

# GPAC Meeting #14 Summary

July 19, 2022



## Introduction

On July 19, 2022, the City of Ventura General Plan Update (GPU) team convened the 14th meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). This meeting focused on the City's Active Transportation Plan (ATP), an ongoing project running parallel to the GPU. The primary meeting objectives were to:

- Provide an overview of the ATP and its goals and objectives
- Explain the relationship between the GPU and ATP
- Describe progress made to date on major components of the ATP, including Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs, Complete Street typologies, and plan policies
- Answer GPAC and community questions about the ATP
- Discuss how the GPU can expand the mobility goals and policies advanced in the ATP

The meeting was open to the public and held in person at City Hall in the Community Meeting Room (Room 202). It was recorded and uploaded to [YouTube](#) following the meeting. This document summarizes the key content presented and themes discussed.

## Meeting Participants

The following participants attended the meeting:

### General Plan Team

- Simran Malhotra, Raimi + Associates
- Neda Zayer, City of Ventura

### Active Transportation Team

- Drusilla van Hengel, Nelson\Nygaard
- Derek Towers, City of Ventura
- Jeff Hereford, City of Ventura

### GPAC Members

- Philip Bohan, GPAC
- Nicholas Bonge, GPAC
- Stephanie Caldwell, GPAC
- Kyler Carson, GPAC
- David Comden, GPAC
- Joshua Damigo, GPAC
- Nicholas Deitch, GPAC
- Peter Freeman, GPAC
- Kacie Goff, GPAC
- Kelsey Jonker, GPAC
- Stephanie Karba, GPAC
- Erin Kraus, GPAC
- Scott McCarty, GPAC
- Bill McReynolds, GPAC
- Daniel Reardon, GPAC
- Sabrena Rodriguez, GPAC
- Alejandra Tellez, GPAC
- Dana Worsnop, GPAC

*Absent: Lorrie Brown, Doug Halter, Louise Lampara*

# Meeting Format

Neda Zayer welcomed GPAC members and the public to the 14th GPAC meeting. She began the meeting with a brief overview of the meeting agenda and staff updates. Notable updates included upcoming engagement activities for the Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP) and a summary of the City Council meeting held on July 11, where City Council endorsed the Consultant Team’s approach to developing the land use alternatives. Following staff updates, Simran reviewed the purpose and process of developing the land use alternatives, as well as upcoming engagement activities planned for the summer and fall.

The bulk of the meeting was spent on the ATP. Drusilla van Hengel from Nelson\Nygaard, the lead active transportation consultant, gave a comprehensive [presentation](#) summarizing the work completed to date for the ATP. Discussion sessions were interspersed throughout the ATP presentation so GPAC members could ask questions and provide feedback on different components of the presentation. The meeting concluded with public comment.

# Discussion

The following section summarizes questions and comments from GPAC members, organized by the different components of the presentation. Questions from GPAC members are **bolded**, while accompanying answers from the General Plan and Active Transportation Team are *italicized*.

## Stakeholder Engagement

### Questions

- **How does the ATP consider the needs of those with mobility, visual, and auditory impairments?**
  - *The ATP Team has conducted focus groups with seniors and have also connected one-on-one with stakeholders via community councils to understand the needs of those who are older and facing potential impairments. The ATP will contain policy recommendations that intend to elevate the experience of people with disabilities, and the complete streets recommendations will integrate elements that ensures Universal Design<sup>1</sup> standards as opposed to basic ADA compliance.*
- **Are there areas of the city where we could reduce or eliminate parking requirements altogether to focus on pedestrian-only infrastructure?**
  - *The General Plan will advance goals and policies for parking management strategies that will be implemented through changes to parking requirements in the Zoning Code. For example, the General Plan could include policies such as expanding shared parking districts and unbundling parking in residential developments.*

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Design is the “design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Center for Universal Design).

- **How are the ATP and General Plan addressing public transit?**
  - *The ATP focuses on the first/last-mile component of public transit, such as getting people to transit and ensuring they have a safe place to leave their bicycle, based on current transit priority streets. The ATP does not provide route service recommendations or designate new transit priority streets. The General Plan Team is working with VCTC, Gold Coast Transit, and Metrolink to consider transit improvements within the city. The General Plan will provide high-level direction through the Circulation Element to influence how transit providers improve their services and operations.*

## Comments

- It would be helpful to develop a common language to define terms (such as first/last mile).
- In addition to biking and walking, micromobility needs to be a part of the ATP discussion as one of the solutions for first/last-mile problems.

## ATP Goals and Prioritization Process

### Questions

- **How does the ATP inform parking requirements for future developments?**
  - *The ATP will identify districts where walking and bicycling is more primary than vehicular use, as well as the projects needed to improve active transportation in these areas. The identification of these districts happens in conjunction with the designation of General Plan land uses.*
- **Does increasing walkability actually decrease the number of cars in a community and reduce the need for parking, or does it just reduce the usage of cars?**
  - *While people will continue to need cars, it has been well researched that those places with high-quality alternatives to driving and land use scenarios that make it possible to access goods, services, and jobs without a car all help increase mode share for active transportation. Many studies also show that as the cost of parking and driving goes up, people look to use other modes.*
- **There are many community assets in Midtown that I missed because I mostly drive through the area. What kind of transportation improvements would help places like this thrive more?**
  - *The ATP identifies various streetscape elements that help support an excellent pedestrian experience. The types of streetscape elements that are appropriate differ based on the type of street.*
- **Does the City have an Urban Tree Plan? How are considerations for urban tree canopy being incorporated into the ATP and GPU?**
  - *The City has a street tree master plan that was developed through a steering committee and adopted last year. It is managed by the City's Urban Forestry Division. The current Downtown Specific Plan identifies appropriate street tree patterns for various streetscapes, and this can be expanded for other areas through the General Plan.*

- **What is a Chariot ride?**
  - *Chariot rides are an existing engagement strategy used by Bike Ventura. They involve towing a chariot behind somebody's bicycle during a group ride. The ATP Team used a chariot ride in the past to encourage people to share their experiences with walking in west Ventura and advertised an online ATP survey that was available in both English and Spanish.*
- **How does the ATP prioritize projects?**
  - *The ATP identifies locations in the city that are most important to invest in (i.e., near schools, places with high concentrations of low-income people, commercial destinations), based on where there is a higher probability that with better infrastructure, people will be more motivated to shift modes. The plan also identifies appropriate projects for different street typologies (i.e., which streets should have shared lane markings versus those that should have protected bike lanes). Every year, the City will decide when each priority project will be implemented.*

## Safe Routes to School

### Questions

- **Has the ATP Team received any feedback from high schoolers? I witness a lot of near accidents and poor traffic circulation around arrival and dismissal time.**
  - *We did not have any focus groups with high school participants; it is difficult to ask for time with students on something that is not instructional. We have observed and heard that the speed of drivers going past schools was the primary concern for most high school staff. When we circulate action plans with the School District, we will hopefully hear ideas for how to engage with older students more.*
- **Did the ATP team engage with Ventura College for SRTS?**
  - *We did not do a SRTS audit with Ventura College.*
- **What percentage of students currently take the bus, walk, or bike to school?**
  - *The percentage is very low - in the single digits.*
- **Did you hear any feedback from parents about their limitations with active transportation? Getting kids to school is complex – parents have to consider what time the school starts, how far you live away, your comfort level for allowing your children to walk to school by themselves, etc.**
  - *State requirements for new campuses being a certain size have de facto made campuses further away than what it used to be. We conducted two different surveys around SRTS, and 500 of the responses were from parents.*

### Comments

- Busing isn't always a viable option, given that parents have a choice in where they send their kids and a lot of kids do not attend their neighborhood school. Some school districts around the County have even eliminated school busing completely because it is so expensive.
- Middle school bike education should be expanded.

- Ventura College has a grant to allow their students to ride public buses for free. The City should consider expanding that program for high school and middle school students.

## Complete Street Typologies

### Questions

- **How do you decrease speeds along arterial streets like Main Street?**
  - *Street trees are one strategy common across all street types that can help reduce speeds without impacting through traffic.*

### Comments

- There are five points of connection to the beach. These corridors should have a particular designation, and we need to improve accessibility along these corridors for pedestrians and cyclists.

## Policy Opportunities

### Questions

- **Does the ATP consider increasing pedestrian overpasses or underpasses across SR-126 and US-101?**
  - *Yes, making connections across these barriers is important for accessibility to the harbor, waterfront, and beaches. There is a funded overpass planned around the Grove.*
- **What is the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program and why was it stopped?**
  - *A Neighborhood Traffic Management Program takes an area-wide approach to reducing travel speeds in residential neighborhoods (as opposed to reducing speeds on a single street and moving the speeding problem to another street). The City used to have one but ran into funding issues during the Recession. There is now interest in bringing it back. A Neighborhood Traffic Management Program can help the City establish a denser network of low-traffic/low-stress bike lanes and greenways.*

### Comments

- Parking should be a required component of any development to open up space on streets for bike lanes and other active transportation improvements.
- The City should look into bike sharing to help with tourism and commuting opportunities.
- The City should install more talking crosswalk signals.
- The City's industrial areas should not be omitted from the ATP – many people who work in these areas walk at lunchtime and there are few complete sidewalks.

## Public Comments

Several individuals spoke during public comment at the close of each meeting. Comments are summarized below.

- Bicycle theft is a big problem in the city, and we need more bicycle storage in Downtown. Electric low-speed vehicles could help retirement communities access local shopping centers, but in practice it is difficult to use them to get across town, because all the east-west streets have a speed limit over 35 miles/hour. The City should consider reintroducing a westbound one-way street on Poli between Pacific and Lincoln to help alleviate traffic and improve safety.
- E-scooters are currently banned in Ventura because of an emergency ordinance put in place in 2018, but they should be considered a part of the solution to take cars off the road. As a local e-scooter business owner, I take public health and safety seriously and don't intend to operate without the permission of the government. Parking zones, geofencing technology, and dual kick stands are some of the strategies that can promote safety on public right of way.
- I commute to work by transit, and it is egregious that an eight-minute drive from Victoria to Downtown is an hour on transit. Most delays on transit happen because of people circling around for on-street parking and congestion along Main, Thompson, and Victoria. The areas where I feel the most unsafe walking are those dominated by cars. Reducing parking requirements for new developments or prohibiting on-street parking, especially on Main, could help with these issues. A pedestrian bridge across SR-126 to El Camino would also greatly improve accessibility and safety to schools like Elmhurst Elementary and Ventura College. Micromobility and ridesharing are great options for tourists and alleviating congestion in Downtown. The City should widen sidewalks, especially on Telegraph, by removing a parking or travel lane.
- Reduced parking requirements will not fix anything until we have better transit and active transportation infrastructure. Please consider that many residents work out of town and must drive to work to afford living in the city. As an RV owner, I am also grateful when a community has a waste treatment plant that has a free dump site for RV's. Before we develop more, we need assurance that we have an adequate water supply.
- The City needs enhanced signals at intersections that warn cars about turning right when pedestrians are crossing.
- Emphasize quality of life and enhancing the outdoor character of Ventura more in the ATP process.
- It would be nice if we were all out of our cars, but many residents rely on cars because our jobs and markets are not within walking distance. Given this reality, it's not practical to reduce parking for new developments; we need to ensure there is adequate parking.
- Active transportation should be a core component of the General Plan. We need more complete streets in every part of town and to prioritize public health over speed. The big vision for Ventura in the next 20 years should be about creating a place where everyone can walk and bicycle everywhere.
- We are putting the health of children at risk by allowing heavy traffic in residential neighborhoods. The closure of Main Street has pushed more traffic onto Poli, and drivers on Poli routinely exceed the speed limit, ignore crosswalks, and stop signs. Consider adding stop signs throughout the residential sections of Poli, Foothill, and San Nicholas and adding additional lanes on Main Street from Fir to Seward to encourage drivers to use commercial roadways like Main and Thompson to get across town. Encouraging traffic into high-capacity

roadways can free up residential neighborhoods for walking and biking in a safer and cleaner environment.

- The City's public right of ways need to be able to accommodate a variety of modes (not just walking and bicycling), including newer modes like e-scooters. Reducing parking pushes cars onto streets, impedes the use of Safe Streets to Schools, and reduces cyclist safety on bicycle routes - priority should be given to certain streets to maintain higher parking standards. The City and County needs more hike and bike facilities.
- Strongly against changing zoning to accommodate 3-5 story development.