

October 7, 2010

Planning Commission  
County of Humboldt

Re: Complete Streets Working Group Comments on the Circulation Element

Dear Commissioners,

These comments and the attached suggested edits to the Circulation Element Plan Alternatives Comparison Chart are submitted on behalf of the Complete Streets Working Group, a diverse group of transportation- and health-related organizations including the Humboldt Partnership for Active Living, Green Wheels, the Healthy Humboldt Coalition, California Center for Rural Policy and many others. We offer our gratitude to this Commission and to County staff who have worked so hard for a General Plan that will benefit generations to come. We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Circulation chapter of the County's General Plan Update.

### **Why "Complete Streets"?**

Both individually and collectively, all of our organizations experience an intense set of needs and interests around transportation safety, ease of access to basic goods and services, and reducing costs associated with transportation – especially at a time when any and all household expenditure reductions are important. We are grateful for the opportunity to revisit transportation policy and priorities to help local government and community organizations improve our ability to address those needs.

The nationwide movement to 'complete the streets' ([www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org)) and expand every community's transportation options has a strong hold in Humboldt County. The number of local organizations focusing on improving active modes of transportation, public transportation, coordination of transportation services, and working to reduce negative effects of the built environment on public health, is impressive by any measure.

For the last decade, numerous local elections have been framed around developing a regional multi-use trail system. From the Avenue of the Giants Community Plan effort a decade ago – where the second priority identified was a multi-use trail system – to Willow Creek and Hoopa's downtown revitalization efforts focused on bicycle and pedestrian safety, to the 'safe routes to schools movement', to continued expansion of the Hammond Trail in McKinleyville, it is clear that 'complete streets' is a very important issue to residents of Humboldt County.

Because our transportation system serves as the connective fiber between neighborhoods, schools, services, retail centers, and parks, it is an issue that is central to every resident, business and organization. Like all communities across the U.S., our transportation infrastructure and policy has been geared primarily toward one mode of transportation, and we collectively feel that it is broadly understood and accepted – locally and nationally – that it is time to diversify our transportation portfolio. Some of this work is already underway, and the best way to ensure that programmatic, development and funding priorities match community priorities is through policy and process.

We also believe that an increasing policy emphasis on active and public modes of transportation will simultaneously provide numerous compounded benefits, making investment in these modes very cost-effective. Providing options that reduce reliance on automobiles is a proven strategy

for decreasing household and business expenditures, improving community health, reducing air and water pollution, and increases foot-traffic in commercial areas, benefiting the local economy. Increased use of public transit and active transportation reduces greenhouse gas emissions, traffic congestion, parking demand, and energy consumption, helping us to meet increasingly stringent guidelines for emissions reduction.

Complete Streets policy ensures that all users of the transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users as well as children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities, are able to travel safely and conveniently on streets and highways. Complete streets are functional transportation networks for all modes, including sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit routes, resulting in an integrated transportation network that provides equal consideration for all modes of travel.

In addition, Humboldt County has been pursuing \$50 million for an active transportation system via the proposed Active Community Transportation Act, a marker bill supported by Congressman Mike Thompson in the federal transportation bill reauthorization. To be competitive with larger and urban communities, it is clear from the language in the ACT Act that Humboldt County policy and programs must seek to prioritize shifting short trips from motorized to non-motorized modes. Complete Streets policies and decisionmaking processes that result in the successful function of active and public transportation networks will be a significant measure of competitiveness for funding.

States, counties and towns throughout the country are adopting Complete Streets policies to achieve communities that are healthier and more sustainable. In 2008, California recently adopted AB 1358, directing local governments to consider "complete streets" as part of their General Plans. Likewise, the California Department of Transportation, through Deputy Directive 64-R1, requires that transportation improvement projects improve safety, access and mobility for all users. The California Department of Transportation's *Smart Mobility Framework* guide, through the Office of Community Planning, uses complete streets policies to provide context sensitive solutions to improve location-efficient community design and regional accessibility for all transportation users in all place types across California.

By adopting a Complete Streets framework, Humboldt County can join the vision across the U.S. to create a safe, healthy, connected transportation network for the efficient movement of people and goods.

If there are questions or need for clarification, please contact HumPAL at 269-2056 or [noelle@Nrsrcaa.org](mailto:noelle@Nrsrcaa.org). Thank you for your time and dedication to completion of the General Plan Update.

Sincerely,



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