

**V.**  
**CIRCULATION ELEMENT**

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

**General Plan Legislation**

The Circulation Element has been a required element of the General Plan since 1955. Section 65302 (b) of the California Government Code requires:

A Circulation Element consisting of the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, and other local public utilities and facilities, all correlated with the land use element of the plan.

During the past 20 years, transportation technology has advanced rapidly. This enhanced technology has resulted in an increased emphasis on the provision of a balanced multi-model transportation system to meet the needs of residents and businesses.

**Purpose and Function**

The purpose of the Circulation Element is to provide a safe and efficient transportation system for existing and proposed land uses within the community. The Element provides a basis for the orderly pattern of development while minimizing the impact of transportation services on residential neighborhoods and the environmental quality of the community.

**Relationship to Other General Plan Elements**

The manner in which people and goods move within and through the City is an important factor in maintaining a quality living environment. The Circulation Element must be closely coordinated with the Land Use and Housing Elements to fully utilize the resources of the community. In addition, the Circulation Element is also closely related to the Noise Element. For instance, the Circulation Element prescribes traffic volumes for the various roadways comprising the transportation network, while the Noise Element describes the baseline noise levels which are necessary to achieve noise compatible land uses. In an urban environment, aesthetic elements of a circulation system such as medians, street trees and attractive pedestrian walkways can provide passive open space and positive visual resources.

This topic is considered in the Open Space/Conservation/Parks-Recreation Elements. This 1987 Circulation Element revises and updates, as appropriate, the Element which was adopted in 1973. That Circulation Element incorporated many of the freeway improvements which were achieved during the past decade. The achievement of those improvements has resulted in less traffic through the core area of the City.

In January 2005, the City Council adopted the Corridors Specific Plan (SP-4), which put in place policies and strategies to transform Truman Street, San Fernando Road, Maclay Avenue, and First Street into attractive, livable, and economically vital districts. Key components of the plan included a) creating a more comfortable environment for pedestrians by introducing streetscape improvements and implementing roadway designs to tame the current flow of traffic, and b) introducing a policy

framework with associated design standards and guidelines to focus activity and investment along these corridors.

In December 2017, the City amended the Corridors Specific Plan to accommodate the East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor (ESFVTC) transit improvements, a proposal by the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) to introduce either Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along Truman Street, Low Floor Light Rail Transit (LRT) along San Fernando Road, or High Floor LRT within the existing railroad right-of-way, as well as to implement pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular access to the San Fernando/Sylmar Metrolink Station and the transit stops associated with Metro's proposed ESFVTC initiative.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This section summarizes the major findings and conclusions regarding circulation services and transportation facilities available within the City of San Fernando. The principal sources of background data for preparation of this section are listed below:

- The 1973 Circulation Element of the General Plan.
- The 1987 Circulation Element Update of the General Plan.
- CalTrans, " 2014 Traffic Volumes on California State Highways."
- Traffic impact analysis studies for public and private projects.
- Citywide speed zone surveys.
- Traffic studies on coordination of railroad operations with vehicular traffic movements.
- Service data from the Southern California Rapid Transit District.
- Traffic impact analysis from the 2017 Corridors Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

### **Findings**

1. The local street system is comprised of major highways, secondary highways, collector and local access streets. A description of the existing arterial system is provided in Section B of the Technical Appendix. The functions of these streets are briefly described below: The major function of major and secondary highways is to move large volumes of traffic from one part of the City to another. On-street parking and access points along these highways to adjacent land uses are carefully considered in relationship to traffic volumes.

Collector streets provide both land access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. This system differs from the arterial system in that facilities on the collector system may penetrate residential neighborhoods, distributing trips from the arterials, through the area, to the ultimate destination. The collector street system moves traffic to local shopping centers, schools, parks and between adjacent neighborhoods.

The function of the access street is to provide direct access to individual parcels. The access street is not designed for through traffic.

2. As the City of San Fernando is surrounded by freeways there is excellent freeway access. The City is served by the Golden State Freeway (1-5), the San Diego Freeway (1-405), the Foothill Freeway (1-210), and the Simi-San Fernando Freeway (State Route 118). These routes are shown in Exhibit V-1.
3. San Fernando is served by two major inter-regional bus lines, the Greyhound Bus Lines and the Continental Trailways Bus System. Both offer service from San Fernando to points lying outside the Southern California Rapid Transit District and vice versa. Both lines use the Golden State Freeway in making connections to either Los Angeles or points to the north. There is no east-west service emanating in San Fernando.
4. San Fernando is served by eight Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) bus routes which provide service to other sections of the San Fernando Valley and downtown Los Angeles.
5. San Fernando is served by the Antelope Valley line of the Metrolink commuter rail service. The Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station is located just west of the Planning Area, near the intersection of Hubbard Avenue and First Street. Both the station and its park-and-ride lot sit just outside San Fernando's city limits. Trains on the line make 15 round trips on weekdays, and six round trips on both weekend days. The San Fernando trolley offers daily service, stopping at 28 locations throughout the City,
6. Although the San Fernando Airport is no longer in operation, there are adequate regional facilities to provide air passenger and freight services.
7. Approximately five freight trains pass through San Fernando each day.
8. The City is bounded by mountain ranges to the east and north and Van Norman Dam is located to the west. These areas do not generate traffic and, as a result, most through traffic from the west, north and east is generated in a relatively small area lying between the City of San Fernando and the above-mentioned geographic features.

## **Conclusions**

1. The City of San Fernando is fully developed with well-established traffic patterns. The City's circulation system is classified according to the character of service which the street is intended to provide.
2. Street standards utilized by the City of Los Angeles are not appropriate for the City of San Fernando. Due to the geographic location of the City, arterials perform a somewhat different function in the circulation network.
3. Topographic barriers limit the area of traffic generation and there is more than average freeway access. Because of these factors, much of the traffic usually carried by arterials will use the freeway system instead. The City of San Fernando street classifications are described in Section B of the Technical Appendix.
4. There are adequate regional transportation facilities to serve the needs of the community.

## **ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

This section outlines circulation related issues and opportunities in the City of San Fernando. The identification of these issues and opportunities serves to highlight areas of interest that should be considered in circulation planning and decisions on traffic improvements.

## **Issues**

Traffic blockages, due to railroad switching movements, can impede through traffic circulation along major arterials and can restrict the movement of emergency vehicles.

## **Opportunities**

1. Traffic studies have been completed that provide information useful to the coordination of railroad operations with vehicular traffic movements and to improve traffic flow through the City.
2. The construction of the Foothill and Simi Valley Freeways altered traffic patterns, resulting in less through traffic within the core area of the City. Concurrently, access to other destinations of regional interest was improved for San Fernando residents and businesses.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

This section identifies the continuing and long-range goals and objectives of the Circulation Element. As is the case for the other General Plan Elements, the goals and objectives are based on the information summarized in the previous sections, the data contained in the Technical Appendix as well as the 1973 Circulation Element and the 1987 Circulation Plan Update.

### **Goals**

1. To provide an efficient street system which allows maximum accessibility, while providing maximum safety and economy of movement.
2. To provide a street system that links San Fernando to other communities and regional facilities, while providing the residents of those communities with easily accessible routes to various facilities within the City of San Fernando.
3. To recognize problem areas and to implement programs aimed at solving those problems.
4. To generate a pedestrian- and transit-oriented network of complete streets within the Corridors Specific Plan area that provides high quality connections to the Metrolink Station for all travel modes, while balancing the needs of automobile access with the safety and comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists.

### **Objectives**

1. Conflicts between vehicular traffic and railway operations will be minimized to the maximum extent possible.
2. The Central Business District will be enhanced as a commercial area through the establishment of efficient circulation patterns.
3. Traffic Improvements will be implemented, as needed, to respond to changes in regional traffic patterns that affect local circulation.
4. Within the San Fernando Corridors Specific Plan (SP-5) area:
  - a. Facilitate the transition of the Maclay Avenue, Truman Street, San Fernando Road, and First Street corridors into multi-modal streets that complement the land uses and development pattern planned for the corridors through implementation of the specific plan.

- b. Maintain and improve vehicular traffic circulation within the specific plan area and the adjacent community in order to safely and efficiently move both local and through traffic to its destination, while accommodating future demand for circulation by all modes of transportation.
- c. Implement traffic calming techniques to improve traffic and pedestrian safety.
- d. Create attractive urban streetscapes with design and amenities that are visually compatible with and enhance planned private development pursuant to this specific plan in general, and that support pedestrian use and outdoor activities in particular.
- e. Ensure Metro's East San Fernando Valley Transit Corridor project preserves on-street parking, does not compromise pedestrian accessibility and comfort, or negatively impact adjacent businesses.

## **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

This section presents the policies and action programs adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council in order to achieve a circulation and transportation system that meets the needs of the community. The implementation measures are, in effect, a statement of the policies and actions which have been endorsed by the City over the recent years.

### **Policies**

1. The street classification system should separate those streets that are designed for through traffic from those that are local in nature. The intended function should be obvious to the driver.
2. San Fernando's circulation system should be coordinated with that of the City of Los Angeles, whose standards are different. This will insure the elimination of abrupt changes in the roadway that cause confusion and congestion for the motorist.
3. The circulation system should provide continuity of movement throughout the City and should facilitate safe, efficient emergency access.

### **Action Programs**

1. Circulation Element Map implementation -- Exhibit V-1 is the official Circulation Element Map that indicates the street classifications for roadways in San Fernando and the regional freeway system. The goals and objectives of this map will be continually implemented and any changes will be processed as an amendment to the General Plan.
2. Inter-governmental Coordination — On the basis of City Council policy, there is coordination with the City of Los Angeles on a continuing basis regarding roadway transition areas between San Fernando and Los Angeles. Although each City maintains different street standards, the Intergovernmental coordination serves to maximize the provision for a continuity of movement throughout the City without confusion or congestion.
3. Traffic Signalization — The City utilizes a traffic signal interconnect system which sequences traffic lights at different intersections to provide progression of traffic movement throughout the City. New state-of-the-art computerized controllers are being phased in to upgrade the system.
4. Traffic Impact Studies — To avoid adverse Impacts on businesses and residential neighborhoods, the City frequently authorizes special studies on the traffic impacts stemming from the

development of public and private projects. In addition, the Traffic Commission continually surveys intersections at high accident locations for purposes of recommending traffic improvements.

#### **INTERNAL CONSISTENCY**

Street classifications are appropriate to serve the land use categories designated in the Land Use Element. The landscaping along major arterials provides passive open space, enhancing the visual image of the community to the motorist.