CITY OF MERCED
Development Services

TO: Bicycle Advisory Commission
FROM: Bill King, AICP, Principal Planner
DATE: February 22, 2011
SUBJECT: BAC Review and Recommendation on General Plan Policies

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ACTION REQUIRED:

Part 1: For information only.
Part 2: Review and Provide Recommendations of bike-related policies from General Plan Update Chapters 6 and 8.

DISCUSSION

Part 1: City Council Review of Recommendations

The BAC voted at their December 2010 meeting to request from the City Council, a second viewing of the General Plan Update bike-related policies subsequent to the Planning Commission's final consideration and recommendation to the City Council. Such request is not needed, however. Any individual or group, including a City Commission, may review and comment on actions of any other City Commission or Committee prior to City Council action. While this is the BAC's prerogative, please keep the following items in mind, including: (A) an understanding of the normal review and recommendation process that is being followed by the Planning Staff; and, (B) scheduling constraints.

A. Normal Review and Recommendation Process:

The minutes of the December BAC meeting reflect a misunderstanding of the normal review process. Although the City Council could opt to send an item back to the recommending body, in this case, the Planning Commission, this is rare and then only done for specific reason. The minutes describe an understanding, that as a general practice, items are referred back to the Planning Commission for final review and comment after an initial review by the City Council, which is not the case.

Step 1: Comments and recommendations are collected by the Planning Division from all sources, including those from the Bicycle Advisory Committee. All

comments and recommendations will be included in the information packet that is prepared for both the Planning Commission and City Council.

Step 2: The Planning Division will review and assess the comments and recommendations received. The Planning Division will then prepare a written catalog of its recommended changes to the Draft General Plan Update, including both the specific language change and the source of the original comment or recommendation.

Step 3: The Planning Commission, who is required by state law to provide a recommendation to the City Council on all changes to the General Plan, will hold a public hearing, have the opportunity to review the original comments along with staff's recommendation, and then take action as to their recommendation to the City Council.

Step 4: The City Council will receive the recommendation from the Planning Commission, as well as Planning Staff's recommendation, and all the original comments and recommendations that were provided to the Planning Division. The City Council will make a final decision as to any changes and final content of the General Plan.

This is the process within which all members of the public, City Staff, and appointed boards and commissions operate. As noted above, all interested parties are free to review and comment on the Planning Commission's action when it goes to the City Council.

B. Normal Review and Recommendation Process:

On rare occasions, one City committee or commission may opt to comment on the actions of another committee or commission, when there is a difference of opinion. Such comment would then be forwarded, along with any original comments, to the City Council for final consideration. Due to the limited meeting dates of the BAC, along with the scheduling needs of the General Plan Update, there may not be adequate time for the BAC to provide such comment, however. A special meeting would need to be scheduled in order for the BAC to first decide whether or not there is reason to establish a contrarian viewpoint from the Planning Commission, and then to decide what specific

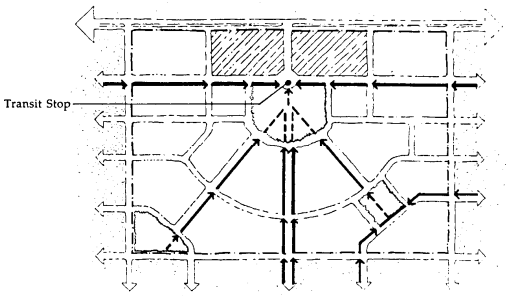
policy recommendation would be made. For reasons noted above, there may not be adequate time to hold even a special meeting.

Part 2: Additional Policies for BAC Review and Comment

In addition to policies already reviewed and commented on by the BAC, presented below are two other draft General Plan policies from the Urban Design (UD) and Sustainable Development (SD) chapters for your review and comment. The third item is bike-related urban design 'guidelines,' which are suggestions for architects and designers and are not mandatory requirements.

1. Policy UD-1.2: *Distribute and Design Urban Villages to Promote Convenient Vehicular, Pedestrian, and Transit Access.*

   Implementing Action: 1.2.g: *The pedestrian and bicycle system must provide clear and direct access to the Core Commercial area and the transit stop.*



   Explanation: *Although the street and sidewalk system will accommodate many destinations within Villages, the primary destination will be the Commercial Core and transit stop. Direct paths to the transit stop should be lined with activities and be shaded. The configuration of parking, shopping and pedestrian routes should reinforce access to transit. A feeling of safety for pedestrians and bicyclists can be provided through the use of park strips between the curb and the sidewalk or bike path which provide separation from auto traffic.*

2. Policy SD-4.2: *Encourage Increased Physical Activity of Residents and Healthier Food Choices*

   Implementing Action: 4.2.a: *Increase biking and walking through street design.*

   Explanation: *By designing "complete streets" that accommodate all modes of transportation, as required in the policies in the Transportation Element (Chapter 4), residents will have access to safe and convenient biking and*

walking facilities. The City's policy of planting of trees along streets between the curb and the sidewalk help create a feeling of safety for pedestrians and handicap-accessibility is emphasized. Bike lanes are provided along most streets.

3. Merced Urban 'Street Design' Design Guidelines

Bikeways
Bike paths should also be provided along greenways, along transitways, the approximate alignment of the Yosemite Valley Railroad (YVRR), and along major creeks and powerline easements. Bicycle routes are also encouraged on small residential streets, but marked bike lanes may not be required. Connections to Merced's existing bikeway network should also be provided.

Explanation: Selected routes to the transit stop should provide marked or separated bikeways connecting Village areas. The greenway network provides additional bicycle-oriented connections to parks and schools. On smaller residential streets within the Village, slower auto speeds will allow bikes to share the travel lanes. The YVRR bike path in North Merced need not follow the existing alignment of the railroad, but should run near it and provide a direct route.

Bike Parking
Bicycle parking facilities should be provided throughout Core Commercial areas, in office developments, and at transit stops, schools, parks, and other special destinations.

Explanation: Bike racks or other bike storage facilities should be provided at various shopping, employment, transit and recreational destinations in Villages. Bike parking may be shared between uses, but should be centrally located, easily accessible to building entries, protected from weather extremes, and visible from streets or parking lots.

<u>Attachment</u>

A. December 2010 BAC Minute Excerpts

(E) PRESENTATION OF "COMBINED" ANNUAL PROJECT CALENDAR (CONTINUED FROM OCTOBER 26, 2010, MEETING)

Planner HAMILTON presented the combined project calendar, explaining that the purpose is to make sure both staff and Commissioners are informed of project timelines. It was suggested that the Bike Transportation Plan's commuter survey be taken in a month that schools are in session, perhaps September. A formal count was also discussed, in order to incorporate current ridership information into the next Bike Plan update. Commissioner GUZZETTA asked if the Commission could review count records from the 2003 MCAG ridership count. Mr. HAMILTON stated that he would contact MCAG for that information.

After questions by Commissioner SMITH, Mr. HAMILTON stated that General Plan-related matters will not show on the recurring calendar. Commissioner SMITH asked if MCAG would initiate an update to the Bike Plan after the General Plan is updated, and Mr. HAMILTON stated that staff is beginning to look into that. Commissioner SMITH emphasized that since the General Plan and the Bike Plan updates are being done at around the same time, there is an opportunity to strengthen the linkage between the two, making for stronger policies.

Commissioner KAYSER-GRANT added that review of and input to the General Plan bike-related policies is a role of the BAC. Commissioner SMITH suggested the Commission consider an action to request that, after the Commission's initial comments are received and reviewed by the City Council, it be referred back to the BAC prior to consideration by the Planning Commission.

Mr. HAMILTON stated that once given direction by City Council, then all departments will probably be able to bring the updated draft back to all of the City's advisory commissions for a final review, but added that it is up to the Council to direct staff to do so.

ON MOTION OF COMMISSIONER MIDDLEBROOKS, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KAYSER-GRANT, DULY CARRIED, TO REQUEST FROM CITY COUNCIL A SECOND VIEWING OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, PRIOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S FINAL CONSIDERATION AND RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL.

BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS KAYSER-GRANT, GUZZETTA, MIDDLEBROOKS, TYLER, NOBLE, AND CHAIRPERSON STANLEY

ATTACHMENT A

NOES: NONE
ABSTAIN: NONE
ABSENT: COMMISSIONER COMEYNE