



TOWN HALL MEETING #1

SUMMARY

St. Helena General Plan Update
Town Hall Meeting #1: Circulation
May 3, 2010

INTRODUCTION

On April 10, 2010 a Town Hall Meeting was held to discuss proposed roadways extensions and circulation changes included in the Draft St. Helena General Plan. The meeting included a presentation about key circulation issues in St. Helena and a facilitated discussion that included electronic polling of meeting participants. Following is a summary of the discussion and electronic polling results.

Mayor Del Britton opened the Town Hall Meeting shortly after 9:30 am, welcoming participants to the review of preliminary proposals for the Circulation Element of the City General Plan. Daniel Iacofano of MIG, Inc. made a short presentation of the planning issues for consideration and moderated the discussion.

PRESENTATION

The presentation included an overview of the General Plan process and schedule, and description of previous planning efforts (the current General Plan, prepared in 1993, the 2006 Traffic Calming Study, and the Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency Plan).

The Draft General Plan Circulation Element considers all modes of transportation, includes a street typology system that establishes different standards for different street types, and emphasizes a pedestrian-scaled and bicycle-friendly network to reduce dependence on the automobile, as well as traffic calming opportunities to slow traffic.

Goals of the plan include:

- Reduce overall congestion/GHG emissions
- Provide multimodal circulation infrastructure
- Reduce peak auto traffic
- Manage vehicle parking

The proposed roadway extensions were presented, pointing out that the 2010 Draft General Plan recommends reducing the number of potential new roads that are identified in the current 1993 Plan.

Further, the identified locations for potential extensions are not proposals for new roads. They are recommended alignments that would best serve the City with a logical and comprehensive system, only if future development occurs that would require additional street capacity. Any new road would require full

planning and environmental review, Planning Commission and City Council approval, before it could be built.

The Draft General Plan proposes four potential alignments:

- A – Starr/Adams Connection
- B – Mills Lane Connection Options (College/Starr/Allison)
- C – Oak Avenue (Grayson to Charter Oak)
- D – Silverado Trail Connection Alternatives (Adams or Mills)

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND ELECTRONIC POLLING

This part of the meeting consisted of four parts, (1) a profile of meeting participants; (2) a discussion of bicycle and pedestrian circulation concepts; (3) a discussion of traffic calming options; and (4) a discussion of the proposed roadway extensions.

Participant Profile

Prior to discussion of specific circulation issues, participants were asked to respond with the electronic voting keypads to some demographic questions. The results of the demographic poll provide a detailed profile of the meeting's participants. Following are the results of the participant profile.

1. Gender:

- | | |
|-----------|-----|
| a. Male | 52% |
| b. Female | 48% |

2. Team Preference:

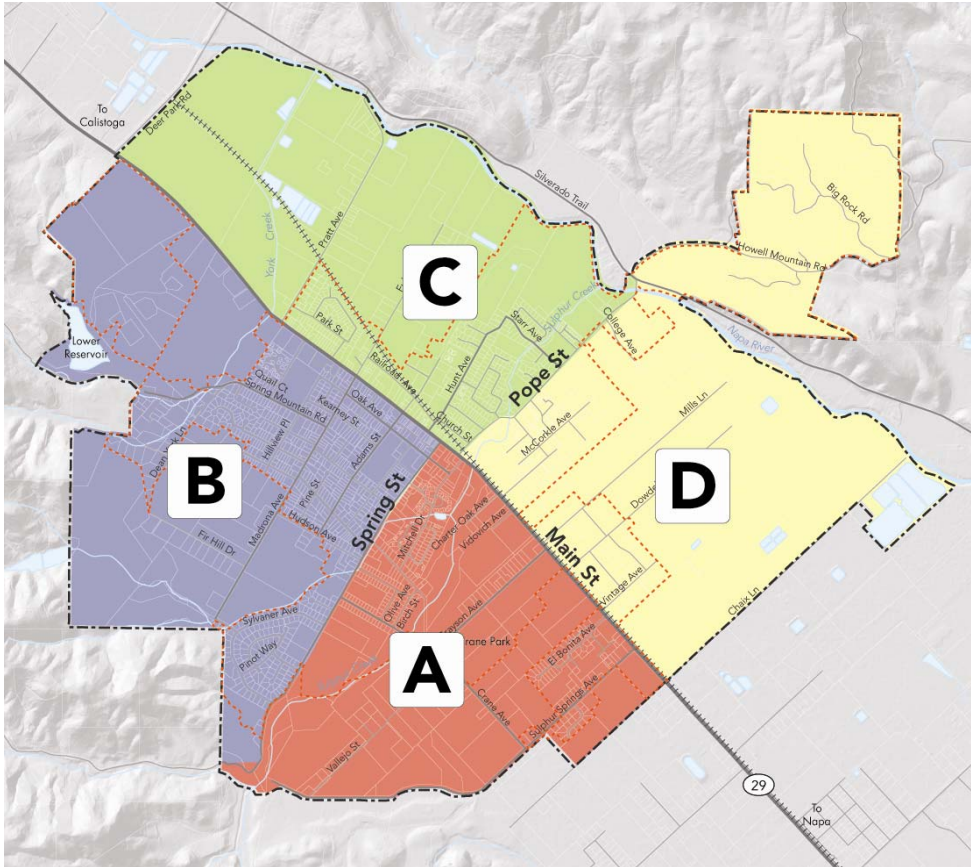
- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| a. Oakland A's | 10% |
| b. SF Giants | 53% |
| c. Both Teams | 6% |
| d. Neither Team | 24% |
| e. Don't Know | 8% |

3. Primary Residence:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| a. In St. Helena | 86% |
| b. Outside St. Helena | 14% |

4. Geographic Location:

a. Area A	17%
b. Area B	32%
c. Area C	30%
d. Area D	22%



5. Age Category:

a. Under 18	1%
b. 18 – 24	1%
c. 25 – 34	7%
d. 35 – 44	9%
e. 45 – 54	17%
f. 55 – 64	26%
g. 65 and Over	39%

6. Children (ages 0 – 17 years) living at home:

a. 0	76%
b. 1	12%
c. 2	7%
d. 3 or more	5%

7. Years living in St. Helena:

- | | |
|---------------|-----|
| a. 0 – 4 | 10% |
| b. 5 – 9 | 13% |
| c. 10 – 14 | 18% |
| d. 15 or more | 59% |

8. Home Status:

- | | |
|-----------|-----|
| a. Owner | 85% |
| b. Renter | 15% |

Bicycle & Pedestrian Circulation Concepts

To gain information on community concerns about bicycle and pedestrian components of the Circulation Element of the General Plan, MIG conducted electronic polling and facilitated discussion of a few basic questions. The first question in this part of the meeting explored opinions about the bicycle and pedestrian circulation network:

9. Complete the pedestrian and bicycle network. Do you:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| a. Agree | 69% |
| b. Somewhat Agree | 17% |
| c. Neutral | 6% |
| d. Somewhat Disagree | 3% |
| e. Disagree | 4% |
| f. Don't know | 1% |

Participant discussion identified concerns about pathways adjacent to waterways (specifically Sulfur Creek) and damage to private property and the environment as a result of public access. A point was made that a strong public environmental education program is needed before allowing streamside access.

The next question was:

10. Create safe routes to schools. Do you:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| a. Agree | 85% |
| b. Somewhat Agree | 8% |
| c. Neutral | 5% |
| d. Somewhat Disagree | 0% |
| e. Disagree | 1% |
| f. Don't know | 1% |

This question led to a discussion of bicycle safety on roadways, and a straw poll using red, green, and yellow cards was conducted for the question: "Is it safe to ride on the road?"

The response was mixed, about 50/50. Red cards indicated no/disagree, green cards indicated yes/agree, and yellow cards indicated not sure/maybe/no opinion. Only one or two yellow cards were raised.

A follow-up question asked people to only respond if they were bike riders, and the response to this question was still mixed, but with slightly more green cards, (perhaps a little more than 60%), indicating that bike riding experience and familiarity with the roads led people to feel safer.

In response to a third follow-up question, "Do you believe it is safe for kids to ride on St Helena streets?", red cards clearly dominated, indicating nearly all thought it was not safe for kids to ride on roads.

Most agreed that speed of traffic created unsafe conditions for biking, but a point was also made that the removal of vegetation along streets and sidewalks could increase safety for cyclists and pedestrians.

Traffic Calming Concepts

The next area of discussion and polling explored community opinions about Traffic Calming, public transit use and downtown parking. Traffic Calming was explained as traffic management techniques to slow traffic, consisting of a variety of elements that might include speed humps, bulb-outs or chokers with planting, traffic circles, striping, the speed monitoring signs, or other devices.

11. Implement traffic calming measures. Do you:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| a. Agree | 57% |
| b. Somewhat Agree | 27% |
| c. Neutral | 7% |
| d. Somewhat Disagree | 4% |
| e. Disagree | 5% |
| f. Don't know | 0% |

During discussion participants shared their experiences with some traffic calming initiatives already in place. One person observed that a double yellow centerline is a license to speed, and recommended that none be provided on residential streets. Another observed that striping sides of traffic lanes to narrow them has not reduced speed in his experience. Another stated that physical devices might help, but traffic enforcement is needed to ensure slower speeds.

12. Increase the use of shuttles and public transit. Do you:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| a. Agree | 54% |
| b. Somewhat Agree | 19% |
| c. Neutral | 12% |
| d. Somewhat Disagree | 4% |
| e. Disagree | 10% |
| f. Don't know | 1% |

One person noted that there is often a safety problem getting to bus stops when transit is located on fast-moving streets.

13. Provide more parking in downtown. Do you:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| a. Agree | 30% |
| b. Somewhat Agree | 23% |
| c. Neutral | 8% |
| d. Somewhat Disagree | 14% |
| e. Disagree | 24% |
| f. Don't know | 1% |

The polling and discussion indicated a mixed response to the need for more parking in St Helena. Many seemed to agree that parking should not be needed if there were more consistent and comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle access routes throughout town. An exception was noted for seniors: special parking allocations should be provided for their convenience (different from required ADA parking for the disabled).

Another suggestion was that parking should be strategically located at each end of town for the benefit of tourists. A quick red/green card straw vote indicated that nearly 100% of participants favored the suggestion.

A final series of questions solicited opinions about first, second, and third priorities for transportation concepts:

14a. From the list below please select your *first* choice for improving transportation in St. Helena.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| a. Complete the pedestrian and bicycle network | 40% |
| b. Create safe routes to schools | 23% |
| c. Implement traffic calming measures | 21% |
| d. Increase the use of shuttles and public transit | 7% |
| e. Provide more parking downtown | 10% |

14b. From the list below please select your second choice for improving transportation in St. Helena.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| a. Complete the pedestrian and bicycle network | 27% |
| b. Create safe routes to schools | 25% |
| c. Implement traffic calming measures | 20% |
| d. Increase the use of shuttles and public transit | 9% |
| e. Provide more parking downtown | 20% |

14c. From the list below please select your third choice for improving transportation in St. Helena.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| a. Complete the pedestrian and bicycle network | 19% |
| b. Create safe routes to schools | 15% |
| c. Implement traffic calming measures | 24% |
| d. Increase the use of shuttles and public transit | 18% |
| e. Provide more parking downtown | 25% |

Potential Roadway Extensions

The next part of the meeting focused on opinions about potential road extensions. The Draft General Plan recommends that certain corridors be designated as preferred alignments for future streets in the event that congestion increases with future population growth and requires mitigation. The potential roadway extensions generated a great deal of discussion, both for and against the recommendation.

A: Starr Avenue & Adams Street Extension

The Starr/Adams Extension would connect these two streets to increase convenient access to the center of town.

16. Would you like to see this street extension?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| a. Yes | 28% |
| b. Yes, with qualifications | 12% |
| c. No | 55% |
| d. Don't know | 5% |

Several people questioned the need for this extension, indicating they did not understand the circulation rationale ("There's no place to go on Starr"). One person stated they needed more information about the reasoning before voting. Another pointed out that the extensions are only potential alignments and agreed that the plan should identify the connection in order to leave the option open for future construction.

Others viewed the identification of potential roadway extensions as only encouraging development and/or traffic, opposing the recommended extension. (“Is the General Plan for residents or developers?”) (“Don’t extend Starr, it already encourages traffic.”)

Some of the discussion indicated a slight divide in the opinions of those living west of Highway 29, and those living east of the highway. Others emphasized the common interests of the entire community.

Other comments included:

“The West side of town now has more cut-through traffic; there needs to be fair sharing of both North/South and East/West traffic throughout town.”

“Extending Starr will help traffic on Main.”

“Starr is residential, don’t repeat the Westside problem.”

“We need to diffuse traffic all across town, and provide more choices.”

“To be fair to everyone, we need to implement the entire plan; spot changes create unbalanced positive and negative effects.”

“Do not encourage tourist traffic in residential areas.”

“It is a mistake to focus on diverting traffic as a solution to the problem; we need to look at all alternatives to get people out of their cars.”

B: Options to Mills Avenue

The potential street extensions to Mills Lane under consideration include three options for alignment: College Avenue, Starr Avenue, or Allison Avenue. Only one would be implemented, and only if future growth warranted it.

17. What is your preferred connection to Mills Lane?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| a. Starr Avenue | 22% |
| b. College Avenue | 7% |
| c. Allison Avenue | 6% |
| d. No New Roadway Extension | 64% |

Again, people asked for more information to inform their voting. One person wanted to know if the City owned the ROW where the road extensions are shown. The following comments were made before re-voting on the question:

“The proposed extensions are only for the benefit of developers.”

“Road extensions only encourage development.”

“We need to see ourselves as one community.”

“I’m opposed to development that brings cars to residential neighborhoods.”

“The proposed extensions are for all of us – they provide services and access for us, not developers. It’s not outsiders, it’s us.”

“The road extensions are linked to housing. We understand some growth is inevitable, but we want it to be small and slow.”

C: Oak Street Extension Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge only over Sulphur Creek

The Draft General Plan proposes a southward extension of Oak Avenue to improve both auto and pedestrian/bicycle circulation in the southwest quadrant of town. A new street is recommended between Grayson Avenue and Charter Oak Avenue, and a new bridge across Sulphur Creek restricted to pedestrians and bicycles only, designed to bolster the bicycle network, would connect Mitchell Drive to Charter Oak.

The question regarding Oak Avenue was asked in two parts:

18a. Would you like to see this bicycle and pedestrian bridge over Sulphur Creek?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| a. Yes | 52% |
| b. Yes, with qualifications | 21% |
| c. No | 19% |
| d. Don’t know | 8% |

Discussion following the vote indicated that although the majority wanted to improve bicycle circulation, there is also a desire to improve convenience for auto traffic. Many felt the bridge should serve autos as well. One person thought that restricting the bridge to bicycles only would increase traffic on Main Street/Highway 29. Another observed that the recommendation for bicycles only was out of step with the 1993 Plan.

A Red/Green card straw vote revealed the majority want the bridge to serve cars.

Next, participants voted on the second half of the question:

18b. Would you like to see this street (Oak) extension from Charter Oak to Grayson?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| a. Yes | 62% |
| b. Yes, with qualifications | 14% |
| c. No | 19% |
| d. Don't know | 4% |

One person, speaking as a west side resident, commented "We want the Oak Avenue option for vehicles so we can have better access to our neighborhoods." However a dissenting opinion cautioned against the road extensions, asking: "Do we really want these extensions and their neighborhood impact just to save 2 minutes?"

D: Silverado connection

The final vote polled participants' opinions about another connection across the Napa River to the Silverado Trail. The Draft General Plan is considering two options, an extension of Adams Street, or an extension of Mills Lane.

19. What is your preferred connection to the Silverado Trail?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| a. Mills Lane | 18% |
| b. Adams Street | 28% |
| c. No New Roadway Extension | 54% |

Discussion raised questions about other alternatives, for example, why not extend Dowdell Lane? A Red card/Green card straw vote was held, indicating the majority would prefer Dowdell.

Other comments concerned impact on the Napa riparian corridor ("Don't destroy the river area"), and one person felt that the flood control project had desecrated the Adams St. area.

A concern was expressed that it was difficult to form an opinion without a better understanding of the cumulative effect of all the proposed changes, asking for a visual representation of the overall future plan.

A final comment pointed out that Mills Lane is the logical choice, since destinations are primarily to Napa and points south.