



Mayor Gonzales
City Council Members
San Jose City Council
801 North First Street, Rm. 600
San Jose, CA 95110

June 20, 2005

Honorable Mayor Gonzales and Council members:

I am writing on behalf of the Sierra Club to express our strong support for transit-oriented development plans like the proposed update to the North San Jose Area Development Policy. Unlike Coyote Valley, development of the North San Jose Area demonstrates a real commitment to the principles of smart growth. Development within existing urban areas prevents sprawl and thus protects wildlife habitat and other valuable open space. If developed properly, transit-oriented development can also create vibrant places that attract people to urban living, while minimizing city infrastructure costs.

In particular the Sierra Club wishes to support the following features of the proposed update:

- housing and neighborhood-serving businesses near jobs
- intensification of development near transit
- creation of a rich pedestrian environment near transit corridors
- preservation of existing cultural and historic assets that draw people to more urban living
- promotion of green building

Although the Sierra Club applauds most features of the proposal, we also have questions regarding the project's traffic and neighborhood impacts that are labeled significant and unavoidable in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Specifically according to the DEIR:

- **"The project as it is proposed will have significant unavoidable traffic impacts on 38 intersections.** (Significant Unavoidable Impact)" *North San Jose Development Policies Update DEIR*, page 174
- **"The project as proposed will add significant additional traffic to 72 freeway segments operating at LOS F.** (Significant Unavoidable Impact)" *North San Jose Development Policies Update DEIR*, page 174

Because San Jose is now proposing a mixed use project, including employee housing, which should require less outside access to this site than single-use industrial development would require and because San Jose is proposing a maximum of pedestrian friendly, transit oriented mobility within the site, we believe the traffic impacts cited may be more dire than necessary. If the city maximizes planning for pedestrian amenities, neighborhood-serving land uses, mass transit improvements and methods of discouraging through traffic to the area traffic impacts should be reduced to a level that would make North San Jose a more desirable place to live and work.

On a related note, several San Jose-based organizations have raised concerns about adequate treatment of the following neighborhood-serving and neighborhood-enriching land uses:

- **Public services-** Will schools and medical facilities be located so that they are accessible to a maximum number of residents and employees with minimum car use?
- **Family-oriented parks-** Note that homes will not be single-family homes with back yards so family-oriented park space within walking distance of homes will be a critical need. Also, will there be timely reporting on progress in developing parks as housing is developed?
- **Heritage resources-** Has advice from heritage resource experts such as the Historic Landmarks Board and PAC SJ about preservation of critical area resources been sought and incorporated into the proposal?
- **Retail-** Was the opportunity to “catch” the current retail outflow to cities north of San Jose figured in to the current plan? Will retail be located so that a maximum number of residents and employees can shop with minimum car use?

The Sierra Club requests the City of San Jose reopen the transportation and other relevant sections of this DEIR to develop a program that results in an attractive, pedestrian friendly and neighborhood-serving region supported by mass transit improvements and minimizes automobile use. Then, we urge the City of San Jose to revise its General Plan to reflect the current thinking on land use and transportation for densely developed communities.

Stopping sprawl and promoting infill development are top Sierra Club priorities. Avoiding the loss of agricultural lands, critical wildlife habitat, and other valuable open space requires compact and attractive development of lands within our urban growth boundaries. **Once critical improvements are made it appears that the proposed update to the North San Jose Area Development Policy could be the kind of plan the Sierra Club would wholeheartedly support.**

Sincerely,



Melissa Hippard, Director