



## CONNECTMENLO

menlo park land use & mobility update

# Transportation and Bicycle Commissions Hearing

*The Transportation and Bicycle Commissions held a joint session to hear ConnectMenlo transportation-related topics on June 1, 2015 (7:00 – 9:00 pm) in the Menlo Park Senior Center at 100 Terminal Avenue.*

### **TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Bianca Walser, Chair  
Philip Mazzara, Vice Chair  
Maurice Shiu  
Penelope Huang  
Adina Levin  
Jason Pfannenstiel  
Michael Meyer

### **BICYCLE COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

William Kirsch, Chair  
Cindy Welton, Vice Chair  
Jonathan Weiner  
Lydia Lee  
Fred Berghout

### **CITY STAFF AND CONSULTANTS PRESENT**

Justin Murphy, Assistant Community Development Director  
Nikki Nagaya, Transportation Manager  
Rene Baile, Transportation Engineer  
Kristiann Choy, Senior Transportation Engineer  
Deanna Chow, Senior Planner  
Charlie Knox, PlaceWorks  
Rosie Dudley, PlaceWorks  
Jeff Tumlin, Nelson\Nygaard  
Jessica Alba, Nelson\Nygaard

## MEETING PURPOSE

The primary purposes of this joint Commission meeting was to learn from internationally renowned transportation planning expert, Jeff Tumlin of Nelson\Nygaard about methods to meet the City's long-term transportation goals and evaluate Menlo Park's transportation investments.

## MEETING SUMMARY

William Kirsch, Chair of the Bicycle Commission brought the meeting to order, provided an overview of the agenda, and introduced the Bicycle Commission. Bianca Walser, chair of the Transportation Commission introduced the Transportation Commissioners. Then Mr. Kirsch introduced Charlie Knox, the lead consultant hired by the City to conduct the ConnectMenlo Process. Mr. Knox provided a brief overview of the planning process and described how this meeting fits into the schedule and process, and explained that transportation policies and programs for the Circulation Element are being developed. He then introduced Mr. Tumlin who described the evolution of America's love affair with the automobile, how it has shaped our cities and our lifestyles, and how cities are addressing the resulting congestion now. He outlined 10 methods to manage parking and transportation demand—the critical tools for revitalizing city centers and creating sustainable places.

## TRANSPORTATION AND BICYCLE COMMISSIONS MEETING SUMMARY

Following his presentation, the Commissioners opened the meeting up to public comments and then provided their own comments/questions following those from the public.

See the project website for a copy of this presentation: [www.menlopark.org/connectmenlo](http://www.menlopark.org/connectmenlo)

## COMMENTS

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Question 1: How broad is the area measured when studying per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT)?

*Tumlin: The right metric depends on each application. It can be applied to a single development or an entire region. Cities can measure it citywide or set a different target for each neighborhood depending on their goals.*

Question 2: How do you measure VMT results?

*Tumlin: Compare it against the regional average. For example, if the target is a citywide traffic management, you can distribute that reduction and compare to existing VMT in that part of the city. It is important to understand what the data is assessing.*

Question 3: Parking costs—how do you determine the cost per spot?

*Tumlin: Estimating the cost depends on what you include in the figure and land values of an area, so they do range. Assume land has value in Menlo Park. Structured parking is usually cheaper than a surface lot parking spot but surface lots occur as a product of the development regulations. Parking spaces can generally range from \$20,000 to \$75,000 per space.*

Question 4: What do you suggest we say to shop owners to justify charging for parking since they often are opposed?

*Tumlin: Many people are still afraid to charge for parking because the shopping center parking lots are free. Most successful shopping districts don't try to compete with shopping centers and instead focus on creating their own value. The transaction of paying at a meter is more irritating than actually paying for a parking space and should be made easier for drivers. If parking is in abundance, it's OK to be free, but if there is high demand, it should have a fee. If you require every store to have a gigantic parking lot, you use up space that could be used for something else. Parking management and congestion pricing are the only ways to control congestion. Developers should decide optimal number of parking spaces needed in their developments—retail or otherwise, rather than being required to meet an outdated parking ratio requirement.*

Question 5: Very supportive of congestion pricing and Dumbarton rail. But in regard to biking more, it's just not always feasible. How can I get across the bridge on a bike? There will be more trips not less if residents have to work across the Bay. How do we keep existing residents happy and able to get to their jobs in Silicon Valley? In addition, Belle Haven residents need access from Belle Haven to Downtown Menlo Park and can't always bike if it's dark out or traveling with young children.

*Tumlin: We understand that there still will be the need to drive; not everyone will be able to bike and not drive. The policies we put forth need to make it easier for people to get around without driving and thereby reduce the number of cars on the street so driving*

## TRANSPORTATION AND BICYCLE COMMISSIONS MEETING SUMMARY

*is easier for those who do need to drive to their destinations. Multi-modal improvements and congestion pricing can get enough people off the streets to make a difference.*

Question 6: How can the Dumbarton rail be used for bike/ped and BRT/transit as well?

*Tumlin: Rail technology is not necessarily the best technology to use on Dumbarton rail. Constraints on either side in Union City and Redwood City limit how many trains can come through. It could be better served with rubber tire transit improvements that can easily fan out and connect to existing transit hubs on both sides of Bay. Think hard about what the best way to use it. The ped/bike trail should be incorporated into the ROW along with transit.*

*Councilmember Keith: The Dumbarton Rail committee was just unfunded as of last week. We can still look at trails, Congestion pricing is an excellent idea; working with the Toll Authority should be a next step.*

Question 7: Is the Nexus Study still relevant? Does it need to be updated? Currently charges \$5/Sq Ft of office/retail/commercial space.

*Tumlin: It should be updated; fees are higher now. Need to work with a real estate economist to determine the ideal fee. Make sure fee can be spent on what the community/City needs. Neighboring cities should use the same fee.*

Comment: There is desire to use VMT measurement instead of LOS and get it integrated into CEQA process. It was passed in 2013/2014, however the rule-making process has proven difficult. “Sprawl” developers resist the VMT method since it accurately shows greater impacts of building far away from existing infrastructure and requires more vehicle trips. New rules are being drafted and may not be in place until 2016. In the meantime many EIRs are underway and if they have to use LOS, it will not result in the environments we’ve identified through this process. In addition, it would be helpful to use the air quality data and analysis in conjunction with traffic analysis—huge value in using VMT over LOS.

*Tumlin: Menlo Park can move forward without the state’s decision. Other cities have adopted the VMT criteria. We can use the General Plan process to adopt the process.*

*Knox: One of the goals of the General Plan is to look at multi-modal solutions/metrics to address Menlo Park’s circulation and integrate them into the Circulation Element. Could also use multi-modal LOS that looks at more than just vehicular level of service.*

Comment: I live in Menlo Oaks near Vintage Oaks, out of the city limits. We have a safety problem at the high school which is undergoing its EIR. Public comment is open until June 22. There is congestion that reduce speeds to 15 mph which reduces collision rates. However all of the students have to cross the carpool lane to get to the buses. About 73 percent of the students are picked up by car. Only 9 percent use the bus; they are not using the bus because of lack of space and it is standing room only. About 15 percent of kids are dropped off off-campus in the middle of the street on Arlington Way which also causes a safety problem. Consider relocating the bus stop to the County of San Mateo segment of the road (500 feet) to accommodate a longer bus stop that allows for more buses to stop at once.

*Tumlin: Several government jurisdictions given geographic boundaries result in efficient/ineffective plans.*

## TRANSPORTATION AND BICYCLE COMMISSIONS MEETING SUMMARY

*Commissioners: We have heard about the bike concerns around the school and went out to bike the area. Result: buffered a bike lane and narrowed vehicle lane to encourage more bicyclists and make it safer to ride. Who is approving this EIR? Perhaps the Commissions can add it to their agenda?*

*Nagaya: Sequoia Union High School District is the lead agency. Any member of the public or the Commission as a whole can submit a comment letter. The City can respond, but it does not have jurisdiction over it.*

## COMMISSION COMMENTS

Question 1: How have other cities budgeted for improvements? With development fees?

*Tumlin: The cities that are successful go after all of the resources they can get. Menlo Park is thriving. Development should be seen as a privilege. Make development approval process predictable and achievable. Figure out how to create value and maximize total community benefits. Make it transparent to developers. Development impact fees and community benefits are key. They should help raise revenue. Facilitate self-taxation in business improvement districts. Each commercial district should raise money for shared improvements for their specific area. Accommodate housing demand near transit. Menlo Park can continue to improve in these ways.*

Question 2: How to address the public safety value in Menlo Park? There is concern that changes to roads will affect emergency vehicle response time.

*Tumlin: There is a tension between total public safety and fire safety. On the one hand we want traffic to go slower to limit collisions, but on the other we want emergency vehicles to get to fires/accidents quickly. There are far more people dying in traffic collisions than in fires. There should be multiple streets in a grid system that allow for emergency vehicles to get around quickly. Carpool lanes can be used by emergency vehicles during emergencies. Also, landscaped areas can be designed in such a way to accommodate emergency access when necessary.*

Question 3: Can impact fees pay for non-vehicle improvements?

*Tumlin: There are many cities where 100 percent of fees are going to non-vehicle/driving improvements. There are some that use it for transit operations, as well, not just capital improvements. For example, the model used in San Francisco is constructed around the nexus that looks at connections to transit and the delay to access transit. Thus it justified that operation fees (paying for more bus drivers) could be paid for with the impact fees.*

Question 4: Bicycle infrastructure is very spotty around our schools and it seems shortsighted that we're not fixing the immediate surroundings (blocks and sidewalks) around schools. Are there regional efforts to make this a priority?

*Tumlin: There are state and regional funds for Safe Routes to School (SR2S) improvements. It's most successful when the schools/cities are prioritizing improvements within these areas. However it does get politically complicated to get them prioritized.*

Question 5: Wouldn't it be great for the City to have a staff member whose job it is to bike all around town to address bicycle issues.

*Tumlin: The problem is there is a long list of problems to address and not enough capacity to address them all at once.*

---

## TRANSPORTATION AND BICYCLE COMMISSIONS MEETING SUMMARY

Question 6: How similar do the transportation metrics/guidelines looking across cities?

*Tumlin: Performance metrics are reflective of local values and those vary from city to city. Menlo Park needs to distill a list of objectives and identify what data is readily available to determine a short list of transportation performance metrics. Different metrics make sense on different streets—each street will have a different threshold and need for sidewalk width, tree canopy, bike facilities, etc.*

*Knox: It is a customizable set of criteria and will differ for each neighborhood or type of street. We will use this General Plan process to provide these metrics and will be providing draft policy in the coming months.*

Comment: The Transportation Commission has a General Plan subcommittee. We should provide some policy recommendations. We have a street classification system that is based on vehicles.

*Tumlin: The typical set of designations defines the street based on how cars use them. Some streets are more important for pedestrians, bikes, cars, and some are used by all modes. It's important to look at how streets serve each mode and the land uses along them; they differ based on the surrounding land uses (residential vs. commercial).*