

DATE: September 5, 2015  
TO: CAC Members and Staff  
FROM: Stephen Levy  
SUBJECT: Points to Discuss on Transportation Element

1. I encourage the City to collect more information to guide the development of programs that reduce auto travel, especially single occupancy travel.

--I support the City asking businesses to provide a map of where employees live. We could start with downtown, Cal Ave, and Stanford Research Park employers

--I support collection of more surveys of employee commuting behavior and preferences such as was done for a few downtown employers. Perhaps we could start with Stanford Research Park employers and employees.

2. I would like to discuss and clarify what we mean by reduce congestion. I see two distinct possible interpretations.

--One is to reduce congestion compared to what it would have been without policies to reduce auto use. A whole range of policies from carpooling to incentives for public transit use to carpooling could be effective here and subject to considering costs, I support these policies and programs.

--Another interpretation is to reduce congestion compared to what it is today. I am skeptical that this can be done easily or without unintended consequences or great cost and would like programs that have this goal to be subject to cost and impact analyses.

My skepticism does not mean we should not try or should not adopt cost effective programs where costs are both monetary and environmental. It does mean I do not favor adopting goals that are unrealistic or overpromise.

Here is one of my concerns. As a region we did very well in having drivers shift away from single occupancy driving and I hope we continue the trend. Yet at the same time, our roads are more congested and both BART and CalTrain, despite capacity increases are more crowded.

But this was a great achievement in handling the dramatic increase in travel demand from our continuing regional growth.

**Workers in the San Francisco Bay Area made the nation's most dramatic shift from commuting via automobile to using alternative transportation between 2006 and 2013, according to a new [Census Bureau report](#).**

**Commuting by private car in the densely populated region, including carpooling, dropped from 73.6 percent of workers in 2006 to 69.8 percent seven years later, giving it the nation's third highest level of alternative commuting.**

Read more here: <http://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article31010712.html#storylink=cpy>

In light of this experience I think it is reasonable for the CAC to discuss what reducing congestion should mean in the context of the Comp Plan and what is reasonable to tell residents to expect.

### **A First Cut at Increasing Travel Demand**

I looked up data on per capita travel. It was national and only up to 2009 so I will look further for local data. But average travel was around 4 trips per capita.

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/2013cpr/chap1.cfm>

For the past five years the three peninsula counties have averaged 36,000 added residents per year. Even if that declines to say 25,000 per year that will mean 500,000 more trip demand in 2020 compared to 2015 (25,000 added residents time 4 trips per resident times five years).

I have no idea how this translates to Palo Alto except that the existing conditions report cites that most travel in PA comes from people coming here so the regional growth does impact us.

Handling the growth in travel demand seems like quite a challenge to my eyes.

3. I would like to see cost effectiveness added as a criterion for evaluating policies and programs. I think environmental impacts like the impact on air pollution and climate change are also important criteria along with mobility and cost.
4. I would like to see some commitment that Palo Alto residents and businesses should help fund new transportation investments. This is

particularly important for me with regard to CalTrain right of way improvements like grade separation and trenching.

5. I support the bike and pedestrian safety and access improvements. As one who is not able to drive or bike, I do walk a lot and although I always feel safe, I appreciate the concerns of those who feel less safe.
6. I would like to explore more the concept of charging for parking and the impacts of subsidizing parking by not charging anywhere near the full costs.
7. Finally, and although I am not able to drive, I would like some appreciation for the continuing importance of car use and ease for many residents along with the goals about reduced car use and environmental impacts. To my eye it is possible to read the transportation element and come away with the feeling that residents think cars and drivers are somehow evil and should be punished.