

Town of Portola Valley General Plan

Circulation Element

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Circulation Element

Introduction

- 3100 The circulation system is designed to provide for all necessary types of movement of people and goods within and through the planning area. All routes and facilities are interrelated and form a comprehensive system.
- 3100a The proposed system of circulation facilities includes riding and hiking trails, bicycle and walking paths, bicycle lanes, local roads and thoroughfares. This system would provide for a variety of types of travel throughout the planning area and would link related land uses. Thus, local trails would provide for movement for local residents within the planning area, whereas major trails connecting the planning area with other areas would be set apart on different alignments. Thoroughfares, including freeways and arterials, link the planning area to adjoining areas, provide channels of movement for through traffic and handle longer distance local trips. Local roads including land service roads, minor collectors and major collectors would provide access to abutting properties, handle short distance local trips and form connecting links with thoroughfares. Wherever possible, thoroughfares and major trails are combined in corridors of movement set in scenic corridors or greenways.
- 3100b While the circulation element provides the necessary roads to serve the planning area, it does not necessarily provide sufficient capacity on all roads to permit a free flow condition at all times. There may be portions of some of the two-lane roads where congestion will require reduced speeds at times and where special traffic control measures may be necessary in order to improve safety. These decisions will have to be made as an alternative to providing additional traffic lanes inasmuch as additional traffic lanes within the town with accompanying adverse environmental impacts are not compatible with major community goals.

Furthermore, it has been assumed that there will be greater reliance on public transportation in the future which could serve to reduce the need for additional traffic lanes. In line with this possibility, attention will need to be given to possible public transportation stops along the more major trafficways within the planning area.

Definitions

- 3100c
1. **Freeway.** A divided arterial highway for through traffic with full control of access. Trafficways carrying primarily inter-regional and inter-county traffic should be of freeway level.
 2. **Arterial Road.** A trafficway for through traffic with intersections at grade but with direct access to abutting property limited to the greatest extent feasible. Routes accommodating heavy volumes of traffic and connecting other local roads with inter-community, inter-county or inter-regional routes should be of arterial road level.
 3. **Major Collector.** A surface street with points of access to abutting property controlled or restricted, designed for local trips and mainly connecting minor collector streets and land service roads with arterial roads, and freeways.
 4. **Minor Collector.** A surface road with no major limitation to access to abutting property and designed for shorter distance local trips. Minor collectors usually serve one of two functions: a) provide a route of travel alternative to that provided by major collectors; or, b) serve as a collector-distributor providing connections between land service roads and major collector roads or thoroughfares.
 5. **Land Service Road.** A road primarily for access to abutting property and not designed for general traffic use.
 6. **Scenic Corridors and Greenways.** See definitions in Section 2302.
 7. **Emergency Access Road.** A road for vehicle use only in the event of an emergency. Such roads are gated, constructed to blend as much as possible with the surroundings, and with a surface appropriate for emergency use. Such roads are intended to provide an alternative route in emergencies to and from areas otherwise reached by a single means of access that is not considered sufficient for public safety.

Objectives

- 3101
1. To provide for movement within and through the planning area by automobile, bicycle, horse and foot on an integrated system of circulation facilities. (See the trails and paths element for proposals for movement by bicycle, horse and foot.)
 2. To accommodate the reasonable needs of each mode of transportation on a route designed and located to provide for the enjoyment and safety of the individual and to cause minimum interference with adjacent uses of land.
 3. To locate, design and develop circulation facilities so as to conserve the natural beauty of the area and minimize adverse effects on adjoining uses of the land.
 4. To provide a circulation system correlated with the land use element.
 5. To provide trafficways: a) to connect the planning area with adjoining areas; and, b) to the extent made necessary by physical conditions, to provide for travel through the planning area.
 6. To provide for safe and reasonably expeditious movement for local residents and minimize the disruptive influences of through traffic.
 7. To provide adequate local roads to: a) afford access to individual properties; b) permit safe, pleasant travel between parts of the planning area; and, c) connect local areas within the planning area to thoroughfares.
 8. Trafficways should be of a character and size that is compatible with the rural character of the town.
- 3102 (Not Used.)
- 3103 (Not Used.)
- 3104 (Not Used.)

Principles

- 3105
1. Through traffic should be handled on trafficways on the periphery of the planning area to the maximum extent possible.
 2. All thoroughfares and major local roads should be carefully located, designed and landscaped to preserve the beauty of the area, prevent ground

failure and erosion, limit impervious surface and help shield residents from noise and air pollution. Particular care should be given to retaining trees and other vegetative cover. Cuts and fills should be minimized and molded to natural contours.

3. Scenic routes through the area should be developed as greenways and scenic corridors.
4. Thoroughfares and major collector roads should be located and designed so as not to separate residents from local service facilities.
5. The system of thoroughfares should be coordinated with thoroughfares in adjacent areas.
6. All thoroughfares should have rights-of-way of sufficient width to permit planting of trees and shrubs to provide a substantial buffer between the roadway and adjoining properties.
7. Where choice is required between a direct route which has adverse impact on local residents or disrupts the natural features of an area, and a less direct route which has less adverse impact, the second alternative should be preferred.
8. Roads should be designed for safe travel at moderate speeds and to minimize the cost of maintenance.
9. On-road parking should be discouraged.
10. Trafficways within the town and its spheres of influence, other than Junipero Serra Freeway, should be limited to two lanes except where additional lanes are needed for turning movements.

Standards

- 3106
1. Standards of curvature, grade, alignment and sight distance should be conducive to safe, convenient travel on the following classes of trafficways: freeways, arterial roads, major collectors, minor collectors, and land service roads. Within limits imposed by safety, these standards should be modified in steep and difficult terrain to ensure that the scenic qualities of the area are not damaged. Also, the "country lane" quality of roads should be fostered to the maximum extent feasible and still meet an acceptable level of safety.

2. Adequate provision should be made for pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian crossings at appropriate locations. Specific locations should be controlled to provide adequate sight distance and minimize hazard. Such crossings should be clearly distinguished by signs and lane markings.
3. All traffic entering thoroughfares or major collector roads should be controlled by stop signs, channelization or other appropriate devices.
4. Where warranted by traffic volume and physical conditions, appropriate means of traffic control should be employed on roads other than thoroughfares and major collectors in order to provide safe, expeditious movement of traffic.

Description

3107 A system of freeways, arterials, and major and minor collectors provide for movement within and through the planning area. Major through traffic would use routes either on or near the boundaries of the planning area leaving most of the planning area with only local roads to serve local traffic.

Freeways

3108 The Junipero Serra Freeway is shown on the plan diagram. The Junipero Serra Freeway has had a very significant impact upon the planning area in terms of accessibility, noise and change to the landscape. Significant steps were taken to help assure that its design is compatible with the natural setting. Of particular concern have been the crossings over San Francisquito and Los Trancos Creeks. These crossings are on structures designed to minimize interference with the character of the creeks. At both of these crossings, there should be safe provisions for through trails and paths.

Arterials

3109 Nine arterials are shown on the plan diagram and described below.

3110 **Alpine Road.** Alpine Road serves as an arterial from Junipero Serra Boulevard to Portola Road. It is one of the two major arterials providing access to the majority of the planning area. It should remain as a two lane road within the town limits. This is described in detail in the Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan, Part 6.

3111 **Portola Road.** Portola Road should remain as a two lane road. As the main road through Portola Valley, it is important to control the development along the road and to carry out a planting program where natural vegetation is lacking. Buildings

should be well set back from the roadway in order to preserve the open qualities essential to the present rural quality of the valley. The corridor along Portola Road is discussed in detail in the Portola Road Corridor Plan, starting with Section 6400 of this General Plan.

- 3112 **Skyline Boulevard.** Skyline Boulevard is a State Scenic Highway. The general plan designates the route as a scenic corridor. It is envisioned that this will remain a two-lane facility passing through largely undeveloped land within the planning area. As a part of the scenic corridor, several stopping points with outstanding vistas are proposed. Also, the route will be a corridor for trails and paths. Special building setbacks and design controls should be maintained on lands fronting on the road.
- 3113 **Sand Hill Road.** That portion of Sand Hill Road from Junipero Serra Freeway to Portola Road should be adequate as a two-lane road.
- 3114 **Junipero Serra Boulevard.** Junipero Serra Boulevard is a two-lane facility within the planning area.
- 3115 **Old La Honda Road.** Most of Old La Honda Road is outside the planning area. It is shown, however, because it provides the principal access to the portion of Portola Valley along Skyline Boulevard and also because of its importance as a route between the bayside and coastside of the peninsula. This road, which would be very difficult to widen, will be pushed to its capacity limits.
- 3116 **Whiskey Hill Road.** Whiskey Hill Road is now developed as a two-lane road and should have sufficient capacity.
- 3117 **Arastradero Road.** Besides accommodating traffic to and from the residential areas in the Palo Alto Foothills, Arastradero Road provides an important link for some residents of the planning area traveling to the south Palo Alto area. Two lanes should be sufficient.
- 3118 **Page Mill Road.** Page Mill Road will be an important road providing access to and from residential development in the lower Palo Alto Hills and Los Altos Hills. In addition, it plays an important role as a connection between the lower portion of Palo Alto and the Skyline Scenic corridor and the Palo Alto Foothill Park.

Major Collectors

- 3119 The plan diagram indicates several major collectors: Westridge Drive, Alpine Road from Portola Road to Willowbrook Road, Los Trancos Road from Alpine Road to Los Trancos Woods, and the La Mesa-La Cuesta loop in Ladera.

Minor Collectors

- 3120 Some of the minor collectors indicated on the plan diagram are existing while others are proposed. The existing ones are proposed to follow essentially the existing alignments while the proposed routes are only general in location. Not all of the minor collectors are shown on the plan diagram. Additional minor collectors will be needed, and in the main these can be constructed in conjunction with private development.
- 3121 Alpine Road, from Willowbrook Drive, is designated a minor collector to its intersection with Ciervos Road (approximately 1,000 feet southeast of Joaquin Road). This length of road passes through a steep-sided, narrow canyon of great natural beauty. Accordingly, this canyon is designated as a greenway. This length of road can not be widened without great harm to the environment and should therefore remain a narrow road. It is likely it should remain a one-lane facility with increased places for passing. Southeast of Ciervos Road the grade and alignment are extremely poor and it is recommended that the road continue to be closed to other than emergency vehicles and used for trail and path purposes.
- 3122 While the comprehensive plan diagram does not show road connections from the floor of the valley to Skyline Boulevard within the planning area except for Old La Honda Road, it is recognized that some minor connections will be appropriate. Such connections should be for emergency purposes only.

Circulation Element Appendix 1: Implementation of the Circulation Element

Actions to date:

1. Alpine Road and Portola Road carry the major traffic in the town. The town has installed speed limits of 35 mph and 45 mph on these roads.

Future actions:

1. The intersection of Alpine Road- Junipero Serra Boulevard - Santa Cruz Avenue poses major traffic problems for residents of the town during morning and afternoon commute hours. The town should continue to work with neighboring jurisdictions to develop improvements to this intersection.
2. The town should monitor intersections on Alpine and Portola Roads to identify any safety problems and then develop appropriate traffic engineering solutions where problems require action.