



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: May 10, 2007 REPORT NO. PC-07-092

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of May 17, 2007

SUBJECT: Workshop on the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update

REFERENCE: Planning Commission Workshop Report Nos. PC-06-196, PC-05-222,
PC-06-300, PC-07-026

SUMMARY

THIS IS A WORKSHOP TO DISCUSS TRANSPORTATION ISSUES RELATED TO THE OTAY MESA COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AT THIS TIME.

BACKGROUND

Community Plan Update Status

To date, three draft land use scenarios, in addition to the adopted community plan land use map, have been developed for public discussion and review in association with the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update. Recently, revised scenarios have been generated, and are currently under discussion and consideration by stakeholders, the community planning group, and the planning team (Attachment 1). The scenarios propose changes in land use patterns and designations that would decrease acreage available for industrial and commercial development and increase acreage available for residential and village development. The scenarios propose an increase of between 5,000 and 14,000 housing units above the 12,900 units provided by the adopted plan. Much of the proposed new residential development in Otay Mesa would be on land not currently designated for residential development, with plan text being developed which will enumerate the goals for land uses within the community planning area.

Over the past six months, the Planning Commission has held several workshops in a series of focused issue workshops in association with the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update. In December of 2006, the Planning Commission discussed residential development opportunities and policy direction, and in January of 2007, the Planning Commission discussed industrial lands supply and demand, as well as the implications of the draft General Plan Economic Prosperity Element policies to Otay Mesa. The focus of this report and workshop is on transportation issues and how they will impact policy decisions for the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update.

DISCUSSION

Applicability of General Plan policies and goals

The Mobility Element of the draft General Plan has an overall goal of improving mobility through development of a balanced, multi-modal transportation network. As part of the update process, there is an opportunity for the Otay Mesa Community Plan to create an efficient network where each type of transportation contributes services meeting the needs of a variety of users. Because Otay Mesa is defined as a subregional district within the Strategic Framework Element, the Mobility Element of the Otay Mesa Community Plan will address street classifications, transit, and walking, as well as address goods movement, truck traffic, Brown Field, bicycling, trail systems, and regional collaboration.

Existing Circulation Network

The Otay Mesa circulation network includes local and collector streets that provide for local traffic movement and access to abutting property, major streets that carry through traffic while still providing driveway access to abutting property, and prime arterials that are specifically designed to carry through traffic with limited or no driveway access to abutting property. Much of the land in Otay Mesa is undeveloped or underdeveloped, and as a result, the street system is incomplete. The present development pattern is heavily influenced by the existing system of arterial roadways. Attachment 2 is the existing and planned circulation element, and depicts the limited access on and off the mesa.

Congestion currently occurs along various segments of the existing roadway network. Congestion is due to limited roadway access, high truck volumes, the uncompleted SR- 905, and proximity to the highly-utilized commercial crossing at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry. As an example, Otay Mesa Road and Airway Road experience congestion throughout the day along with numerous intersections throughout the Mesa.

Otay Mesa experiences a significant number of trucks in the community because of the truck intensive businesses associated with the commercial border crossing to Mexico. In 2002, Mexican customs began inspecting all trucks traveling into Mexico, laden and unladen. Because of this, the time to process trucks increased and caused substantial queuing problems on City streets. An agreement between U.S. Customs, the U.S. Border Patrol, and the City of San Diego was reached which separated the laden and unladen queues. The agreement required unladen trucks to travel south on Drucker Lane and the laden trucks to travel south on La Media to the existing one-lane truck route along the Mexican Border.

Future Circulation Network

The future South Bay Expressway (SR-125) will provide an extension of SR-125 from SR-54 in Spring Valley to SR-905 in Otay Mesa. SR-125 will operate as a toll road under a partnership of Caltrans and California Transportation Ventures, a private enterprise. This north-south toll way will improve regional traffic flow in the South Bay and expand access for residential, businesses and employment centers. The toll road is anticipated to open in late summer of 2007.

SR-905 will be a 6-lane facility that will provide a direct east-west connection from I-805 to the Otay Mesa Port of Entry (POE) to improve mobility for local, regional, and international traffic (see Attachment 3). Currently, Caltrans is in the process of site acquisitions, and anticipates construction to begin in late 2007. The ultimate project will include grade separated local access interchanges, and the freeway to freeway interchange with the South Bay Expressway

As shown in Attachment 4, the proposed SR-11 consists of approximately 3 miles of a new four-lane freeway from the proposed SR-905/SR125 junction to a future Federal Port of Entry (POE) at East Otay Mesa in San Diego County. Currently, discussions are exploring the possibility of a private/public partnership for development of the facility, with the idea that the Port of Entry could be a tolled facility.

A number of local, collector, and major streets are planned to link Otay Mesa internally as well as regionally. Beyer Boulevard is proposed to be an east/west connection and would link Otay Mesa to the San Ysidro community. With the construction of SR-905, north/south connections are being studied to maintain connectivity for village and activity centers. From a regional standpoint, key circulation element roadways will link Otay Mesa to the City of Chula Vista. Heritage Road is proposed to be a 6-lane prime arterial roadway providing a north-south connection from Main Street to Otay Mesa Road. Another key segment is La Media Road, which is proposed to be a 6-lane primary arterial roadway connecting from its current terminus in Chula Vista to Otay Mesa Rd.

Transit

Otay Mesa is currently served by Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Route 905 (express service) and 905A (local service) buses. Route 905 provides service generally along Otay Mesa Road/SR-905, between the Iris Avenue Trolley Station and the Otay Mesa Port of Entry (POE). Route 905A provides service between the same terminal destinations, with additional local service within Otay Mesa, as shown on the route map (see Attachment 5). Both buses operate about every 30 minutes on weekdays and about once per hour on weekends.

The San Diego Association of Government's (SANDAG) Regional Transportation Plan identifies a bus rapid transit corridor called the South Bay Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). This project will provide high-speed transit connections between downtown San Diego and the Otay Mesa POE along the future I-805 Managed Lanes, a dedicated transit way through eastern Chula Vista and along the South Bay Expressway, terminating at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry, as shown in Attachment 6. Use of the managed lanes and transit way will provide travel priority for the service allowing it to bypass traffic congestion. This new BRT will provide access to regional employment centers in downtown San Diego, Otay Mesa, and the future Eastern Urban Center, as well as serve residential communities in Chula Vista and National City. The first phase of the project, between downtown San Diego and the Eastern Urban Center in Chula Vista is scheduled to be completed by 2010. Phase Two to the Otay Mesa POE is scheduled to be completed by 2015.

The Otay Mesa Community Plan Update proposes land uses to support additional transit service as a part of the circulation element, consistent with the City of Villages strategy and the Mobility Element of the draft General Plan. Transit is an important element of the plan update and the

City is working with SANDAG to attain a balanced, multi-modal transportation network throughout the Mesa. An east-west high frequency bus corridor is proposed to link between the South Bay BRT and San Diego Trolley. Analysis for the transit route to travel along Airway Road is being conducted, as it could link villages and employment centers within Otay Mesa. Additional right-of-way for Airway Road would provide the option for dedicated transit lanes. In all three land use plan scenarios, Airway Road serves as the principal community transportation and activity corridor. Because there are existing industrial facilities along Airway Road, some amount of truck traffic will continue along Airway Road, an issue which requires further analysis and discussions with MTS and SANDAG.

A second bus route proposal being analyzed would provide a transit linkage to Otay Mesa between the communities of San Ysidro, Otay Mesa – Nestor and Imperial Beach. Within Otay Mesa, this route would link the proposed village in the southwestern area to San Ysidro High School, Ocean View Hills K-8 Elementary School, Palm Promenade shopping center and the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center. It would intersect with the Airway Road bus corridor at Caliente Avenue. Attachment 7 depicts the proposed additional transit routes together with the South Bay BRT and Trolley.

As the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update is a policy document, additional study of the two proposed routes would determine the exact type of service, route alignments and station locations in coordination with SANDAG and MTS. These two routes were identified based on the types and locations of land uses and activity centers in conjunction with planned regional transit service. Consistent with the City of Villages strategy, transit together with land use is being planned up front. Additional local serving transit routes may be considered by MTS over time as demand warrants.

Cross-border Goods Movement & Truck Parking

The City Planning and Community Investment Department retained IMS Worldwide, Inc., a logistics consulting firm, to analyze existing conditions and trends in logistics affecting the Otay Mesa area. The full report is provided in Attachment 8.

With manufacturing growing significantly in Asia, the maquiladoras (manufacturing facilities in the Tijuana area) have been evolving. There exists a strong relationship between the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the maquiladoras, with the Otay Mesa POE and associated logistics facilities playing an integral role in the supply chain.

A key driver in the demand for logistics centers and truck depots is the continued expansion of the maquiladora industry. Several indicators suggest that the industry will continue to expand at a rate between three and ten percent per year in new maquiladoras or new maquiladora employees. Current data suggests that employment in the certain maquiladora sectors has and will continue to expand.

A share of the maquiladora activity growth rate translates into demand for logistics space and an increase in truck traffic in the Otay Mesa area, which IMS Worldwide conservatively forecasts to be an additional five percent of the previous five-year growth rate in Otay Mesa. This translates into a preliminary forecast demand for logistics space to be approximately 1,300 acres through

2027. The forecast for industrial land provided during the January 2007 workshop on industrial land and economic prosperity is specific to the City's portion of Otay Mesa and includes logistics and other unrelated industrial demand. An inventory of industrial land in the Otay Mesa area is provided in Attachment 9. With the potential opening of a third Port of Entry in East Otay Mesa, there is an opportunity for the County to capture a share of this increasing demand for logistics due to rising land costs in Otay Mesa.

Although there are continuing efforts to fully implement the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), provisions for reciprocal truck access in both countries, litigation, homeland security requirements and industry practices are likely to perpetuate the existing system of cross-border goods movement, although targeted efficiency enhancements are anticipated. Because of this forecasted upward trend in the logistics industry, the OTAY MESA COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE will include cross-border logistics in the planning process.

Truck Circulation

The Otay Mesa Port of Entry (POE) is the sole port for commercial trucks in the western San Diego region. It is the 25th busiest port in the United States and the third busiest port along the border with Mexico. Commercial goods are transited through the Otay Mesa area on commercial trucks. As discussed in Attachment 8, the Otay Mesa area serves as a transiting center for goods, with a very small percentage of the goods destined for Otay Mesa.

The logistics market in Otay Mesa is heavily influenced by Mexican customs regulations, restrictions on foreign trucks operating in the United States and Mexico and other logistics industry factors. This system means that goods do not transit through the Otay Mesa POE directly from origin to destination. Goods must be transferred in Otay Mesa before heading to final destinations. A long haul truck drops cargo in the Otay Mesa area, generally raw materials, and returns empty containers or finished goods manufactured in the Tijuana area for distribution elsewhere. However, the long haul truck does not cross into Mexico. The actual crossing is handled by short haul trucks in a process known as drayage. These trucks pick up goods dropped in Otay Mesa by the long haul trucks, obtain Mexican customs paperwork in Otay Mesa and deliver goods to manufacturing facilities in the Tijuana area. In the reverse direction, the drayage trucks bring finished goods into Otay Mesa, dropping off goods for pick up by a long haul truck. There are various exceptions and variations, but this description represents the basic process. A typical process, albeit simplified, for moving goods southbound into Mexico includes the following steps:

1. Long haul truck from points up north arrives at truck depot to drop cargo of raw materials destined for a manufacturing facility in the Tijuana area.
2. Long haul truck leaves Otay Mesa to the north with cargo of finished goods manufactured at a manufacturing facility in the Tijuana area.
3. Drayage truck picks up cargo.
4. Drayage of cargo to customs broker to obtain Mexican customs papers.
5. Drayage of cargo via Port of Entry and Mexican customs to manufacturing facility or transfer point in the Tijuana area.
6. Drayage truck returns to truck depot in Otay Mesa.

Attachment 10 illustrates a summary of the general process. The movement of goods northbound is generally similar. All trucks entering from Mexico through the Otay Mesa POE must pass through the California Highway Patrol's Otay Mesa Inspection Facility. The drayage trucks remain in the border area and are therefore continuously inspected.

Because of this system of shuttling goods over short distances by drayage trucks between long haul trucks and manufacturing facilities, most of the internal truck traffic can operate independently of the future SR-905 freeway and South Bay Expressway, provided the local roadway network is constructed. It is primarily the long haul trucks that will continue to rely on the freeway/expressway network, while drayage trucks principally rely on local roadways to access logistics facilities and the Otay Mesa POE. As indicated in Attachment 11, most of the logistics businesses, which include customs brokers, freight forwarders and truck depots are concentrated northeast of the Otay Mesa POE and along Siempre Viva Road east and west of SR-905. Other logistics facilities, in particular, the truck depots, are located elsewhere in the community.

As land use is closely connected to transportation, the project team is studying planning areas for logistics and identifying an associated truck circulation plan. The purpose of the routes for trucks moving cross-border goods would be to provide for trade flow capacity, protect identified routes, coordinate land use planning and manage roadway maintenance costs.

Soon after Mexico shifted its processing of commercial trucks in 1994 from the San Ysidro POE to the Otay Mesa POE, border-bound truck traffic began queuing on City roadways, restricting access to properties. In response, trucks were directed to an improved border frontage road and subsequently laden and unladen trucks bound for Mexico were separated. Presently laden trucks access the border frontage road from La Media Road and unladen trucks take access via Drucker Road. The existing plan is to extend the border frontage road to Britannia Boulevard to allow for additional queuing in anticipation of truck traffic growth. Laden trucks would access the border frontage road from Britannia Boulevard and unladen trucks would access from La Media Road. Local reports currently indicate that queuing beyond Siempre Viva Road is less frequent than before, as a result of the separate processing of laden and unladen trucks.

Two preliminary truck circulation options in conjunction with the draft land use scenarios are currently being studied to support management of truck traffic involved in supporting of cross-border goods movement. Preliminary meetings have occurred with staff and stakeholders, with further analysis needed based on the IMS Report. As Scenarios #1 and #2 propose residential and related uses west of the SR-905 – South Bay Expressway alignment, truck traffic would be directed to use the freeways/expressways and a perimeter local roadway route using Siempre Viva Road, Enrico Fermi Drive, Lonestar Road and an undercrossing of the South Bay Expressway at Piper Ranch Road. This route incorporates roadways under the jurisdiction of the County Otay Mesa in its East Otay Mesa Specific Plan Area, so this would necessitate coordination with the County. The study alternative for Scenario #3 is similar. However, since residential and related uses are located west of Britannia Boulevard, La Media Road would be a designated truck route and Piper Ranch Road would not be extended under the South Bay Expressway. The two study options are illustrated in Attachment 12.

Further, planning is underway for the Otay Mesa East POE, about two miles east of the Otay Mesa POE. Due to the location of proposed land uses in the three scenarios and regional planning efforts that will heavily influence the location decisions of the logistics industry, all the preliminary truck circulation options for the truck routes would eliminate the presently planned extension of the truck route to Britannia Boulevard and maintain the presently operating access points to the border frontage road.

Within the preliminary truck circulation options under study, truck traffic involved in supporting of cross-border goods movement would be restricted on City roadways not a part of the designated access route, unless access to an existing facility could not be obtained from a designated truck route. All other types of truck traffic would continue to use City streets.

Brown Field/Cross Border Terminal

Brown Field, a general aviation airport owned and operated by the City of San Diego, occupies approximately 850 acres in the north central area of Otay Mesa. The City of San Diego has begun the process of securing funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to update the Airport Master Plan for Brown Field. This process is necessarily separate from the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update, as it is expected to take longer than the community plan update and must follow a specific program set forth by the FAA. The Otay Mesa Community Plan Update will include policies that suggest how the airport can be integrated into an updated vision for Otay Mesa. Further, ongoing evaluation of airport operations is intended to allow for flexibility in future operations of Brown Field, which will be determined through the Airport Master Plan update process. Recently, the Airports Division issued an Request For Qualifications to develop and operate a premier Fixed Base Operator on Brown Field Airport, and staff has continued to involve the community planning group to incorporate their desires for future Brown Field development.

The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (SDCRAA) is in the process of preparing an updated Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for Brown Field. The purpose of the ALUCP is to ensure that compatible land uses are located near airport facilities. State law requires that the ALUCP be prepared by the SDCRAA and be considered by the City of San Diego. The ALUCP is anticipated to be completed prior to the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update. The City is actively participating in the development of the ALUCP and has considered various drafts of the ALUCP in developing the Otay Mesa Community Plan Update scenarios.

Working closely with the planning group and stakeholders on the update process, the City Planning and Community Investment Department understands the importance of Brown Field's image and use to the Otay Mesa community. The community believes that the airport could be a catalyst for change in Otay Mesa by functioning as a corporate/business serving airport while continuing its other general aviation, port of entry and international trade operations. Brown Field plays a key role in international trade by supporting the air transport of small, time-sensitive cargo manufactured in Tijuana. While City Planning has no purview over the land uses within Brown Field, the community has indicated it is important that policy language in support of the airport be integrated into an updated vision for the community.

The Airport Authority recently conducted a feasibility study for a Cross Border Terminal associated with Rodriguez Airport in Tijuana, which would connect new U.S. facilities with the existing Mexican airport. While multiple scenarios were illustrated with services ranging from passenger shuttle services to an airplane terminal with ancillary services, any consideration would necessitate a new border crossing and would require a Presidential Permit and Customs and Border Protection involvement. The next steps include obtaining collaboration with the Mexican government generating a market demand study to determine the extent of services that would be required. At this time, land use needs are not known, but the concept of a Cross Border Terminal is supported by the Otay Mesa Community Planning Group. However, the planning group wants the update process to continue while the Airport Authority continues its studies for the Cross Border Terminal. The Otay Mesa Community Plan Update will acknowledge the possibility of a future Cross Border Terminal. As plans for the potential Cross Border Terminal are refined, the Otay Mesa Community Plan may need to be amended in the future.

Pedestrians/Bicycles/Trails

For the plan update, pedestrian and bicycle modes, as well as an integrated trail system, are equal in importance to transit and vehicular in facilitating connectivity. To improve mobility and facilitate multi-modal choices, pedestrian paths and bikeways are being studied as integral parts of the transportation network, linking activity centers such as neighborhood parks, schools, and neighborhood-serving commercial within the community. The bicycle system is also being studied to link to the city-wide network of bicycle trails. The Street Design Manual and the Bicycle Master Plan will be used to help generate mobility policies for bike ways and sidewalks for the plan update.

Because of its extensive canyon system, Otay Mesa provides an excellent opportunity to establish a connected trail system through a protected resource. Trails through the MHPA are important mobility links and provide opportunities for passive recreation. Trail connections should attempt to link the southern canyon system near the border area to activity centers, parks, schools, the Dennerly Ranch canyon system, and the Otay Valley Regional Park to the north.

Regional Collaboration

Because the Otay Mesa community planning area includes regional impacts and issues, the City and its consulting team continues to work with SANDAG staff, Caltrans staff, Airport Authority staff, and County staff to coordinate a comprehensive planning approach for the Otay Mesa update with respect to transportation and circulation issues. SANDAG discussions center on potential smart growth sites for the Smart Growth Concept Map, as well as discussions with transit staff to determine a transit program for Otay Mesa that integrates with the existing regional network. Through SANDAG's Borders Program, City staff and its consulting team are working jointly with SANDAG and Tijuana representatives on the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan which includes transportation issues. Caltrans advises staff with updates on the progress of the SR-905 project. Staff continues to meet with Airport Authority staff as they prepare to update the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for Brown Field. Preliminary discussions have occurred with County staff with regards to circulation, infrastructure financing, and land use impacts.

CONCLUSION

The Otay Mesa Community Plan Update represents a unique opportunity to evaluate the planning area's circulation network for the next 20 years. Land use conflicts with competing values for balancing economic prosperity with housing needs are being analyzed within the three scenarios. With the addition of an international trade center with anticipated increased activity to the equation, complex land use decisions and policy recommendations must be comprehensive, well thought out, and sensitive to the competing needs. The Otay Mesa Community Plan Update provides an opportunity to implement General Plan policies for the development of a multi-modal transportation network to support a sustainable and integrated community.

In order to assist staff in the development of a comprehensive plan for Otay Mesa, Planning Commission input is requested in the following areas:

1. What factors should be evaluated to resolve issues between competing values of truck traffic and other modes of transportation?
2. What other policies and approaches, if any, should staff and the planning team evaluate to provide an efficient multi-modal transportation network within an integrated sustainable community?

Respectfully submitted,

Mary P. Wright, AICP
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WRIGHT/TM

Attachments:

1. April 2007 Land Use Scenarios
2. Existing circulation map
3. SR-905 Map
4. SR-11 Corridor Vicinity Map
5. Transit Route 905 Map
6. South Bay Bus Rapid Transit Route
7. Bus Route Proposal
8. IMS Report
9. Industrial Land Inventory Map
10. Goods Movement Summary
11. Locations of Logistics Industry Businesses in Otay Mesa Map
12. Preliminary Truck Circulation Options