



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Administrative Office
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, CA 94022

Tuesday, July 18, 2023

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Cyr called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at 1:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Jed Cyr, Craig Gleason, Karen Holman

Members absent: None

Staff present: General Manager Ana M. Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Loana Lumina-Hsu, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planner II Tyler Smith, Planner II Brittany Wheatman, Senior Planner Gretchen Laustsen, Chief Ranger/Visitor Services Manager Matthew Anderson, Foothills Area Superintendent Brad Pennington, Supervising Ranger Alysha Carabetta, Public Affairs Manager Korrine Skinner

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Gleason moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

District Clerk Maria Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Approve the July 11, 2023 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes.

Public comment opened at 1:03 p.m.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 1:03 p.m.

Motion: Director Holman moved, and Director Gleason seconded the motion to approve the July 11, 2023 Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting minutes.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

3. Background Information, Proposed Performance Measures and Service Design Concepts, and First Go-No Go Consideration for a Potential Shuttle Program and/or Ride Hail Program at Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve (R-23-86)

General Manager Ana Ruiz stated that due to the extensive amount of information collected for Agenda Item 3, today's meeting is a continuation of the July 11, 2023 Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR) meeting. Ms. Ruiz clarified that the project is an exploration of a potential shuttle program and/or ride hail program for Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve, and that if either program moves forward, the ingress/egress for either program would be from Cristal Rey Drive through the main Preserve entrance.

Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan provided an overview of the Rancho San Antonio Multimodal Access Study, including information on how the strategies were evaluated and prioritized. Ms. Chan explained why the multimodal access study was pursued and the study goals. She reviewed the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies, including the purpose of the TDMs, which aim to expand the travel mode choices. The study included 26 TDM strategies across five categories: access improvements, transit improvements, traffic operational improvements, visitor demand management, and capacity improvements. The TDMs were scored using twelve scoring factors that were weighted by relevance to the study goals, and each TDM was evaluated on a scale from one to five. The highest scoring TDMs were categorized into first, second, and third priority groups.

Director Gleason commented that the goals were set in terms of reducing parking demand as opposed to closing the gap between supply and demand, which he believes has a significant impact on the rankings of the TDMs and inquired how the choice was made.

Ms. Chan stated that in order to close the gap, staff recognized that there is not enough space to build substantially more parking, which is why staff looked at multi-modal choices to shift how people arrive to the preserve and encourage other modes of transportation to reduce the parking demand. Furthermore, while building more capacity can be part the solution, increasing parking capacity alone will not address the issue.

Ms. Ruiz expressed that there is also a concern of what the impacts might be to the preserve and to the visitor experience within the preserve if the solution primarily focuses on increased parking.

Ms. Chan reiterated that adding parking spaces is priority three, it is lower on the priority list as it does not support the goal of reducing parking demand compared to other strategies.

Director Gleason remarked that the goal of reducing parking demand as opposed to closing the gap between supply and demand artificially lowers the scores. Furthermore, that none of the TDMs can close the gap by itself, but rather with a combination of TDMs. The staff report indicates that adding parking spaces does not support the goal of reducing parking demand and scored as a low priority. Whereas, if the goal is to close the gap, one can then compare the options differently.

Ms. Ruiz indicated that there may be a need for a combination of TDM strategies. She also noted for Board consideration that increasing parking supply may not necessarily achieve the goals of meeting the parking demand if the demand further increases with an increase in supply.

Ms. Chan added that the District and Board recognized there would never be enough parking built to meet the demand at Rancho San Antonio, which is why staff is pursuing multimodal access solutions to help reduce the parking demand.

Director Holman is in agreement with Director Gleason and Ms. Ruiz's remarks on demand and supply, and increases in future demand. Director Holman stated that adding more parking would not result in a change in behavior, and that the public would continue to use their current means of transportation. By making Rancho San Antonio more accessible via other means, the District may also be increasing visitation at the preserve.

Chair Cyr stated that the carrying capacity of the preserve data is critical for the Committee to make an informed decision on whether to support the shuttle and/or ride hail programs.

Director Holman commented that the subject of carrying capacity was raised at the previous Committee meeting and without that information it is difficult to make an informed decision. Director Holman suggested that there may be a third option whereby the Board may consider certain options and defer others to a future date when additional information is provided.

Ms. Ruiz offered another option for the Committee to consider: finishing the shuttle and ride-hail studies and findings, keeping in mind that the results may inform future efforts related to the Purisima Multimodal recommendations. Purisima is another preserve with many parking issues that may benefit from a shuttle and other parking management strategies.

Director Gleason commented that connecting people to nature is a critical part of what the District does, and in Rancho San Antonio, people are trying to connect to nature as they sit waiting for a parking space. Director Gleason then made a comparison between Rancho San Antonio's location to the South Bay, noting that Rancho San Antonio is the proximate preserve to many residents who live even outside of District boundaries. For this reason, he believes the District should not actively try to reduce visitation, and if it does, it should do so with good reason and understanding of the impacts that it may have.

Director Holman commented that the two highest priorities of the District's mission are to preserve and protect and questioned the point at which people's experience of nature is degraded due to high visitation, to which she reemphasized the need for a carrying capacity evaluation.

Director Holman inquired and received information about what the District is doing in terms of partnering with other entities to leverage their shuttle programs and whether other entities promote their shuttle services.

Planner II Tyler Smith continued the staff presentation and provided responses to Committee questions from the July 11 Planning and Natural Resources Committee. Mr. Smith provided additional information on the Silicon Valley Hopper program and reviewed the average vehicle occupancy data at Rancho San Antonio on the weekends that was collected in 2016, 2017 and 2023. This data was used in the Multi-Modal Access Study that helped guide the development of the carpool program. Mr. Smith reviewed the preliminary estimated costs of the ride hail and shuttle programs if they were fully implemented. Mr. Smith discussed the impact on parking demand and stated that while the two programs may potentially free up some parking spaces, they would not be able to solve the problem of reducing parking demand and congestion on their own. The need for parking is decreased for those who use the shuttle or ride hail, but because visitor demand is high at Rancho San Antonio, those otherwise unused spaces would likely get filled. The District would need to introduce strategies alongside the shuttle and/or ride hail programs to be able to better manage visitor demand. Lastly, he reviewed the impact of ride hail and shuttle services on parking space reductions.

Director Holman inquired and received information about the parking reductions resulting from the additional bike facilities, rideshare parking, and the digital dynamic parking signage.

Mr. Smith continued the presentation and reviewed the TDM strategies that staff is proposing to evaluate further to complement the proposed shuttle and ride hail programs, whether it is decided to implement one or both of the programs to better manage the parking supply. The TDM strategies have many operational considerations and challenges. The carpool parking measure can benefit from lessons learned through the carpool pilot program that has been running since September of 2022. The carpool pilot program requires between 3 to 5 staff members to operate. The second measure is parking reservations, which could provide benefits such as reducing any open parking and encouraging carpool and trip planning. The third measure is parking time limits, which could promote more frequent parking turnover, but would require enforcement and therefore, more staff capacity. The fourth measure is priority parking zones, which may reduce parking demand at peak times, but may also be confusing for visitors and potentially challenging to manage. The fifth measure is to close the parking lots when capacity is reached to shift visitors to shuttle and/or ride-hail modes. Closure of the parking lots would have significant challenges, including impacts to the visitor experience and circulation.

Ms. Ruiz commented that companion measures will need to be implemented if the goal includes shifting people's travel habit, so they use multimodal transportation to arrive at the preserve. Likewise, if the goal includes parking demand reduction, companion measures are also necessary. The companion measures are a big lift for staff. They would be incredibly time-consuming to administer, maintain, and track, and would be very challenging for staff to pursue and to receive public support. They are also expensive from an operational standpoint.

Director Holman inquired and received information whether it is feasible for volunteers to be able to pick up some of the work on the proposed measures.

Director Holman stated that public messaging and marketing is an important component of this project to clarify that the goals of the project go beyond visitor convenience. By indicating to people that this is the right thing to do, people will be more likely to embrace the measures and this program supports the District's mission.

Director Holman suggested that Friends of Deer Hollow Farm is an active group that could educate visitors to help people be mindful of when and how they arrive to the preserve.

Public comment opened at 2:30 p.m.

Elizabeth Montgomery voiced her concern that she heard a committee member not wanting to build more parking while another committee member mentioned that they want people to continue visiting the preserve. Ms. Montgomery commented that it is really great to have people experience nature and learn to love it, however, she believes that there is a point when bringing more visitors to the preserve will only degrade the experience for wildlife, the environment, and visitors. Ms. Montgomery voiced her worries about the two proposals, individually or in combination, particularly when one of the proposed sites is the Mountain View Caltrain Station, which has the potential to attract additional people who do not even know about Deer Hollow Farm or Rancho San Antonio. She voiced concern for the rise in visitors and how it could eventually have a negative influence on the visitor experience due to the possibility that the visitor rate would grow as a result of subsidized service through either a ride hail or shuttle program. Ms. Montgomery urged the Committee to be cognizant of the issues as they consider the programs. Lastly, she proposed that the District spend some time to determine how to market and message the other preserves, so they have broader utilization and a high payback.

Director Holman asked Ms. Montgomery about the timing of her visitation to the various preserves. Ms. Montgomery stated she visited other preserves with schoolchildren about 12 years ago, and what she discovered is that many preserve would benefit from additional parking, more lighting, and easier access. She believes that if these improvements were provided elsewhere and people were made aware of it, it would promote usage of other preserves and all parks would be more widely used.

Marlene Zimmerman spoke as a visitor to Rancho San Antonio and commented that there is a desire for people to connect with nature, however, if you go at a time when there are more people, you are not connecting with nature and instead connecting with people and suggested considering limiting the number of people at any time. Ms. Zimmerman also spoke as a resident of the St. Joseph's Avenue neighborhood, and she heard a comment that Cristo Rey Drive is the focal point. She suggested having something in writing stating that the St. Joseph Avenue area entrance will not be considered for shuttle or ride hail programs now or in the future. Finally, she spoke as a property owner who funds the District through her taxes and encouraged the Committee to put the study to an end as she believes that sufficient funds have already been spent thus far indicating that the two programs have many flaws. Lastly, she suggests promoting other preserves and putting an end to the study.

Fred Witteborn suggested using a large, flat area for expansion in the adjacent field on the northwest side in which an additional 100 parking spaces could be added. Mr. Witteborn

mentioned that parking lot one already has a restroom and is under used with just 50 parking spaces. In addition, there is a trailhead near this lot that connects to many popular trails and Deer Hollow Farm. Mr. Witteborn stated that if the District does not wish to pursue the additional 100 parking places, then the question is how many people the District wishes to pack into this preserve.

Public comment closed at 2:42 p.m.

Ms. Ruiz stated that the Committee might want to consider bringing the item to the Board with the understanding that staff complete the two studies so that staff can have that data and information, not necessarily that it would be applied to Rancho San Antonio, but that it might help inform implementation of similar programs at other locations where these may be a better fit. Moreover, consideration of implementation could be put on hold until a carrying capacity study at the preserve is completed to determine whether one or both programs should be implemented for Rancho San Antonio.

Chair Cyr asked whether the Board would have enough time to digest the information when it is brought before them.

Ms. Ruiz proposed holding a special meeting solely to discuss this matter and asked the Committee for feedback on whether the full Board would feel the need to delve into the same level of detail as the Committee, and if so, whether two meetings would be necessary.

Chair Cyr expressed support for completing the studies in order to collect the data and information that can be used at other preserves, such as at the Purisima preserve. Chair Cyr stated that he does not wish to overburden the other board members, and his sense is that the two programs do not fit in Rancho San Antonio, and they may also not resolve the congestion problem.

Director Holman inquired how much money is needed to complete the studies if they are 90% complete.

Mr. Smith stated it would be an approximately \$30,000 to complete the studies.

Director Holman inquired and received information on how reliable the data and information would be if the studies were put on hold for two years in order to undertake a carrying capacity study.

Director Holman inquired of there are other cities that are using a ride hail program and whether that would decrease District costs.

Mr. Smith stated that the Cities of Cupertino and Santa Clara will invest in the SV Hopper, while the City of Palo Alto recently began their version of such program, and the City of East Palo Alto has a SamTrans program. These programs have the potential to expand and collaborate in order to create a cohesive program. Leveraging existing partnership programs or resources would be more cost effective.

Director Holman inquired and asked for clarification on whether the information received from the studies can be applied to the Purisima preserve given that they are in such different locales.

Director Gleason expressed his support for the SV Hopper, especially since it is being adopted in various other cities. There is also the potential to use the SV Hopper to transport people to Fremont Older, which is another difficult place for parking, and may be able divert people to other preserves. With respects to the shuttle, he supports completing the study and agrees with Ms. Ruiz that the most likely place to have a shuttle could be at the Purisima preserve.

Chair Cyr's recommendation is to only forward 4b of the General Manager's recommendation.

Director Gleason recommends not to go forward with option 4a and that there is enough reason to continue with the studies. Director Gleason inquired if the motion should be refined to capture Committee input.

Ms. Chan stated that staff can report to the full Board and capture the comments from the Committee so that the Board can understand the Committee's concerns about implementing a shuttle program at Rancho San Antonio, and that the Committee nonetheless supports completing the data gathering process with the clarification that the data may be best applied at another location.

Ms. Ruiz asked Ms. Chan to include mention of the Committee's position on the need to first complete a carrying capacity study before considering such programs at a preserve to fully inform future implementation decisions.

Director Holman agreed that this matter should be brought to the Board, and that the presentation should be concise. For those interested in more details, they can watch the recordings of the Committee meetings. Furthermore, she agrees in removing option 4a and requested adding an additional element to 4b to initiate a carrying capacity study. In addition, she proposed that the Committee recommend which companion measures to move forward.

Chair Cyr recommended that the carrying capacity study only focus on Rancho San Antonio.

Ms. Ruiz indicated that the Committee does not need to decide on the companion measures at this time but, can certainly eliminate those that have no likelihood for further advancement. However, if they are all kept at this time, the District will be able provide additional information and costs on each potential companion measure.

Director Holman suggested also adding information for the Board that the carpool pilot program is nearing its completion and include information on the outcomes of the pilot program.

Chair Cyr stated that he did not support the time limit companion measure.

Director Gleason expressed support for letting staff decide which companion measures to further explore.

The Committee continued to discuss refinements to the General Manager's recommendation and proposed the following for recommendation 4:

4. Based on information received and Committee discussion, select one of the following recommendations to forward on to the full Board of Directors for consideration:

- ~~a. Discontinue further development of the shuttle and/or ride hail programs.~~
~~—Or~~
- a. Direct the General Manager to continue expending funds from the contract and allocating staff resources to pursue next steps, including:
- i. Further developing the shuttle and ride hail programs options, focusing on opportunities that best leverage similar existing programs;
 - ii. Exploring the availability of grant programs to cover upfront program implementation costs and, if possible, on-going operating expenses; and
 - iii. Refining and selecting the recommended companion measure(s) that will be necessary to reach successful program outcomes.
- b. Prior to taking action on the proposed programs, initiate a carrying capacity study of the preserve.

Motion: Director Holman moved, and Director Gleason seconded the motion to forward the General Manager's recommendation based on information received and Committee discussion recommend to forward on to the full Board of Directors for consideration of the following:

- a. Direct the General Manager to continue expending funds from the contract and allocating staff resources to pursue next steps, including:
- i. Further developing the shuttle and ride hail programs options, focusing on opportunities that best leverage similar existing programs;
 - ii. Exploring the availability of grant programs to cover upfront program implementation costs and, if possible, on-going operating expenses; and
 - iii. Refining and selecting the recommended companion measure(s) that will be necessary to reach successful program outcomes.
- b. Prior to taking action on the proposed programs, initiate a carrying capacity study of the preserve.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

Ms. Montgomery inquired if Ms. Zimmerman's suggestion of having a statement in writing that the St. Joseph's Avenue area entrance will not be considered for shuttle or ride hail programs will be taken under consideration.

Ms. Ruiz advised the Committee that it is not in the Board's interest to commit to having such a statement because the future cannot be predicted. Currently, the study indicates that if the District proceeds with either program, the focal point will be Cristo Rey Drive. No one can predict what changes may occur in 10, 20 or more years in the future in terms of circulation in the neighborhood or neighborhood opinion. Furthermore, if there was contemplation of a change that might affect the neighborhood in the future, the neighborhood would be notified in advance to provide early opportunities for discussion and engagement.

Director Holman expressed support of Ms. Ruiz's comments and stated that with all due respect to the neighbors, it is highly unusual to place such a commitment in writing for any public agency because of changes that can occur in the future, and that Ms. Ruiz's comments have noted that should anything be contemplated that may affect the neighborhood, neighborhood notification and input would be pursued.

Ms. Montgomery commented that Wayne Whitlock's comments during the public comment period from the prior meeting were not properly captured and requests that his comments be accurately captured in the minutes.

Ms. Soria stated that the July 11, 2023 minutes had been approved by the Committee, but she will listen to the recording to confirm if Mr. Whitlock's comments were captured correctly and any changes would be brought back to the Committee for approval.

Director Gleason agreed to have the minutes reviewed and revised by the District Clerk because his notes did include further remarks from Mr. Whitlock.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cyr adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 3:28p.m.

Maria Soria, MMC
District Clerk