



## *Shifting Gears from Speed and Efficiency to Health, Equity, and Safety*

### **The Need: Reprioritizing Values in Transportation Planning**

San Mateo County is not immune to congestion and there is a need for more transportation options beyond driving alone to work. For some, this mode shift is a choice, but for others, walk, biking, and using public transit are the only options. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS), 5% (13,930) of San Mateo County households lack access to a vehicle.[<sup>1</sup>] This group must rely on active transportation-walking and biking- or public transportation to achieve daily tasks, such as commuting to work and schools and grocery shopping. Despite active transportation being one of the healthiest mode choices, only 14% of San Mateo County residents commute by walking, biking, or using transit and almost 70% of residents rely on driving alone. The health benefits of walking and biking are numerous and are not limited to those who walk or bike, but even those using public transportation benefit from increased physical activity. Moreover, both active and public transportation help reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), which benefits all county residents.

One way to encourage walking or biking is through improving the existing infrastructure. When places have sidewalks, streetlights, and bike lanes, [residents are more likely to walk or bike<sup>2</sup>](#). Unfortunately, due to planning practices historically focused on moving the most number of cars through an intersection, cars have often received priority over walking and biking infrastructure in transportation planning. This idea of prioritizing cars in transportation planning has been based on a model of Level of Service (LOS), which evaluated transportation plans on the number of cars moving through a given intersection. This approach inherently disadvantaged modes such as walking and biking, since cars can usually move people faster.

A newer evaluation method is Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) that considers how a project contributes to California's state goals for reducing GHG, preserving open space, and promoting infill development, among others. This shift in evaluation metrics for projects has also been coupled with a shift toward Complete Streets designs that promote streets for all users, including walking and biking, and not just cars. While these new metrics and design ideas support walking and biking infrastructure, they are not used ubiquitously throughout planning processes or decisions yet.

*“Our biggest opportunity for increasing cyclists is that we live in an area of the state where cycling works. We have great weather, it's mostly flat, and we are pretty well connected to regional transit. We just have to figure out how to best utilize these opportunities so that we make cycling easy.”*

**—Emma Shlaes , Silicon Valley  
Bicycle Coalition**

## The Solution: Influence Planning Decisions & Funding

Silicon Valley Bike Coalition (SVBC) has played a pivotal role in balancing speed and efficiency with health, safety and equity. They are accomplishing this goal by:

- Fostering strategic partnerships with decision-makers, city and county staff, key influencers, and non-profits,
- Educating decision-makers on the benefits and importance of prioritizing walking and biking in transportation plans.
- Created Vision Zero Toolkit to support Daly City in passing a Vision Zero resolution and serve as a resource for other jurisdictions considering adopting Vision Zero policies.
- Ensuring low-income populations and people of color are able to contribute to, and benefit from, any new transportation plans in the County. Since communities are starting with varying levels of infrastructure and resources, it's imperative to start the work intentionally in communities with the fewest resources.

## The Essential Ingredient for Success: Securing Funding for Infrastructure Improvements

SVBC had two recent successes that illustrate their emphasis on health, safety and equity:

- Helped secured bike and pedestrian funding in the 2018 November Ballot: SVBC participated in the Get Us Moving Stakeholder Advisory Group to set the priorities for a November 2018 sales' tax [expenditure plan](#)[3]. SVBC staff was successful in meeting their goal for securing 5% of the expenditure plan to be dedicated to walking and biking projects, and they were influential in ensuring that a Complete Streets policy was required in any potential project. If the November 2018 ballot measure passes, they will continue this work next year with the technical advisory committee on implementing the funds.
- Helped secured funding for Dumbarton Rail Corridor improvements: SVBC has been active in the planning process for the Dumbarton Rail Corridor, and recently the project's planning coalition secured the funds needed through a public-private partnership with Facebook. This coalition of non-profits and government agencies worked for over a year to secure the funding for rail corridor improvements, and these [improvements](#)[4] will help ease traffic congestion and could include bus and bike lanes.
- Provided technical support in the development and design of the [Sand Hill bike lanes](#)[5], a high-collision intersection.



Photo: SVBC, Sand Hill Road Overcrossing

## Challenge: Long-Term Change Takes Time

Despite much of their success, SVBC has faced challenges as well. As for any organization working to create long-term change, it takes time. It has been a challenge trying to negotiate and compromise with varying government and other non-profits with different goals, missions, and priorities. Coalitions and partnerships with groups such as the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) led Transportation Equity Allied Movement Coalition (TEAMC) have proven beneficial as they have worked together to accomplish their shared goals. These [two groups worked together](#)<sup>[6]</sup> to see their goals met with the Get Us Moving expenditure plan.



Photo: SVBC, Transportation Equity Allied Movement Coalition (TEAMC) & SVBC

## Looking to the Future: Develop a Diverse Pipeline of Bike and Pedestrian Advocates

SVBC plans to train youth to serve on existing Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committees (BPACs). The intention is to have an informed and diverse pipeline of committee applicants. These trainings will start by the end of 2018, in time to begin work on SVBC's 2019 agenda.

## Citations

[1] 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS)

[2] Gotschi, Thomas and Mills, Kevin (2008). *Active Transportation for America, The Case for Federal Increased Investments in Bicycling and Walking*. Rails-to-Trails conservancy. Accessed: <https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=2948>

[3] San Mateo County Transit District (July 2018). *Get Us Moving San Mateo County Update*. Accessed: [http://www.samtrans.com/Assets/\\_\\_\\_Agendas+and+Minutes/SamTrans/Board+of+Directors/Presentations/2018/GUM+Update+-+July+2018.pdf](http://www.samtrans.com/Assets/___Agendas+and+Minutes/SamTrans/Board+of+Directors/Presentations/2018/GUM+Update+-+July+2018.pdf)

[4] San Mateo County Transit District (November 2017). *Dumbarton Transportation Corridor Study*. Accessed: [http://www.samtrans.com/Planning/Planning\\_and\\_Research/DumbartonTransportationCorridorStudy.html](http://www.samtrans.com/Planning/Planning_and_Research/DumbartonTransportationCorridorStudy.html)

[5] Waite, Jessica (July 2018). *WIN: The Story of the New Bike Lanes at San Hill Roas/280*. Silicon Valley Bike Coalition (SVBC) Blog. Accessed: <https://bikesiliconvalley.org/2018/07/16135/>

[6] Shlaes, Emma (July 2018). *San Mateo County Approves Transportation Ballot Measure Plan*. Silicon Valley Bike Coalition (SVBC) Blog. Accessed: <https://bikesiliconvalley.org/2018/07/samtrans-board-approves-transportation-ballot-measure-plan/>