



CIRCULATION ELEMENT

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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



County of Santa Barbara
Planning and Development
123 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

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Former Circulation Element Cover – Replaced March 2009

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CIRCULATION ELEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION^{1 2}

The Circulation Element is one of the seven Elements mandated by State law for inclusion in County and City General Plans. The Circulation Element identifies key roadway links throughout the unincorporated areas of the County, and along with the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, guides decisions regarding new development. The objective of this Element is to provide clear traffic capacity guidelines that are intended to maintain acceptable levels of service on the County's roadways and intersections, while allowing reasonable growth within the communities of the unincorporated area.

The Element applies to all roadways and intersections within the unincorporated area of the County, with the exception of those roadways and intersections located within an area included in an adopted community or area plan (See Circulation Policy A). In addition, the Element applies standards to projects within the unincorporated area that create impacts to over-capacity intersections within incorporated cities.

The remainder of this Element is divided into four sections. The first section provides definitions of the terms used in this Element. The second section describes the County's roadway classification system. The third section provides a set of roadway and intersection standards and a methodology for determining project consistency with those standards. The fourth section includes the policy statements of this Element.

II. DEFINITIONS³

Acceptable Capacity: The maximum number of Average Daily Trips (ADTs) that are acceptable for normal operations of a given roadway. As defined by this Element, Acceptable Capacity for a given roadway is a percentage at or between 53 and 80 percent of Design Capacity, depending upon applicable Special Roadway Condition Factors. As defined by this Element, Base Acceptable Capacity is considered to be 80 percent of Design Capacity.

Beneficial Projects: Beneficial Projects are:

- a. Residential projects in which 50 percent of the units developed are affordable as defined by the County's affordable housing guidelines, or
- b. Residential projects in which 25 percent of the units developed are available to low income buyers/renters per the County's affordable housing guidelines, or Projects proposed by non-profit entities or governmental agencies which will provide public access to sites of significant historical, cultural, or natural resource value, and/or provide essential health, safety, welfare or other community services needs. The applicability of this provision to individual projects shall be

subject to a determination by the Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors.

Estimated Future Level of Service: For a given intersection, the County-accepted level of service (LOS) based on existing traffic levels and on traffic to be generated by approved but not yet occupied projects as referenced in the public draft environmental documents for the development project under review. The Estimated Future Level of Service must consider all funded but not yet constructed improvements that are planned for completion prior to the project's occupancy. This includes mitigations from projects that have been approved by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors but are not yet constructed.

Estimated Future Volume: For a given roadway segment, the most recent County-accepted count of Average Daily Trips (ADTs) plus any ADTs associated with approved projects that are not yet occupied as referenced in the public draft environmental document for the development project under review.

Design Capacity: The maximum number of ADTs that a given roadway can accommodate, based upon roadway design as determined by the County Public Works Department. Design Capacity usually equates to Level of Service (LOS) E/F.

Policy Capacity: The capacity figure in ADTs that is specified for each roadway classification in Section III of this Element (e.g., 5000 ADTs for Collectors).

Remaining Capacity: For a given roadway, the difference between the Acceptable Capacity and the Estimated Future Volume in ADTs.

Special Roadway Condition Factors: Four special categories that can be applied to a given roadway. Special Roadway Condition Factors categories denote that special conditions exist on a given roadway which merit a reduction in the Base Acceptable Capacity of 80 percent of design capacity. The geometries category shall be applied to roadways based upon the presence of curves, slopes, narrow pavement, etc., which substantially limit sight distance, maneuverability, etc. The design category shall be applied based upon prevalence of driveways, intersections, or other access points which produce substantial turning movement conflicts, etc. The special usage category shall be applied to roadways which have substantial current or projected use by pedestrians, bicycles, equestrians, agricultural equipment or other non-automobile uses. The on-street parking category shall be applied to roadways with a current or projected prevalence of on-street parking, including commercial loading areas. Special Roadway Condition Factors shall be applied in the following manner:

APPLICATION OF SPECIAL ROADWAY CONDITION FACTORS

No. of Applicable Categories on a Given Roadway	Acceptable Capacity (Expressed as Percent of Design Capacity)
0	80%
1	73%
2	66%
3	59%
4	53%

III. ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM⁴

The roadway classification system consists of seven basic functional classes of roads. The seven roadway classes are as follows:

Freeway: A four or six lane divided arterial highway with full control of access and with grade separations at intersections. As the highest type of road facility, Freeways provide maximum service and safety for through traffic. Freeways serve as the principal arterials of the inter and intra-state system of highways, carrying traffic between cities, traffic generators and points of interest.

Policy Capacity*:

Four Lane Urban: 67,000 ADT
Four Lane Rural: 44,000 ADT
Six Lane Urban: 100,000 ADT
Six Lane Rural: 67,000 ADT

*Assumes 10% Peak Hour, 60% Directional
2,000 Vehicles/Hour Lane Capacity (Urban)
1,300 Vehicles/Hour Lane Capacity (Rural)

Expressway: A four lane arterial highway with at least partial control of access which may or may not be divided or have grade separations at intersections. As a secondary type of intercity or community highway, Expressways carry much of the traffic between important centers of activity and employment.

Policy Capacity*:

Urban: 50,000 ADT
Rural: 33,000 ADT

*Assumes 10% Peak Hour, 60% Directional
1,500 Vehicles/Hour Lane Capacity (Urban)
1,000 Vehicles/Hour Lane Capacity (Rural)

Policy Capacity*: 5,000 ADT

*Policy capacity for this road category is limited not by the physical capacity of the road section, but rather by the desirability of maintaining an acceptable traffic level which will not adversely affect residential neighborhood qualities.

IV. ROADWAY PROJECT AND INTERSECTION CONSISTENCY STANDARDS FOR DETERMINATION OF PROJECT CONSISTENCY⁵

A. Purpose:

This section defines how the policy capacity levels that are defined for the various roadway classifications in this Element will be applied in making findings of project consistency with this Element. This section also defines intersection standards in terms of level of service and provides methodology for determining project consistency with these standards. The intent of this section is to ensure that remaining roadway and intersection capacities are equitably allocated between projects until capital improvements are carried out or until formal updates to this Element or the Land Use Element are performed that will implement new roadway and intersection standards, and/or new land use designations. The standards prescribed in this section shall also serve as a basis for circulation capital improvement planning and funding.

B. Roadway Standards:

The policy capacities provided in this Element shall be used as guidelines for evaluating consistency with this section of this Element. A project's consistency with this section shall be determined as follows:

- a. A project that would contribute ADTs to a roadway where the Estimated Future Volume does not exceed the policy capacity would be considered consistent with this section of this Element.
- b. For roadways where the Estimated Future Volume exceeds the policy capacity but does not exceed the Acceptable Capacity, a project would be considered consistent with this section of this Element only if the number of ADTs contributed by the project to the roadway was less than or equal to 2 percent of the remaining capacity of that roadway or 40 ADT, whichever is greater.
- c. For roadways where the Estimated Future Volume exceeds the acceptable capacity but does not exceed Design Capacity, a project would be considered consistent with this section of this Element only if the number of ADTs contributed by the project to the roadway does not exceed 25 ADT.
- d. For roadways where the Estimated Future Volume exceeds the design capacity, a project would be consistent with this section of this Element only if the number of ADTs contributed by the project to the roadway does not exceed 10 ADT.

C. Exceptions/Special Applications for Roadway Standards:

Notwithstanding Section B above, consistency of Beneficial Projects with roadway standards shall be evaluated as follows:

- a. A Beneficial Project that would contribute ADTs to a roadway where the estimated future volume does not exceed the policy capacity would be considered consistent with this section of this Element.
- b. For roadways where the Estimated Future Volume exceeds the Policy Capacity but does not exceed the Acceptable Capacity, a Beneficial Project would be considered consistent with this section of this Element only if (1) the number of ADTs contributed by the project to the roadway was less than or equal to 5 percent of the Remaining Capacity of that roadway or 40 ADT, whichever is greater, or (2) a finding is made by the Board of Supervisors that the roadway can accommodate the additional ADTs given specific roadway characteristics and cumulative project trips.
- c. For roadways where the Estimated Future Volume exceeds the Acceptable Capacity, a Beneficial Project would be considered consistent with this section of this Element only if: (1) the number of ADTs contributed by the project to the roadway is less than or equal to 2 percent of the difference between the design capacity and the Estimated Future Volume or 25 ADTs, whichever is greater; or (2) a finding is made by the Board of Supervisors that the roadway can accommodate the additional ADTs given specific roadway characteristics and cumulative project trips.⁶

D. Intersection Standards:

1. Projects contributing PHTs (peak hour trips) to intersections that operate at an Estimated Future Level of Service that is better than LOS C shall be found consistent with this section of this Element unless the project results in a change in V/C (volume/capacity) ratio greater than 0.20 for an intersection operating at LOS A or 0.15 for an intersection operating at LOS B.
2. For intersections operating at an Estimated Future Level of Service that is less than or equal to LOS "C", a project must meet the following criteria in order to be found consistent with this section of this Element.
 - For intersections operating at an Estimated Future Level of Service C, no project must result in a change of V/C ratio greater than 0.10.
 - For intersections operating at an estimated future Level of Service D, no project shall contribute 15 or more Peak Hour Trips.
 - For intersections operating at an Estimated Future level of Service E, no project shall contribute 10 or more Peak Hour Trips.

- For intersections operating at an Estimated Future Level of Service F, no project shall contribute 5 or more Peak Hour Trips.
- 3. Where a project's traffic contribution does not result in a measurable change in the V/C ratio at an intersection but does result in a finding of inconsistency with Intersection Standard 2 above, intersection improvements that are acceptable to the Public Works Department shall be required in order to make a finding of consistency with these intersection standards. A measurable change in V/C ratio shall be defined as a change greater than or equal to 0.01.⁷
- 4. Where a project's traffic contribution does result in a measurable change in V/C ratio and also results in a finding of inconsistency with Intersection Standards 1 or 2, above, intersection improvements that are sufficient to fully offset the change in V/C ratio associated with the project shall be required in order to make a finding of consistency with these intersection standards.⁸
- 5. The above intersection standards shall also apply to all projects which generate Peak Hour Trips to intersections within incorporated cities that are operating at levels of service worse than those permitted by the city's Circulation Element.

E. Exemptions:

Roadway and Intersection standards stated above shall not apply to:

- a. Land use permits and coastal development permits if the Zoning Administrator/Planning Commission/Board of Supervisors has taken final action on a valid prerequisite discretionary approval (e.g. FDP, CUP) and a finding of Comprehensive Plan consistency was made at the time of approval, and no substantial change has occurred in the project.
- b. Project applications deemed complete prior to October 1, 1991 which are designed to serve as a mitigation measure for, and were expressly embodied as a condition of approval of a previously approved project.
- c. Projects for which a settlement agreement between the property owner and the County was entered into prior to December 3, 1991.
- d. Development Agreements for projects for which a Final Development Plan was approved prior to October 1, 1991, and for which a Settlement Agreement expressly contemplates the County will enter into a Development Agreement for such projects in order to conclude the settlement.
- e. Affordable Housing Overlay designated sites and special need facilities as defined in the Housing Element.^{9 10}

- f. Projects within the Isla Vista Master Plan Area. The Isla Vista community is located adjacent to the region's largest employer and is primarily a developed urban area. In addition, it is the intent of the Master Plan to encourage the development of basic commercial services within Isla Vista to minimize the necessity of trips outside the area.¹¹

V. Circulation Element Policies¹²

- A. The roadway classifications, intersection levels of service, and capacity levels adopted in this Element shall apply to all roadways and intersections within the unincorporated area of the County, with the exception of those roadways and intersections located within an area included in an adopted community area plan. Roadway classifications, intersection levels of service, and capacity levels adopted as part of any community or area plan subsequent to the adoption of this Element shall supersede any standards included as part of this Element.
 1. For the communities of Summerland, Montecito, Goleta, Los Alamos, Mission Canyon, Orcutt and the area of Toro Canyon, and the Santa Ynez Valley area please see the Circulation chapters of the Summerland, Montecito, Goleta, Los Alamos, Mission Canyon, and Orcutt Community Plans and the Toro Canyon Plan and Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan sections of the Coastal Land Use Plan and the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan for the specific Policies and Actions which implement this policy.^{13 14 15 16 17 18 19}
 2. For the community of Los Alamos, please see the Circulation chapter of the Los Alamos Community Plan section of the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Element for specific policies and actions that implement this policy.²⁰
- B. Individual community and area plans adopted subsequent to this Element shall strive to achieve a balance between designated land uses and roadway and intersection capacity. These community and area plans shall identify areas where increased traffic may create noise levels that could potentially exceed the policies and standards of the Noise Element of the Comprehensive Plan and to the extent feasible, include policies, land use changes and other mitigations to reduce these impacts to insignificance.
- C. The County shall continue to develop programs that encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation including, but not limited to, an updated bicycle route plan, park and ride facilities, and transportation demand management ordinances.
- D. The County shall maintain a seven-year Capital Improvement Plan. The Plan shall be updated by the Public Works Department and presented to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors for review at a public hearing before

each body on an annual basis. The Plan shall contain a list of transportation projects to be undertaken ranked in relative priority order and include estimated cost, and if known, estimated delivery year for each project.

- E. A determination of project consistency with the standards and policies of this Element shall constitute a determination of project consistency with the Land Use Element's Land Use Development Policy #4 with regard to roadway and intersection capacity.

TABLE 1

SAMPLE APPLICATION OF CIRCULATION ELEMENT STANDARDS TO SELECTED ROADWAYS									
ROADWAY	EXISTING VOLUME	POLICY CAPACITY	DESIGN CAPACITY	53% ACCEPTABLE CAPACITY	ADTs ALLOWED	66% ACCEPTABLE CAPACITY	ADTs ALLOWED	80% ACCEPTABLE CAPACITY	ADTs ALLOWED
Foster	6,000	5,000	11,800	6,254	40	7,788	40	9,440	68
Lakeview	8,500	5,000	11,800	6,254	25	7,788	25	9,440	40
Bradley (2 lane)	15,000	10,000	16,000	8,480	25	10,560	25	12,800	25
Edison	6,000	5,000	11,800	6,254	40	7,788	40	9,440	68
McMurray	5,000	5,000	11,800	6,254	40	7,788	55	9,440	88
Hot Springs (S. of East Valley)	10,700	10,000	16,000	8,480	25	10,560	25	12,800	42
Embarcadero Del Mar	7,200	5,000	11,800	6,254	25	7,788	40	9,440	44
Calle Real (W. of Glen Annie)	9,900	5,000	11,800	6,254	25	7,788	25	9,440	25

Circulation Element Maps

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Circulation Element
CIRC-1 (1" = 8,000')

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Circulation Element
Carpinteria Area
CIRC-2 (1" = 1,000')

Summerland Community Plan
Circulation Element (1" = 300')

Montecito Community Plan
Circulation Element (1" = 1,000')

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Santa Barbara Area Circulation Map
Goleta Community Plan Circulation Element Map²¹
CIRC-3 (1" = 1,000')

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Circulation Element
²²Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan Circulation Element Map²³
Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan Bikeways Map

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Circulation Element
Lompoc Area
CIRC-5 (1" = 1,000')

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Circulation Element
Santa Maria-Orcutt Area
CIRC-6 (1" = 1,000')

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Circulation Element
Guadalupe-Casmalia Area
CIRC-7 (1" = 2,000')

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Circulation Element

Los Alamos Area
CIRC-8 (1"= 600')

Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan
Circulation Element
Cuyama Valley Area
CIRC-9 (1"= 2,000')

Mission Canyon Community Plan
Circulation Element²⁴

NOTE: As a new community plan is adopted for each planning area in the County, new Circulation Element Maps will be adopted for that planning area.²⁵

CITATIONS

- ¹ [Resolution No. 80-566](#) (Case No. 77-GP-11) Adopted December 22nd, 1980 (Adopted Circulation Element)
- ² [Resolution No. 91-696](#) (Case No. 91-GP-005) Adopted December 3, 1991, (Added the following sections in their entirety: I. Introduction, II. Definitions, IV Roadway and Intersection Standards for Determination of Project Consistency, V Circulation Element Policies. Section III Roadway Classification System deleted sentences from introductory paragraph, changed Expressway Rural Capacity from 33,333 to 33,000, Collector Road changed word “traffic” capacity to “policy” capacity in last paragraph. Circulation Element Maps added “Note” statement)
- ³ [Resolution No. 91-696](#) (Case No. 91-GP-005) Adopted December 3, 1991, (Added the following sections in their entirety: I. Introduction, II. Definitions, IV Roadway and Intersection Standards for Determination of Project Consistency, V Circulation Element Policies. Section III Roadway Classification System deleted sentences from introductory paragraph, changed Expressway Rural Capacity from 33,333 to 33,000, Collector Road changed word “traffic” capacity to “policy” capacity in last paragraph. Circulation Element Maps added “Note” statement)
- ⁴ [Resolution No. 91-696](#) (Case No. 91-GP-005) Adopted December 3, 1991, (Added the following sections in their entirety: I. Introduction, II. Definitions, IV Roadway and Intersection Standards for Determination of Project Consistency, V Circulation Element Policies. Section III Roadway Classification System deleted sentences from introductory paragraph, changed Expressway Rural Capacity from 33,333 to 33,000, Collector Road changed word “traffic” capacity to “policy” capacity in last paragraph. Circulation Element Maps added “Note” statement)
- ⁵ [Resolution No. 91-696](#) (Case No. 91-GP-005) Adopted December 3, 1991, (Added the following sections in their entirety: I. Introduction, II. Definitions, IV Roadway and Intersection Standards for Determination of Project Consistency, V Circulation Element Policies. Section III Roadway Classification System deleted sentences from introductory paragraph, changed Expressway Rural Capacity from 33,333 to 33,000, Collector Road changed word “traffic” capacity to “policy” capacity in last paragraph. Circulation Element Maps added “Note” statement)
- ⁶ [Resolution No. 91-696](#) (Case No. 91-GP-005) Amended December 3rd, 1991 (Added Section C(b) (2))
- ⁷ [Resolution No. 93-602](#) (Case No. 93-GP-012) Amended November 9th, 1993 (Amended D subsection 3)
- ⁸ [Resolution No. 93-602](#) (Case No. 93-GP-012) Amended November 9th, 1993 (Amended D subsection 4)
- ⁹ [Resolution No. 93-602](#) (Case No. 93-GP-012) Amended November 9th, 1993 (Added Exemptions section E)
- ¹⁰ [Resolution No. 95-81](#) (Case No. 94-GP-006) Amended February 21st, 1995 (Amended Exemptions section E)
- ¹¹ [Resolution No. 07-260](#) Adopted August 21, 2007. (Adopted changes to Circulation Element regarding Isla Vista Master Plan).
- ¹² [Resolution No. 91-696](#) (Case No. 91-GP-005) Adopted December 3, 1991, (Added the following sections in their entirety: I. Introduction, II. Definitions, IV Roadway and Intersection Standards for Determination of Project Consistency, V Circulation Element Policies. Section III Roadway Classification System deleted sentences from introductory paragraph, changed Expressway Rural Capacity from 33,333 to 33,000, Collector Road changed word “traffic” capacity to “policy” capacity in last paragraph. Circulation Element Maps added “Note” statement)

- ¹³ [Resolution No. 92-308](#) (Case No. 92-GP-9) Amended May 19th, 1992 (Added original section A.1 specific to Summerland)
- ¹⁴ [Resolution No. 92-514](#) (Case No. 92-GP-016) Amended September, 1992 (Added Montecito section under A.1)
- ¹⁵ [Resolution No. 93-400](#) (Case No. 92-GP-026) Amended July 20th, 1993 (Added Goleta section under A.1)
- ¹⁶ [Resolution No. 02-064](#) (Case No. 01-002) Amended February 25, 2002 (Added Toro Canyon section under A.1) Previous resolutions include Resolution No. 92-308 (Case No. 92-GP-9) Amended May 19, 1992; Resolution No. 92-514 (Case No. 92-GP-016) Amended September 15, 1992; Resolution No. 93-400 (Case No. 92-GP-026) Amended July 20, 1993;
- ¹⁷ [Resolution No. 97-315](#) (Case No. 96-GP-017) Amended July 22nd, 1997 (Added Orcutt section under A.1)
- ¹⁸ [Resolution No.09-287](#) (Case No. 90GPA-00000-00002) Amended October 6, 2009 (Added Santa Ynez Valley section A.1)
- ¹⁹ [Resolution No. 14-81](#) (Case No. 11GPA-00000-00006) Amended April 1, 2014 (Added Mission Canyon Community Plan Circulation Element)
- ²⁰ [Resolution No. 94-97](#) (Case No. 92-GP-23) Amended February 8th, 1994 (Added section A.2)
- ²¹ [Resolution No. 93-400](#) (Case No. 92-GP-026) Amended July 20, 1993 (Amended Circulation Element Maps)
- ²² [Resolution No.09-287](#) (Case No. 90GPA-00000-00002) Amended October 6, 2009 (Retired Santa Ynez Valley Area CIRC-4 Map)
- ²³ [Resolution No.09-287](#) (Case No. 90GPA-00000-00002) Amended October 6, 2009 (Added Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan Circulation Element Map and Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan Bikeways Map)
- ²⁴ [Resolution No. 14-81](#) (Case No. 11 GPA-00000-00006) Amended April 1, 2014 (Added Mission Canyon Community Plan Circulation Element Map)
- ²⁵ [Resolution No. 91-696](#) (Case No. 91-GP-005) Adopted December 3, 1991, (Added the following sections in their entirety: I. Introduction, II. Definitions, IV Roadway and Intersection Standards for Determination of Project Consistency, V Circulation Element Policies. Section III Roadway Classification System deleted sentences from introductory paragraph, changed Expressway Rural Capacity from 33,333 to 33,000, Collector Road changed word “traffic” capacity to “policy” capacity in last paragraph. Circulation Element Maps added “Note” statement)