1%	2.3%	2.7%
Bicycle	0.2%	1.3%	1.1%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	0.5%	1.0%	1.3%
Worked at home	5.8%	5.1%	5.3%

Source: American Community Survey 2012

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

### Community Context

Because no two communities or streetscapes are alike, the incorporation of complete streets must be tailored to the area in context. A complete street in a rural area will be different from one in an urban area, and have different issues to be addressed. In addition, the community members, stakeholders, and policymakers will have varying interests that will guide complete streets policies and implementation. A wide variety of infrastructure features are available to create complete streets. Together these features

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create a “toolbox” of options and each tool can be evaluated individually for each location and used appropriately.

### Rural Area

There is a significant amount of rural land in the Elk Grove Planning Area, much of it located within the Rural Area, which contains approximately 5,260 acres in the northeastern portion of the City. While the design of complete streets in rural regions differs from that in urban or suburban settings, a number of tools are still available to improve multimodal access in the area. Wide shoulders to allow for safer walking and bicycling and connections to regional trails and public transportation are examples of techniques used to design complete streets in rural areas.

### Rural Road Improvement Policy and Standards

In 2007, Elk Grove established the Rural Road Improvement Policy and accompanying Rural Roads Standards to better evaluate and act on roadway improvements specific to the Rural Area. The Rural Road Improvement Policy calls for phasing road improvements incrementally to maintain the character of the rural residential area of the City. This policy works in conjunction with the Rural Road Standards, which establishes unique road improvement design standards that are rural (rather than urban) in character. The Policy and Standards together ensure that the rural character is maintained and also require that public workshops be held to gather input on any road improvements proposed prior to any changes to the policy, standards, or actions in the area.

### Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach

In response to some community interest for increased mobility for nonvehicular modes in the Rural Area, the Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach project was initiated by the City in 2014. A combination of surveys and workshops was employed to engage community members and evaluate the level of multimodal infrastructure desired in the Rural Area. The vast majority of respondents advocated for a “less is more” approach to rural road mobility, desiring to maintain, at this time, the rural streets as they exist today.

The project concluded with a final City Council meeting, which took place on December 9, 2015, during which the following determinations were made:

1. The City will not pursue Rural Area-wide mobility improvements at this time.
2. The City will conduct an engineering study to determine feasible options for traffic-calming measures on major roadways in the Rural Area in response to prevalent concerns about speeds and volumes of vehicular traffic.
3. The City will use the outreach effort and report to inform the General Plan Circulation Element policy discussion for the Rural Area, specifically regarding complete streets considerations.

While there was a desire to maintain the rural streets at this time, a number of residents reported that they currently walk, bike, or ride a horse in the Rural Area, and even more said they would like to be able to travel by foot, bicycle, or horse to access community destinations. Many participants identified support for the following mobility improvements on certain street segments:

- *Excelsior Road.* Biking and walking trails that are separated from the road with adequate drainage and no impact to existing trees.
- *Pleasant Grove School Road.* A bicycle lane or other bicycle improvements on the side of the roadway, so long as the improvements do not change the rural character.

There was also some desire for selective improvements to address walking and/or biking safety on Waterman Road, Bradshaw Road, Calvine Road, Sheldon Road, and Bader Road. Most of the improvements were conditioned on maintaining the rural character of the roadway and preserving existing trees. However, the majority of residents living along these roads preferred that no pedestrian or bicycle paths be constructed for these segments.

Using the feedback from the Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach project, the City should identify focused mobility improvements in the Rural Area that would balance the desires of the commenters with the City's obligation to address complete streets standards within the overall street network. Policies would be included to direct an update to street standards for the implementation of complete streets, within the context of the Rural Area. Such area-specific policies should also be considered for inclusion in the General Plan through establishment of a community or area plan for the Rural Area.

*Refer to Policy Topic Paper 2.0: Community and Area Plans for additional information and specific recommendations for addressing policies within unique areas of the Planning Area.*

### Pedestrian-oriented Areas

Areas focused on pedestrian activity, such as Old Town and the Civic Center, require specific design treatment and planning considerations. A greater focus on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in these areas will allow for safe, comfortable, and convenient active transportation choices by designing roads, pathways, and facilities with these users in mind. A complete and connected system of sidewalks, crosswalks, off-street multiuse paths, and painted bike lanes and signposted bike routes are essential to support walking and biking. Amenities that enhance pedestrian comfort, convenience, and visibility should be incorporated into street and pathway design. A combination of the following amenities should be included in street and pathway designs in these areas: street trees, landscaped medians, bulb-outs, bike racks, pedestrian-oriented lighting, benches, and wayfinding signage.

The City can include policies giving priority to pedestrian, bicycle, or transit mobility within specific pedestrian-oriented areas and directing updates to street standards for the implementation of enhanced

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infrastructure serving such modes of travel. These areas may be identified on a map or through defined standards for determining when pedestrian-oriented area design considerations should be implemented.

### **Existing Plans and Policies**

The current Elk Grove General Plan, the City Municipal Code, and several other plans, policies, and codes contain requirements related to complete streets. A number of policy documents are already adopted by the City and will need to be reflected as appropriate in the updated General Plan to ensure consistency, while standards documents may need to be reviewed and updated to maintain consistency with the General Plan after the updated document is adopted.

#### Existing Policy Documents

The following documents include adopted policies and implementation action items that will need to be considered and supported as appropriate by the General Plan update.

#### *City of Elk Grove Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Master Plan (BPTMP)*

The BPTMP was adopted in July 2014. It includes descriptions of available infrastructure, facilities, and modes; statistics on usage and survey results for the City and surrounding region; and the actions to be taken by the City to enhance the bikeway, trails, and pedestrian networks and encourage their usage. Existing and planned bikeways, trails, and pedestrian networks identified in the BPTMP should be reflected in the City's circulation system to ensure consistency across planning documents and align implementation actions.

#### *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*

The Cosumnes Community Services District (CCSD) oversees the construction and maintenance of parks and trails in much of the City; the CCSD and the City partner on new parks and trails in the City's New Growth Area. To address how new parks and recreation services are provided, the City and CCSD have jointly prepared a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The City's Circulation Element should reflect existing and future park and recreation facilities as an integral part of the circulation system and ensure consistency across planning documents.

#### *City Rural Road Improvement Policy*

The City Council adopted the Rural Road Improvement Policy for phasing road improvements incrementally to maintain the character of the rural residential area of the City. The policies in this document, although specific to the Rural Area, will need to be considered to ensure consistency with all policies in the General Plan update. As noted above, such area-specific policies should also be considered for inclusion in the General Plan through establishment of a community or area plan for the Rural Area.

*Refer to Policy Topic Paper 2.0: Community and Area Plans for additional information and specific recommendations for addressing policies within unique areas of the Planning Area.*

### Comprehensive Operational Analysis

The City is currently conducting an operational analysis of the local and commuter transit services provided by e-Tran. It includes an assessment of currently offered services, the existing market demand for services, the development of goals, objectives, and policies for how to meet such demand, and a financial analysis of future operating costs and possible fare modification options. Existing and future routes identified through this process should be considered in the planning and development of the circulation system to ensure transit services are supported by the appropriate infrastructure.

*Refer to Policy Topic Paper 5.0: Fixed Transit for additional information and specific recommendations for addressing fixed transit service in the Planning Area.*

## SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion contained in this policy topic paper, staff recommends the following items for consideration. Commission and Council direction on these items will be consolidated with that provided on other key policy topics to inform the direction and contents of the draft General Plan update.

### **Policy Topic 4.0: Complete Streets**

- 4.1. Identify targeted street segments in the Rural Area on the General Plan Circulation Map that may be the focus for developing street-specific mobility improvements. Street segments considered will include those identified in the Rural Residential Area Mobility Outreach Summary Report (October 2015) and any additional street segments, if necessary, to meet the intent of the Complete Streets Act. The segments identified and any accompanying policies must meet the obligations of the Complete Streets Act while still responding to the concerns and desires of the community.
- 4.2 Identify pedestrian-oriented areas on the General Plan Land Use and/or Circulation Map to guide applicability of targeted policies and design considerations.
- 4.3 Consider the following goals and policies for incorporation into the General Plan.

#### **GOAL: The Transportation System Meets Resident, Employee, and Visitor Needs**

- As new roads are constructed, assess how the needs of all users can be integrated into the street design based on the local context and street typology.
- Retrofit existing roads to enhance multimodal access.

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- Conduct a Citywide analysis to identify deficiencies and opportunities to connect segments of modal infrastructure.
- Implement the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Master Plan (BPTMP).
  - When planning and designing bicycle, pedestrian, and trail facilities and infrastructure, follow the recommendations and guidelines contained in the BPTMP.
  - Prioritize improvements identified in the BPTMP when updating the Capital Improvements Program.
- Recognize the needs of all segments of the population, including disabled, youth, and the elderly, and provide increased opportunities for their mobility.
  - When considering projects and requirements, require the action that, to the fullest extent feasible, best enhances mobility for those with limited travel options.
  - Provide for safe and convenient paths and crossings along major streets within the context of the surrounding area, taking into account the needs of disabled, youth, and elderly.
  - Continue to implement the ADA Transition Plan, as appropriate.
- Identify and plan for goods movement in the transportation network, including rail service.
- Consider bus rapid transit or other accelerated methods of travel for major corridors during peak times.
- Strongly advocate for local and state funding to finance upgrades to services, facilities, and routes.
- Once complete, utilize the Comprehensive Operational Analysis to implement the best strategy that ensures the prioritization of efficient services, especially for those with limited mobility.
- Support and utilize infrastructure improvements and technological advancements such as intelligent transportation management tools to facilitate the movement and security of goods throughout the City in an efficient manner.
  - Coordinate traffic signals to maximize the flow of traffic while accommodating nonvehicular modes of travel.

**GOAL: A Connected and Convenient Transit System**

- Connect streets, trails, and transit to provide complete mobility locally and regionally, with priority funding and maintenance going toward those improvements which complete the local and regional circulation network.
- Develop a complete and connected street network with sidewalks, crossings, paths, and bike lanes that are convenient and attractive, with a variety of routes in pedestrian-oriented areas throughout the City.
- Require new development to include safe pedestrian walkways that directly link to streets and major destinations such as transit stops, schools, parks, and commercial centers.
- Require and place access areas and facilities for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit travel in front of major destinations, such as shopping centers and schools. Facilities may include any or a combination of the following: designated passenger drop-off and pickup zones, benches, lighting, bike racks, shelters, and street trees.
- Regularly update and expand the City's wayfinding signage to key destinations to help all users navigate the City in an efficient manner and to create a sense of place.

**GOAL: Context-Sensitive Design for Complete Streets**

- Update the City's improvement standards to incorporate, as appropriate, all modes of transportation.
  - Establish a working group of City departments and stakeholders to collaborate on the establishment of complete streets design standards.
  - Review City codes and policies to identify barriers to complete streets designs.
- Ensure that designs for complete streets employ features appropriate for the location and context.
  - Develop appropriate location- and context-specific street standards to meet complete streets requirements and promote safe travel for all modes.
  - Develop and/or revise street standards appropriate for rural, suburban, and urban contexts.
  - Develop street standards for pedestrian-oriented areas that place an emphasis on enhanced pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities.

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- Develop criteria for determining appropriate application of pedestrian-oriented area design considerations.
- In planning and implementing street projects, allow for flexibility in design in order to maintain sensitivity to local conditions and local sense of place.

**Sense of Place:** *Those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging*

### **GOAL: Safety in All Modes of Travel**

- Prioritize the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Ensure visibility of pedestrians at intersections through street design measures such as bulb-outs, painted crossings, signalized crossings, and street lighting.
- Provide safe and visible crossings at mid-block in areas with long block lengths.
- Incorporate traffic-calming measures such as roundabouts, reduced lane widths, and/or other design elements that result in lower vehicle speeds when possible and appropriate.
- Provide the safest form of bike path feasible on all roads identified for bicycle facilities.
- Conduct widespread awareness campaigns and educational services for complete streets safety in partnership with local organizations, such as WalkSacramento.