

Chapter 5:

A Connected City

INTRODUCTION

A connected city focuses on moving people and not simply vehicles. With a connected city, a citywide system of pedestrian walkways, bike trails, public transit opportunities and street network exists or is planned. The transportation system functions as an integrated system. This allows residents to travel within the community in a variety of ways which are safe and efficient.

Connectivity links neighborhoods, recreation, schools, employment and shopping. This connects neighborhoods with other places, encouraging social interaction. It also provides increased access to the outdoors and makes the city a healthier place to live.

The Sparks transportation system is connected to the western United States by U.S. Highway 395, Interstate 80 and Union Pacific Railroad. Interstate 80 is an east-west freeway providing regional and interstate connections. There are six Sparks' interchanges (Vista Boulevard, Sparks Boulevard, East McCarran Boulevard, Pyramid Way, Rock Boulevard and East 4th Street) and four interchanges in the East Truckee Canyon (USA Parkway, Patrick, Mustang and Lockwood). Union Pacific Railroad is one of America's leading transportation companies linking 23 states in the western two third of the U.S. One of the main tracks runs east-west through Sparks. Sparks serves as one of the rail yards for Union Pacific and Amtrak. Amtrak operates bus service from the Nugget Hotel/Casino in Sparks connecting to Amtrak train stations to the west. The Truckee Meadows Amtrak stop is located in downtown Reno.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Generally, the older parts of Sparks are served by a grid pattern of local, collector or arterial roadways, especially the areas of the City located within the McCarran Boulevard ring road. The newer neighborhoods located north or east of the McCarran Boulevard ring road and into the Spanish Springs Valley tend to have the curvilinear character typical of suburban master planned communities. Using the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) classifications, Interstate 80 is classified as the only Interstate Highway passing through Sparks. The Other Principal Arterials designated are Pyramid Way, Sparks Boulevard, Vista Boulevard south of Los Altos Parkway, Baring Boulevard, Prater Way, Oddie Boulevard, Glendale Avenue and McCarran Boulevard. NDOT classifies La Posada west of Cordoba

Boulevard, Vista Boulevard north of Los Altos Parkway, Los Altos Parkway, Greg Street, Highland Ranch Parkway, El Rancho Drive, Sullivan Lane, Victorian Avenue, Glendale Avenue and Rock Boulevard as Minor Arterials. NDOT classifies 33 streets in Sparks as Minor Collectors. Refer to Figure 5-1 for designation of the streets within the City of Sparks.

The Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (RTC) provides public transit in Washoe County. The two services available to Sparks' residents are RTC Ride and RTC Access. RTC Ride is the fixed-route transit service. There are seven routes from Centennial Plaza, RTC's bus transfer station in downtown Sparks. There are four routes that originate and return to the Centennial Plaza. The other three routes are connections to the other transfer stations in the system. The areas served are the industrial and warehouse district north and south of I-80, Northern Nevada Medical Center along East Prater Way, along Prater Way north to Reed High School and one connecting to Reno's downtown transfer station via northeast Sparks. This is only one bus route serving this area providing very limited transit access for the residents' of northeast Sparks with no bus service within walking distance for most of older Sparks within the McCarran Boulevard ring road. There is currently no service for the Spanish Springs Valley part of the city. RTC Access is a demand-responsive, ADA paratransit service for people who meet ADA paratransit eligibility criteria. In Sparks, RTC Access serves the entire City including Spanish Springs Valley.

There is no inventory of the existing sidewalks; however Public Works estimates that 90% of the residential streets in Sparks have sidewalks. Over the years the City has been working on developing a network of trails or pathways beyond the sidewalk system. Most of these are multi-use trails accommodating both pedestrians and bicycles. The current network is a mix of designs and standards and has connection gaps. Generally trails designated Regional Trail are a ten feet wide concrete path. The Pedestrian Paths (Ped Path) vary in width and surface from asphalt to gravel/decomposed granite. An Unimproved Trail is a dirt path more like a hiking trail. Refer to Figure 5-2 identifying the trail network. Figure 5-2 does not identify the bike lanes (a portion of the roadway designated by striping, signing and pavement markings for the exclusive use of bicyclists) and sidewalks, though they are an integrate part of the system. Adding the sidewalks and bike lanes to Figure 5-2 would make the map difficult to read. For mapping of the bike lanes, refer to RTC for Bike Map/Plan.

FUTURE CONDITIONS

RTC prepares and maintains a transportation plan called *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)*. The RTP is a long-range (to 2040) transportation plan focusing on highways/streets, bicycles, pedestrians and public transportation improvements. The RTP identifies the regional road traffic congestion and the level-of-service at intersections defining how well the existing intersections are functioning. The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), RTP and the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) prioritize the street improvements by projected timeframe for the needed improvements. For the targeted improvements and phasing, refer to the RTP, STIP and CIP.

Critical to connectivity is the design of the streets. Over the last 30 years a lot of planning and engineering has gone into making streets attractive and functional for motor vehicles and freight haulers. In recent years, an increasing number of communities have changed their approach to street design adopting a “Complete Street” philosophy. The complete street concept considers not just the paved vehicular lanes but takes into consideration all the users of roads. A complete street can be safely used regardless of transportation mode, age or physical ability. Complete streets are designed to accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and motorists with features as outlined in the sidebar on this page.

A key component of a connected city is public transit. To encourage public transit and complementary development, Sparks adopted the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Corridor Master Plan and development standards. The TOD Corridor Master Plan supports the city’s long-term vision for its transit corridors. The TOD Corridor Master Plan envisions a pedestrian-friendly environment supporting and facilitating transit ridership while promoting infill development.

Figure 5-2 illustrates proposed new trails and connections to existing trails needed to complete the network of multi-use trails in Sparks. These trails provide opportunities for recreational use and also provide connections between land uses. The trails serve as alternative pathways separated from motorways. The goal is to connect most of the major destinations, parks and open space areas with multi-use trails.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The movement of people is the premise of this chapter: A Connected City. Goal CC1 sets the ground work for future circulation decisions to consider the transport of people, not just moving vehicles from one point to another. This goal’s intent is to change the decision-making so that all users of streets are considered when planning, designing, building and operating roadways.

❖ Goal CC1: Foster the Concept of Moving People

- ◆ Policy CC1.1: The City will adopt the principles of “Complete Streets” which includes such as sidewalks,

BASIC STANDARDS OF COMPLETE STREETS

What are complete streets?

A complete street is safe, accessible and convenient for all users regardless of transportation mode, age, or physical ability. They adequately provide for bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and motorists. A Federal Highways Administration safety review found ‘complete streets’ to be safer while encouraging walking and bicycling.

Complete Streets Design Considerations

- ◆ Narrower motorized vehicle travel lanes
- ◆ Street connectivity – meaning linking uses, length of blocks and number of connections
- ◆ Classifying streets by function and adjacent land uses such as commercial streets, industrial streets, mixed-use streets, main street, and residential streets.
- ◆ Complete streetscape design elements include: raised medians, pedestrian refuge islands within medians, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, bus pullouts, transit shelters, wide shoulders, plenty of crossing opportunities, raised crosswalks, audible pedestrian signals, sidewalk bulb-outs and street furniture.
- ◆ Effective efficient lighting
- ◆ Aesthetic elements – landscaping, public art, etc.

bike lanes, wide shoulders, plenty of crossing opportunities, refuge medians, bus shelters, possible special bus lanes, raised cross walks, audible pedestrian signals, sidewalk bulb-outs, effective/efficient lighting, and aesthetic elements (landscaping, public art, etc.).

- ◆ Policy CC1.2: The City will provide transportation choices by integrating bicycle and pedestrian facilities into transportation planning.
- ◆ Policy CC1.3: The City will adopt revised street standards that incorporate “Complete Streets” design considerations.
- ◆ Policy CC1.4: Recognizing that only certain streets should be developed as “Complete Streets”, the City will establish a map designating the routes and connections to be improved to “Complete Streets” standards.
- ◆ Policy CC1.5: The City will promote the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, freight and motor vehicles to be accommodated in all types of transportation and development projects through all phases of a project so that even the most vulnerable – children, elderly and persons with disabilities- can travel safely within the public right-of-way.
- ◆ Policy CC1.6: The City will support a public transportation system including rapid transit, local transit, paratransit, park and ride facilities, and bikeways/trails which provides efficient service throughout the City.

The transportation system needs to facilitate efficient travel while promoting a variety of motorized and non-motorized modes. Goal CC2 calls for the City to develop an integrated multi-modal transportation system. This goal differs from Goal CC1 in that its intent is to change the construction and implementation process.

❖ **Goal CC2: Promote Design That Integrates a Multi-Modal Transportation System**

- ◆ Policy CC2.1: Based on the “Complete Streets” Designation Map, the City will require dedication of all right-of-way necessary to implement multi-modal transportation system improvements as part of the entitlement. Refer to *City of Sparks Traffic Calming Guide* for guidance.
- ◆ Policy CC2.2: The City will encourage street patterns and traffic calming such as roundabouts, chokers and speed undulations in residential areas to maintain the

WALKABLE COMMUNITIES ELEMENTS

- ◆ Walkability is a measure of how friendly an area is to pedestrians.
- ◆ Incorporates design that are sensitive to the pedestrians
- ◆ Denser, mixed use development near neighborhood services and transit
- ◆ A distinct urban or town center
- ◆ A variety of connected transportation options
- ◆ Interesting and identifiable public spaces
- ◆ Lower speed streets
- ◆ Accessible design for all pedestrians regardless of age and physical ability
- ◆ Connected street pattern
- ◆ Block size of 300-600 feet
- ◆ Intersection spacing of 1000 feet on arterials and 500 feet on local streets
- ◆ Extend street crossing time (2.5 ft./sec) and easy to cross the street
- ◆ Higher residential densities
- ◆ Connect dead end streets
- ◆ Width of sidewalk based on location (residential neighborhood – 5’ to 6’; commercial /industrial detached – 5’ and commercial/industrial attached – 6’)
- ◆ Preferred location of sidewalk is detached from street, especially on arterials
- ◆ When sidewalk is located next to a wall preferred separation is a minimum of 6’ landscape setback

integrity of the neighborhood by reducing speed and number of trips while enhancing the urban aesthetic.

- ◆ **Policy CC2.3:** The City will foster businesses and other land uses which are substantial generators or attractors of traffic to implement programs that reduce trips. (For more specific goal and policies relating to air quality refer to Chapter 4 – A Livable City Goal LC13 on page 4-XX.)
- ◆ **Policy CC2.4:** The City will require employment and commercial projects to provide facilities for bicycle riders as part of the entitlement.
- ◆ **Policy CC2.5:** In older parts of Sparks, the City will seek opportunities to make multimodal the local streets and to make them more attractive, pedestrian friendly.
- ◆ **Policy CC2.6:** The City will prioritize street improvements in older parts of Sparks to promote higher intensity development along transit-oriented development corridors and downtown areas.

The intent of Goal CC3 is to ensure coordination between transportation agencies and other departments within the City for the promotion of an alternative transportation system. Coordination will ensure that all modes of transportation are considered when designing and improving the transportation network.

❖ **Goal CC3: Coordinate Land Use and Circulation Decisions to Promote the Use of Alternative Modes**

- ◆ **Policy CC3.1:** The City will work with the Regional Transportation Commission and Nevada Department of Transportation to ensure the City’s goals and policies are considered in the design of new roadways or improvements to existing roadways.
- ◆ **Policy CC3.2:** The City will maintain an active presence in regional and state-level transportation planning activities (such as the improvements to I-80 or Pyramid Way) to identify opportunities for joint planning/construction efforts, enhanced levels of service and monitoring impacts on the City.
- ◆ **Policy CC3.3:** The City will require that proposed road improvements be reviewed by all permitting departments to ensure design and construction comply with the Complete Street standards.
- ◆ **Policy CC3.4:** The City will promote the railroad by encouraging industrial land uses that require rail access along the rail corridor by preserving land near tracks.
- ◆ **Policy CC3.5:** When reviewing new development, the City will require a clear circulation pattern that integrates with the surrounding area and encourages alternative modes of transportation.

Goal CC4 emphasizes the importance of a city-wide, connected multi-use pathway/network. In order to complete the pathway system, an inventory must be done and the improvements prioritized.

❖ **Goal CC4: Develop a City-Wide Multi-Use Pathway System**

- ◆ **Policy CC4.1:** The City will ensure that the development of its various trail system (such as recreational trails, multi-use trails, regional trails, sidewalks) is a connected system that is viable for both travel and recreation.

- ◆ **Policy CC4.2:** As resources permit, the City will conduct an inventory of the sidewalk/trail system to assess the existing conditions, identify missing links and prioritize the capital improvements needed to complete the system.
- ◆ **Policy CC4.3:** When designing pedestrian pathways/sidewalks, the City will address the walkability by assessing the location of the sidewalk in relationship to the travel lanes, the ease of crossing the street and the adjoining environment.
- ◆ **Policy CC4.4:** The City will place more emphasize on pedestrian and bicycle facilities improvement and expansion.
- ◆ **Policy CC4.5:** When reviewing new development, the City will make sure the plans accommodate pedestrians and bicycles along streets. Whenever possible, trails and bikeways should be detached and wide enough to accommodate various pedestrian and bicycle uses in both travel directions.
- ◆ **Policy CC4.6:** The City will seek grant funding to expand and improve the pathway network.

Goals and Policies from Other Elements

The following are the goals and policies from the other adopted elements that relate to A Connected City.

Transit Oriented Development

- ❖ **Goal TOD1.4: Improve Pedestrian Circulation Between Developments**
- ❖ **Goal TOD3.2: Create Cohesive Neighborhoods throughout the District Emphasizing Connectivity to Sparks Marina**
 - ◆ Policy TOD3.2 a: Develop the Northern Gateway Marina Neighborhoods
 - ◆ Policy TOD3.2b: Improve Connections between Existing and Future Neighborhoods and the Marina and Activity Center Development

West Pyramid Area Plan

- ❖ **Goal WP 3: To Promote Safe and Efficient Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation Throughout the West Pyramid Area**
 - ◆ Policy WP14: Provide public safety and community services to serve the needs of the new residents of the West Pyramid Plan Area and reduce impacts on the services of surrounding areas.
 - ◆ Policy WP15: Coordinate community and public safety services with Washoe County and City of Reno for seamless levels of regional service.
 - ◆ Policy WP16: A local north/south collector road shall be included in the plan area.

- ◆ Policy WP17: Development shall provide a wide variety of destinations within the plan area in the form of parks and open spaces, retail opportunities, neighborhood services, restaurants, and pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.
- ◆ Policy WP18: New development shall connect to sidewalks, trails and bicycle facilities. Implementation shall be concurrent with development.
- ◆ Policy WP19: Define, plan and implement local transportation options such as local shuttle service, regional park and ride facilities, regional bus service, and alternative transportation modes such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

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