



Visioning Workshop – November 8, 2012

Workshop Summary

On November 8, 2012 five Santa Cruz County community members participated in a workshop about the Transit Corridors Plan for Sustainable Communities held at Watsonville City Hall. The format of this workshop was similar to the previous workshops in this series, though it was adjusted for the smaller group. The purpose of the meeting was to provide community members with a background of the Plan, including a brief summary of existing conditions, and to engage in a discussion about sustainability, within the context of Santa Cruz County, to provide a foundation for the Plan going forward.

1. Workshop Overview

The workshop consisted of two main parts. First, County staff opened with a presentation introducing the purpose and structure of the Plan. The presentation also included a brief review of some of the findings of the Existing Conditions Report, including key land use, transportation, and economic findings – three fields which share an interrelationship in regards to sustainability – in the Study Area. The existing conditions information provided a reference from which the community could participate in the second part of the workshop.

The second part of the workshop consisted of a “World Café” small group discussion, where participants formed one group of the five attendees and county staff, to talk about sustainability in Santa Cruz County. County staff took notes as the participants discussed three questions, which were designed to focus the discussion on sustainability. In this format, participants were able to interact and formulate ideas amongst each other, allowing for a cross-fertilization of ideas in an informal setting, while County staff were available to answer questions and assist where needed. The discussion questions are below:

- 1. What does sustainability mean to you, relating to concepts such as environment, equity, and economy?***
- 2. What are the ways that we can become more sustainable in Santa Cruz County?***
- 3. Of the ways to achieve more sustainable communities identified in the prior conversations, which five ideas are most important for Santa Cruz County?***

As the group of participants moved from one question to the next, they were able to use the notes and ideas from the prior question as a reference to spur the next discussion. Photographs of the notes from discussion questions 1 and 2 can be found in Appendix A.

For Question 3, the group wrote down their top ideas on index cards, which were then posted on the wall. The five participants then reviewed these cards, and placed four adhesive dots next to the ideas that they liked the best, or felt were most important. Photographs of the index cards with adhesive dots can be found in Appendix B.

2. Common Themes in Response to Questions 1 and 2

During this workshop, respondents focused on a few important topics. There was less diversity of ideas, due to the small size of the group, than there had been at other workshops. The ideas brought up in answer to the first two questions fell primarily into three categories:

Commute Solutions

Similar to other workshops, participants at this meeting stressed the various impacts of the extensive in- and out-commuting between Watsonville and the surrounding unincorporated areas. The Highway 1 commute, both north to Santa Cruz and South to Monterey, was seen as particularly problematic. The delays and congestion on Highway 1 are seen as a major negative for quality of life in South County. Families are stressed when both parents need to commute far from home to find work, or live far from work to find affordable housing. Also, the rail corridor was mentioned as a possible solution for some of the trips heading north from Watsonville, either through commuter rail service or a separated bike path.

Job training and growth

The jobs that are located in this part of the County don't match the skills of the people who live there. Participants mentioned the loss of industrial and manufacturing jobs in recent years, and commented on the increase in commuting as a result. Also, the professional level jobs are often filled by workers who live outside of Watsonville and commute in. Balancing the jobs in the area with the skills of the workers living there was a key concern of meeting participants. Job training programs, both during and after high school, were seen as an important component, as was the economic development approach of attracting employers that could employ the existing workforce.

Safe routes to School

Congestion around school sites is a common problem throughout the County, and was mentioned by meeting participants at this meeting as a major concern. The difficulty of picking up and dropping off elementary and middle school students was seen as particularly problematic. Improvements to bike and pedestrian infrastructure was suggested as an option for relieving some of the car traffic that clogs the streets at school sites. Green Valley Road was highlighted as a corridor lacking in pedestrian and bike amenities to make it safe for non vehicle use.

3. Ways for the County to Promote Sustainable Communities (Question 3)

Appendix B contains photographs of the index cards identifying the most important ways for the County to promote sustainable communities. Ideas generally related to land use and urban design, transportation, economy, and natural resources. The following list generalizes the most common ideas provided in response to Question 3.

1. "Fix" Highway 1.
2. Address congestion at school sites, elementary to post-secondary.
3. Educational equity – train local workers to fill local jobs.

Appendices

- A. Group Discussion Posters
- B. Index Cards of Best Ideas for Sustainability

A P P E N D I X A

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
POSTERS



②

Jobs - Housing connection -

- Why do people commute?
 - Housing affordability
 - Public Schools - quality of education
- Need more good local jobs
 - Industrial jobs
- Provide consumer options close to Housing
 - or change housing patterns
- Reduce commute times: Congestion
- Different Types of Housing

2 cont

- Ensure local workers have the skills to fill local jobs.
- Local lower-skill workers commute to Monterey, North County, Bay Area
 - Hospitality, Retail, Service
- Stress of 2 parents commuting.
 - Equity Issue

#3 ¹⁾ Carpooling / Alt. modes / ^{Hwy 1} Meeting

FIX HWY 1

Transportation technology/modes @ Transit Centers - better connections to true destinations

① FIX HWY 1

Safe routes
to school.

② Jobs - More in S. County -
near housing.

③ Transp. connections to Transit.

④ Educational equity - local workers
need the skills to fill local jobs

⑤ Improve Ped/Bike Infrastructure
and destinations.

- Green Valley corridor
- Holihan / East Lake

⑥ Access to Public Institutions
Address congestion

old style more pleasing + more walkable

Soguel is the old Highway 1

rail corridor has a role

"Buddliners" - one ~~to~~ car + trains
1/2 freight 1/2 passenger

Commuter use requires track upgrade for higher speed. Consider as alt. to Watsonville - Santa Cruz commute.

Metro - more express service (frequency)

more peo. from Wat out-commute than in S.C. or Capitola

A P P E N D I X B

INDEX CARDS OF BEST IDEAS FOR
SUSTAINABILITY




Fix Highway 7

~~access~~

address congestion
at UCSC, Cabrillo,
local schools
(safe routes to school)

Educational equity-
local workers need
skills for local jobs



Jobs in south
county near
housing

Mixed + neighborhood
use
services +
retail



Trans. connections
out from transit
centers



Use of the
rail corridor

Ped. infrastructure
bike lane maintenance