



From Mission St in Daly City, to El Camino Real and The Alameda in San Jose

The Grand Boulevard Initiative
% San Mateo County Transit District
Department of Planning & Development
P.O. Box 3006
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306

Ms Brandi Allen
Conference and Education Director
Alliance for Innovation
ballen@transformgov.org

Dear Ms Allen:

Attached please find a Case Study we submit for consideration for the “How **Bold** Can Government Be” conference. The application is for a program that features an unusual structure, but we hope you will find it valuable for the attendees and other Alliance members.

Our program is operated by a consortium of 19 cities, 2 counties, three countywide agencies, the State Department of Transportation and several regional agencies. The policy-setting body also includes representatives of labor, business and environmental groups. The program is administered by the San Mateo County Transit District. We are informed by Federal representatives there is no other program quite like ours. But we feel this will be the future for many local services.

The structure of local government is well adapted to certain challenges, so those services are not seen as problems; sewer treatment facilities would be an example. However, our structure is not amenable to other challenges, so those services do pose problems; mobility issues would be an example.

But our citizens identify strongly with their small cities, meaning the structure of local government is unlikely to change. Our choice, therefore, seems to be limited to the creation of large, regional governments, a federated approach, or acceptance of the problems. We have chosen the federated approach.

Details are presented in the attached narrative.

We hope you are comfortable showing our innovative approach. We feel this type of structure will become more common, as we all achieve success in dealing with regional issues.

Sincerely yours,

Corinne Goodrich, Strategic Development Manager
San Mateo County Transit District



From Mission St in Daly City, to El Camino Real and The Alameda in San Jose

A Cover Sheet for a Case Study presentation for the 2011 Transforming Local Government Conference

The Grand Boulevard Initiative (GBI), a study of Collaboration and Partnerships

The GBI is a collaboration of 19 California cities (Daly City, Colma, South San Francisco, San Bruno, Millbrae, Burlingame, Hillsborough, San Mateo, Belmont, San Carlos, Redwood City, Atherton, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, San Jose) and two counties (San Mateo, Santa Clara). Other participants are the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans), the Valley Transportation Agency (VTA), the San Mateo County/City Association of Governments (C/CAG), Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network, the San Mateo County Economic Development Association (SAMCEDA), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the (Bay Area) Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), as well as representatives of business, labor and the environmental community. In addition, a number of other agencies participate as partners, including the San Mateo County Housing Department and the Public Health Agency.

The area involved lies between San Francisco and San Jose and involves all cities and counties through which State Highway 82, El Camino Real, runs. It extends for 46.4 miles.

Project Leader – Primary Contact

Ms Corinne Goodrich, Strategic Development Manager
Department of Planning & Development
San Mateo County Transit District
P.O. Box 3006
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306

(650) 508-6369

goodrichc@samtrans.com

Presenting Team Members:

Mr. Chris Augenstein, Deputy Director of Planning
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Agency
3331 North First St., Building B2
San Jose, CA 95134-1927

(408) 321-7093
chris.augenstein@vta.org

Mr. Aaron Aknin, Planning Director
City of San Bruno
567 El Camino Real
San Bruno, CA 94066-4247

(650) 616-7039
aaknin@ci.sanbruno.ca.us

Ms Carol Anne Painter, Planning Director
City of Santa Clara
1500 Warburton Ave.
Santa Clara, CA 95050

(408) 615-2450
CAPainter@santaclaraca.gov

The Vision:

El Camino Real will achieve its full potential as a place for residents to work, live, shop and play, creating links between communities that promote walking and transit and an improved and meaningful quality of life.

The Grand Boulevard Initiative: A Case Study in Collaboration and Partnership

Background

A basic premise of local government in America is Home Rule, the idea that each community should be free to govern itself and set its own priorities. This premise has led to many benefits, including citizen identification with their community, smaller and more efficient delivery systems for local services, and an ongoing ethic of effectiveness. However, it also comes with some drawbacks, including a tendency towards parochialism among local agencies, limited revenue and an inability to deal with regional problems. Still, this system is given virtually unanimous support by the people.

One common proposed solution for dealing with regional problems has been the creation of mega-governments, exerting some degree of control over local agencies in order to deal with single, regional problems. But these efforts typically require greater administrative overhead, fail to win public support and are obliged to rely on compulsion to enforce programs. Also, they make government far more complex, leading to citizen frustration. Single-purpose mega-government solutions have failed as often as they have been successful.

Local governments, concerned about these failures but unable to address regional problems on their own, increasingly are turning to locally-based, collaborative structures. Such programs mesh effectively with citizens' increasing activism and their lack of confidence in agencies physically remote from their own community. In this, these new structures conform to the increased passion and commitment seen in contemporary civic affairs. Citizens are willing to work to improve the quality of life in their communities to an extent not seen in past generations. And these programs provide a positive structure for this increased interest in civic engagement. Several recent efforts in different parts of the country have focused on economic revitalization of strip commercial arterial corridors (many of which are state highways), though almost all concern themselves with a single agency or with a limited number of agencies. If local agencies are to achieve their goals of enhancing public systems in order to meet GHG reduction targets and to provide affordable, walkable, and workforce-friendly housing, they will need a newer and more aggressive form of collaboration.

Problems throughout urban America go unanswered because of jurisdictional tangles. While Americans love living in small cities within urban areas there are, from an administrative perspective, too many small cities. This makes it unlikely that regional problems can be addressed by any one of them. In a sense, this matter is not urgent. However, each day sees these regional problems fester, and sees limited service to our citizens.

The Grand Boulevard Initiative is working on an unprecedented model, one that respects community desires for local control but crafts a federated approach by agencies willingly cooperating because they see the common good of the street will improve their operations and the quality of life of their citizens.

The Vision

The Task Force, the GBI policy-setting body, has adopted the following Vision Statement:

El Camino Real will achieve its full potential as a place for residents to work, live, shop and play, creating links between communities that promote walking and transit and an improved and meaningful quality of life.

The Guiding Principles

To this end the Task Force has adopted ten Guiding Principles that define the style of evolution desired for the street. The Principles are necessarily holistic, as the Task Force wishes to respect local autonomy while moving together in a positive direction that will lead to The Grand Boulevard. It is significant that these Principles were adopted by a unanimous vote.

1. Target housing and job growth in strategic areas along the corridor
2. Encourage compact mixed-use development an high quality urban design and construction
3. Create a pedestrian-oriented environment and improve streetscapes, ensuring full access to and between public areas and private developments
4. Develop a balanced multimodal corridor to maintain and improve mobility of people and vehicles along the corridor
5. Manage parking assets
6. Provide vibrant public spaces and gathering places
7. Preserve and accentuate unique and desirable community character and the existing quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods
8. Improve safety and public health
9. Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections with the corridor
10. Pursue environmentally sustainable and economically viable development patterns

Each member agency having responsibility for land use control has adopted these Principles and incorporated them into their land use policies.

Accomplishments

As GBI is based on the premise that the key to lasting and sustainable regional programs must rise from cooperation among the agencies having influence over the problem area it operates only on unanimous agreement and, to the surprise of some observers, has achieved a number of successes during its 4-year history:

- Developed the “Existing Conditions Report,” as a first step toward understanding the corridor – its infrastructure, land use, transportation role and residents
- Conducted quarterly meetings of the Task Force
- Created a GBI Website, Google Earth Project Map, and Development Resource Wiki
- Held Recognition programs, to cite projects and plans that best conformed to the Guiding Principles (2007 & 2010), generating greater public understanding of the vision
- Held a daylong Grand Boulevard Forum in 2009, with over 325 attendees. The program was filmed and has been shown on local access stations throughout the region.
- Coordinated considerable investment by cities and other entities in the corridor, where those plans conformed to the Guiding Principles

- Documented over 150 Local Policy Documents Pertaining to the corridor – Zoning, General Plan, Specific and Precise Plans (available through the web page Library)
- Supported the 16, of 19, cities that have adopted focused Policy and/or Improvement Plans for the corridor
- Documented over 100 Principle-compliant projects underway on the corridor in a Progress Report produced in 2009

Current Activities

- Major projects currently underway include a Multimodal Transportation Corridor Plan and an Economic and Housing Opportunities Study.
- In February 2010 the draft “Multi-Modal Access Strategy & Context-Sensitive Design Guidelines” was released. This document, developed as part of the Multimodal Transportation Corridor Plan, which is funded by Caltrans, is being used to promote multimodal transportation within the context of existing conditions, Caltrans regulations and local community planning and development efforts.
- There have been a series of organized tours of El Camino Real in partnership with transit agencies, housing advocacy organizations and environmental organizations. The intent is to reach out to the general public, increasing awareness of the Guiding Principles and how they translate into developments that contribute to building the Grand Boulevard.

In May 2010 GBI was honored to receive the American Planning Association California Northern 2010 Award in the category of Leadership and Service.