



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 5/2/2018

Agenda Placement: 8A

## Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

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**TO:** Napa County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Charlene Gallina for David Morrison - Director  
Planning, Building and Environmental Services

**REPORT BY:** Dana Ayers, Planner III - (707) 253-4388

**SUBJECT:** General Plan Circulation Element Update - Study Session

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

#### **General Plan Circulation Element Update – Study Session**

**CEQA Status:** This study session is an opportunity for the Planning Commission, public and staff to discuss the draft update to the Circulation Element of the General Plan. At this time, staff does not request that the Commission make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors with respect to adoption of the updated Circulation Element. This study session is therefore exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to section 15262 (Planning and Feasibility Studies) of the state's Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA. Staff will incorporate any comments from the public and Commission into another iteration of the draft document, and thereafter will conduct environmental analysis of the proposed policies and action items before returning to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for actions to adopt the appropriate CEQA findings and the amendment to the General Plan.

**Request:** Napa County proposes to update the Circulation Element of its General Plan to update local transportation system information and incorporate current trends, best practices, and regulatory changes in the planning and impact analysis of transportation networks. At this meeting, staff will introduce the current Draft Circulation Element and the companion Draft Traffic Impact Study (TIS) Guidelines document, and will invite comments and questions from members of the Planning Commission and public.

**Staff Recommendation:** Review the Draft Circulation Element and the Draft TIS Guidelines, receive the staff presentation and public comments, and provide feedback and comments to staff on the draft documents.

**Staff Contact:** Dana Ayers, Planner III, (707) 253-4388 or [dana.ayers@countyofnapa.org](mailto:dana.ayers@countyofnapa.org)

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Proposed Action:**

That the Planning Commission review the Draft Circulation Element and Draft TIS Guidelines and provide comments to staff.

**Discussion:**

The Draft Circulation Element updates traffic and transportation information from the last update of the General Plan in 2008; it also incorporates current trends and best practices in transportation system planning policy, as well as statewide regulatory changes in the methodologies for assessment of project traffic impacts. At this meeting, staff will summarize the differences between the adopted and draft circulation elements and provide background on the changes. Staff invites comments and questions from members of the Planning Commission and public.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Is there a Fiscal Impact?                      No

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

This study session is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to section 15262 (Planning and Feasibility Studies) of the state's Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA. Future actions by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to adopt a Final Circulation Element will be subject to the process of environmental analysis prescribed by CEQA.

**BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION****Project History**

At the March 10, 2015, special joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, the Commission and Board directed staff to prepare an update to the Circulation Element of the General Plan. Subsequently, on August 11, 2015, the Board authorized the chair to execute a Professional Services Agreement (PSA) with Fehr & Peers, a transportation consulting firm, for preparation of an update to the Circulation Element. Tasks within the scope of work of the PSA also included preparation of guidelines and thresholds of significance for project traffic impact studies, based on currently-adopted General Plan policy, and evaluation of a traffic impact mitigation fee that would be charged to private development and that would fund improvements to the transportation network of the County.

**Draft Circulation Element - Summary of Proposed Changes**

With the thresholds of significance for traffic impact studies in effect since early 2016, the County and Fehr & Peers staff have since focused efforts on the text of the Circulation Element. In the attached Draft Circulation Element, demographic data and observed transportation trends have been updated from that found in the adopted Circulation Element, using 2015 data from the U.S. Census Bureau and 2014 data derived from the local Travel Behavior Study commissioned by the Napa Valley Transportation Authority. The text of the document is also re-organized to place the goals in one location ahead of the policies and action items, and to cluster policies with

similar themes together.

In general, the revised text in the Draft Circulation Element reflects a shift in transportation planning principles, wherein less emphasis is placed on modifying the roadway network to optimize automobile movement. Instead, emphasis is placed on maintaining the existing system; ensuring adequate and safe transportation options for all users, regardless of income level, age or physical ability; and enhancing the efficiency of the transportation network by reducing single-occupant automobile trips. Cascading benefits of reduced vehicle trips include improvements in air quality and public health, as air pollutants from vehicle emissions are reduced and people are provided better opportunities to utilize more active transportation options (walking and bicycling).

This Draft Circulation Element retains level of service standards for roadways. (Level of service, or LOS, is a system of classifying roadway segments' and intersections' operations using a letter rating of A through F, based on how quickly automobiles move through the segment or intersection; LOS A indicates free flowing traffic with minimal delays, and LOS F indicates a severely congested segment or intersection.) Draft Policy CIR-37, adapted from adopted Policies CIR-16 and CIR-18, identifies the County's preferred LOS D for most intersections, and is proposed to be kept as a policy for purposes of network and capital improvement planning. However, consistent with the shift toward reducing roadway volumes, its text differs from the 2008 adopted policy in that it specifies project trip reduction rather than roadway modifications as the highest priority in mitigating project impacts.

Other changes to policies are also intended to emphasize the importance of bicycling, walking and transit facilities (often referenced collectively as "multi-modal facilities") to the transportation network. Several adopted and draft policies make reference to the County's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans (Draft Policies CIR-11, CIR-27 and CIR-29 through CIR-32, modified from currently adopted Policies CIR-13 and CIR-35 through CIR-37). New draft text is proposed in an effort to better support implementation of those Plans by requiring private developers and discretionary permit applicants to dedicate right-of-way and/or construct multi-modal facilities at their property's frontages as conditions of approval of their discretionary permit requests.

The updated Draft Circulation Element recognizes evolving trends toward introduction of autonomous vehicles and increased presence of transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft. While recognizing these trends, the Draft Circulation Element also acknowledges that they can inherently promote automobile use and supports these transportation options "to the extent those technologies and options support the County's goals of improving mobility while reducing congestion and emissions" (Draft Goal CIR-3).

As noted above, the Draft Circulation Element text also incorporates regulatory changes in traffic impact analysis. Senate Bill (SB) 743 (Steinberg), enacted by the state legislature in 2013 and codified in part in Public Resources Code section 21099, effects a change in CEQA practice wherein traffic impacts of a public or private development project are no longer to be measured using LOS. Instead, the statute specifies vehicle miles traveled or automobile trips generated as the metric against which the significance of a project's transportation impacts are defined. At the core of the statute is the association between shorter or fewer automobile trips and the environmental benefit from the reduction in tailpipe and air pollution emissions from cars. The intent of the statute is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from automobile use, to facilitate multi-modal transportation and to diversify land uses.

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) is tasked with drafting guidelines for implementation of CEQA and, since 2014, has been working with agencies statewide to draft guidelines for implementation of SB 743 that specify vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the recommended metric. Along with this recommended metric, OPR has prepared a technical advisory document with a recommended threshold of significance for project VMT impacts. Under OPR's recommendation, a project would have a potentially significant impact on the environment if it could not be demonstrated that the project could reduce per capita VMT to a number that is 15 or more percent below the regional average VMT per resident or employee. (Notably, the technical advisory's general threshold would be applicable to typical residential and office projects.) Local agencies, in their individual CEQA procedures,

may choose to apply the recommended threshold from OPR generally or may develop their own threshold, provided that the threshold is supported by substantial evidence and consistent with the intent of the statute as summarized above. OPR's most recent draft of the SB 743 implementation guidance was posted to their website in April 2018.

The transition to VMT is currently in the rulemaking process and would not be required of lead agencies until January 1, 2020. However, in anticipation of the transition, the Draft Circulation Element includes new policies that reflect this new regulatory framework for transportation impact assessment, along with a draft threshold of significance that is based on reduction of VMT compared to the unmitigated project rather than the regional average VMT (Draft Policies CIR-39 through CIR-40). Staff believes this alternative approach to measuring the environmental impacts of a project would be better suited to this county's rural context, while still supporting the efforts of the county to achieve the greenhouse gas emissions goals of its pending Climate Action Plan. The reduction in VMT and, correspondingly, GHG emissions from the transportation sector, is also necessary for the county, the region and the state to achieve long-term, statewide mandates targeted toward reducing GHG emissions. Such mandates include, but are not limited to Executive Orders S-3-05 and B-16-12, which respectively, set a general statewide GHG emissions reduction target of 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, and an 80 percent GHG emissions reduction below 1990 levels (also by 2050) specifically for the transportation sector. The proposed Napa County TIS Guidelines (referenced in Draft Policy CIR-40 and attached to this staff report as Attachment B) include a preliminary methodology for how VMT would be assessed for proposed projects in the unincorporated area.

Draft Policy CIR-6 (adopted Policy CIR-19, modified) would also dictate that traffic studies be funded by applicants but with traffic consultants selected by county staff and managed under a county PSA. This approach to environmental consultant management is currently prescribed in the county's Local CEQA Procedures with respect to preparation of environmental impact reports, and it would allow for greater consistency in traffic studies, particularly as the practice of traffic impact analysis continues to evolve under the new metrics described above.

### **Future Actions**

Staff is seeking input from the public and the Commission on the Draft Circulation Element and also invites comments on the Draft TIS Guidelines; no formal action by the Commission is requested at this time. Staff will continue to accept written comments on either document through close of business on June 1, 2018.

Beginning in early June, staff will begin work on a second Draft Circulation Element. Staff anticipates that this second draft document will provide the scope of the "project" for which staff will begin to conduct environmental analysis pursuant to CEQA. Once the environmental analysis is complete, staff will make the analysis available for public comment in accordance with CEQA requirements, and subsequently will return to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for actions to adopt the appropriate CEQA findings and the amendment to the General Plan.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- A . Draft Circulation Element
- B . Draft Traffic Impact Study Guidelines
- C . Item 8A Fig1\_NapaCo Circ Element Map (Added after initial agenda posting)
- D . Comments for PC May 2 2018 PC Study Session (Added after initial agenda posting)
- E . Item 8A Correspondence Received (Added after meeting)

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: Vincent Smith