



# Memorandum

**TO:** BUILDING BETTER  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** James R. Helmer

**SUBJECT: SMART GROWTH -  
TRANSPORTATION  
IMPACT POLICY**

**DATE:** February 19, 2003

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Approved

Date

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## **BACKGROUND**

The City's General Plan contains various planning principles that support "smart growth" development. Among these include the promotion of infill development, targeting growth in transit corridors and creating transportation choices. The City's current traffic level of service (LOS) policy is a constraint to "smart growth" development and efforts are in progress to amend the policy. The proposed new policy is referred to as the Transportation Impact Policy.

The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee on the status and issues related to the Transportation Impact Policy and to discuss the future direction of this effort. Staff will provide a presentation at the Committee meeting to facilitate understanding and Committee input on the topic.

## **ANALYSIS**

The City's current LOS policy (Council Policy 5-3) was established in the 1970's and is focused on managing Citywide congestion levels for vehicle travel. Over the past decades, the policy has been effective in linking street improvements with land development. However, more recently, the policy has had the consequences of encouraging development in mostly low congestion areas, limiting development density, and requiring the construction of large street intersections (creating impacts to pedestrian, bicycle and transit travel).

It is noted that exceptions to the Citywide LOS policy are currently allowed for the Downtown area (exempt) and for areas with special development policies (North San Jose, Evergreen and Edenvale). A major goal of the update to the Citywide LOS policy is to allow flexibility to encourage "smart growth" development along transit corridors and for areas with Specific Plans, while at the same time continuing to have a strong Citywide commitment to congestion management. Modifications to the LOS policy would also serve to support the City's goals for housing development and economic vitality. An additional policy goal is to link land

development with the construction of multi-modal transportation system improvements, rather than just vehicle capacity improvements.

Last year, two major actions were taken to address the reform of LOS policies at a regional level. First, the Valley Transportation Authority completed their Manual of Best Practices for Integrating Transportation and Land Use, known as the Community Design and Transportation Program. This manual includes a section on revising LOS policies (copy attached). Secondly, State legislation was approved (SB1636) that provides for exemptions to regional LOS policies to support infill development along transit corridors.

Staff has researched other efforts to update transportation impact policies and has found that there are limited examples available that apply to the objectives that San Jose is pursuing. Therefore, San Jose's initiative in this regard supports the City's leadership position in the area of "smart growth".

It is proposed that the City's LOS policy changes be addressed as part of the General Plan Annual Review process in the Fall of 2003. The work plan for the BBT Committee has the LOS Policy issue scheduled for further discussion at the May 2003 meeting.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The development of a new Transportation Impact Policy has to date included consultation with representatives from the development community, housing advocacy groups, the Valley Transportation Authority, and Walk San Jose.

### **COORDINATION**

The development of a new Transportation Impact Policy is a coordinated effort between the Departments of Transportation, Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, Public Works, and Housing, the Offices of the City Attorney and Economic Development, and the Redevelopment Agency.

JAMES R. HELMER  
Director of Transportation

Attachment