

Executive Summary: A Vision of the Future

INTRODUCTION

Today, over 90% of all trips originating in Marin County are made in autos on roads built to standards established decades ago. Our transportation network is being asked to do more and more all the time as our demand to travel increases. This comes as no surprise to people who live here. Over 90% of those responding to a recent survey agree that traffic congestion in Marin County is a moderate or major problem.

In the past, we have been able to keep up with the demand for travel by widening roads and making better use of existing systems. However, the continued widening of roadways is costly, and may harm our environment and the character of our communities. Widening roads alone can no longer keep up with growing demand. Looking into the future, one thing is clear — to manage congestion, we will have to provide a richness of choices that will enable people to travel differently, creating a sustainable transportation system that promotes mobility and maintains the quality of life we enjoy in Marin County.

Building on current projects to address congestion and provide more transportation choices, this document, *Moving Forward: A 25 Year Transportation Vision for Marin County*, represents the next step towards making significant and lasting change in our transportation system. It represents a synthesis of over three years of study and provides a vision for a multi-modal future, where all modes of transportation combine to manage and minimize congestion in the County.

The transportation vision presented in *Moving Forward* is not constrained by existing funding, but it is designed to be reasonably achievable if we all work together.

To manage congestion in Marin County, we need a sustainable transportation system that promotes mobility and maintains Marin's quality of life.

From the common base of knowledge provided in this document, the people who live and work in Marin can move forward together in establishing priorities and a clear vision of the future.

This document is intended to be a tool to help people who live or work in Marin County to envision a different kind of transportation system. From this common base of knowledge, we will all move forward together to determine priorities and a clearer vision for how we will shape the future.

This document is designed to bring a consistent frame of reference to everyone who travels in Marin County. It begins by diagnosing our transportation problems and envisions a set of solutions that combine to enhance our quality of life. Finally, it outlines financing strategies that can be used to realize our vision of the future.

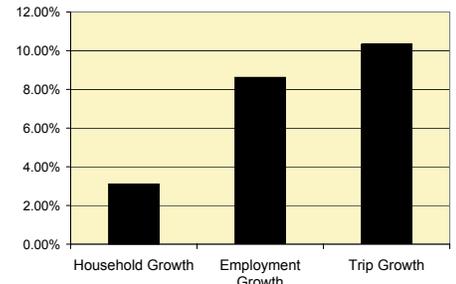
Moving Forward is designed as a fluid document and, as such, sets forth goals and objectives that may be changed or modified in response to economic, demographic, and other changes in our society. This document does not establish any mandatory requirements or goals; instead, it provides a framework for future decisions regarding transportation investments and improvements in Marin County.

This document represents a unique collaboration between the public, staff and elected officials. The Vision process began over three years ago, as a culmination of community-led master plans focused on individual transportation modes. To develop the Vision, a recent series of six open house style workshops were attended by nearly 200 Marin County residents. In addition, over 1,000 individual comments were received. The result is the first Transportation Vision for Marin County, a vision developed by and for the people who live, work, and travel in Marin County.

THE CAUSES OF CONGESTION

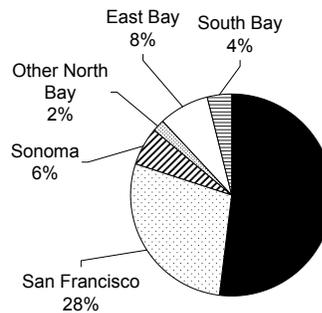
We all know that there is congestion in Marin County, but not many of us have taken the time to think of where it comes from. A detailed study, done by the Marin Congestion Management Agency, has found that our congestion has many causes:

■ **Marin County residents are making more trips.** People who live in the County made over 750,000 daily trips in 1998, up by more than 10% in less than a decade. This growth in trip making outpaced the growth in either employment or households in Marin County. The number of trips per capita continues to grow as Marin County residents become more mobile in pursuit of jobs, education, shopping and the activities of daily life.

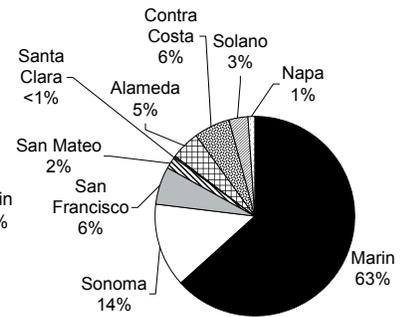


Growth in Marin County, 1990-1998

■ **More trips are being made inside the County.** Only a decade ago, Marin County could be thought of as a “bedroom community” with most commute trips being made from Marin County to jobs in San Francisco. These trips have been well-served by transit, with over 25% of the Marin-San Francisco commute trips made on alternative modes such as buses and ferries. However, over time, more and more residents of Marin are working at jobs within the County. Currently, over half of Marin residents making a commute trip travel to jobs within Marin County. Over the entire day, more than 70% of all trips that begin in Marin County end in the County. These trips are dispersed throughout the County and have the fewest number of transportation choices. Additionally, nearly 40% of people who work at jobs in Marin County live outside the County and must commute into Marin for work. The majority, approximately 14%, are Sonoma County residents who travel south to jobs in Marin County.

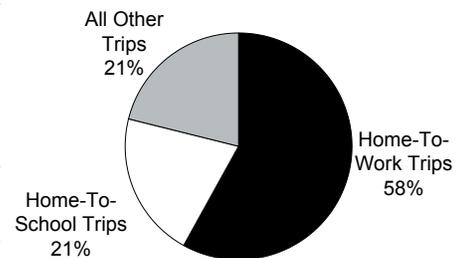


Work Locations of Marin Residents



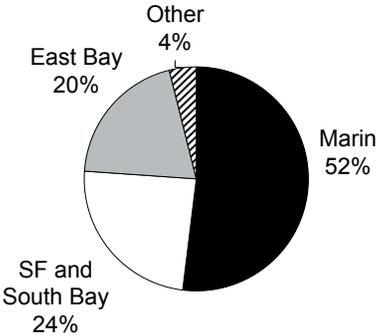
Home Communities of Marin Workers

■ **Peak period trips are made for many purposes.** While peak period congestion is often associated with work-related commute trips, there are many other components that may push traffic “over the top.” One important factor is school travel, which accounts for 21% of morning peak period trips. Every Marin County resident can relate to the fact that congestion is much less severe during school holidays and breaks, both locally around schools themselves and even on Highway 101. This is due to both the



Trip Purposes for Trips Generated in Marin County -AM Peak Trips

absence of school trips and a reduction in work trips as some parents take time off work for family vacations during school holidays.



Destinations of Trips Entering Marin County from Sonoma County on Highway 101 – AM Peak Trips

■ **Marin County’s position in the Bay Area makes it a magnet for regional travel.**

Being centrally located in a major metropolitan area has many advantages for Marin County residents. It also makes it possible for people who live outside the County to come to Marin to access jobs. Currently, about 50% of the trips entering the County from the north on Highway 101 during the morning peak are destined for jobs within Marin County. Nearly 80% of those entering from the east on Highway 580 are also headed for Marin County destinations. While trips traveling *through* the County en route to other places do contribute to congestion in Marin County, and represent a significant percentage of traffic on Highway 101 (about 20% of the total AM peak hour traffic volume), these trips nevertheless represent a relatively small share (8% of all AM peak hour trips) of the traffic on the entire County roadway system.

■ **The scenic beauty of Marin County attracts recreational trips.**

Congestion in Marin County is not limited to the peak commute periods. An important destination for regional and national parks, and a home to many important tourist destinations, Marin County attracts recreational trips from the entire Bay Area and beyond. Traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge on Sunday afternoons is often as congested as some weekday commutes, as visitors enjoy the County’s many recreational opportunities.

■ **There are few alternatives for travel within Marin County.**

For trips within the County, there are few options other than driving. Our local transit system is not designed to be competitive with the automobile and our bicycle and pedestrian facilities are not continuous or easy to navigate. The “Yellow School Bus” has nearly become a thing of the past. Trips are no longer as concentrated as they were in the days when most Marin residents traveled to San Francisco every day. This dispersed travel pattern provides many challenges to transportation planners. Our “love affair with the car” may simply be the result of too few reasonable alternatives.

THE VISION FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Most of the factors that contribute to our congestion problems also contribute in a positive way to the quality of life in Marin County. Marin County residents enjoy working and living in the County. We have become a more mobile County, and we enjoy our freedom of movement. The increase in jobs in the County has meant that more people can work closer to home,

spending more time with their families, and doing things they enjoy. Employment opportunities in the County translate into economic vitality, making it possible for the County and its cities to invest in improved public services to meet the needs of our population.

In fact, Marin County residents enjoy living in the County for some of the same reasons that our visitors keep coming here. Over 75% of Marin County residents in a recent poll said that they were either very or extremely satisfied with the quality of life in the County.

Even with that level of satisfaction, Marin County residents can see that their quality of life will erode if we are unable to get our congestion problems under control. To achieve this goal, elected officials, citizens and experts have studied each of the transportation modes to better understand what they have to offer to our future. *Moving Forward* brings all of these studies together into a single document that defines a very different future for Marin County.

- **Increasing travel choices is the only way to manage congestion and improve mobility.** There is no single mode or single project that can solve all of our congestion problems. Each mode, from commuter rail to bicycles to local streets and road projects has an important role to play in improving our lives. *Moving Forward* includes plans for commuter rail; local and express buses; services focused on school children, the elderly and disabled, and cyclists and pedestrians; as well as a plan for improving our highways and roads. While no single project will serve everyone, having a wide range of choices will let people make travel decisions based on the best mode for their trip, rather than continuing dependence on the auto simply because there is no alternative. Even a 10% reduction in demand for automobile travel can significantly reduce congestion on roads and highways.
- **All modes will be linked together in a seamless, comprehensive transportation network.** New rail stations will become hubs for transportation improvements and will provide places for all transit modes to come together. Bicycle and pedestrian travel will increase as provisions for walking and biking are included in other modes. Train stations will be well served by

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local and regional buses, and at least one train/ferry connection will be completed. Space will be provided for bikes in stations as well as on-board trains and racks on buses. Building each project as part of an overall system will get the most out of the overall network. If all of the projects included in this document are implemented, transit ridership may increase by over 5,000,000 annual riders, bicycle and pedestrian trips could double, and over 370,000 hours currently spent in traffic delays each year could be put to more productive use!

- **Local trips will be served by a variety of new and expanded options, improving mobility for all Marin County residents.** A variety of improvements are planned to serve the diversity of markets in Marin County, including commuters, school children, senior citizens and people who are unable to drive. These local projects are more directly controlled by Marin County, as we turn our Vision into a reality.
- **The increasing demand for commute trips within the County will be served by a major increase in local bus and shuttle transit, a major school transportation initiative, and an emphasis on streets and roads.** Virtually every trip begins or ends on a local street. *Moving Forward* emphasizes projects on local streets and roads, ensuring that our maintenance backlog is managed effectively. Major increases in services to schools, both through the Safe Routes to Schools program and new “school pool” services from our local transit plan could combine to reduce auto travel to schools by at least 15%. Local bus and shuttle transit services will be completely rethought to create a competitive service that can capture choice riders while serving those with mobility needs. Our bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will be greatly improved including completion of major infrastructure for north-south and east-west bicycle travel.
- **Improvements to the local bus and shuttle transit system are a critical component of *Moving Forward*, providing the “glue” that links all modes.** If planned improvements to local bus and shuttle transit services are realized, the projected number of daily transit riders in 2020 may be more than double current estimates based on the existing local bus system. Two new bus transit junctions are expected to be created along with improvements to the existing bus transit hub in San Rafael, providing a high level of passenger amenities such as real-time transit information. These hubs will provide convenient transfer points, allowing passengers to seamlessly travel from their local residence to

any point within the County. Hubs will be served by all types of bus transit trips including a new County Express route serving the residential and employment concentrations along Highway 101. Local shuttles will serve short trips and will be designed to be friendly to senior and youth riders who currently have fewer options. New intercommunity service will link cities and towns providing an option where there is almost no service today. These improvements will also enhance mobility and job access for lower income residents who may not have access to a car.

Specialized services will be added or improved because transit services can not be limited to “big bus” service. Local shuttles and flexible services in less dense parts of the County will ensure that all Marin County residents have mobility options. Our paratransit system, which provides needed mobility to persons with disabilities and seniors will be expanded, so that everyone has opportunities for mobility.

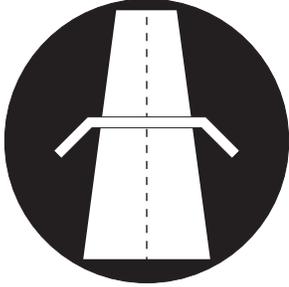
- **A major school initiative will combine Safe Routes to Schools with new school oriented transit service.**

Safe Routes to Schools provides a proven program that helps students and parents promote safe biking and walking pathways to school. This program combines the implementation of actual capital improvements with safety, health and environmentally focused education, and promotes both healthy lifestyles and a reduction of school-related traffic. In the schools that have already received Safe Routes training, driving trips to school have fallen by 15%. This program will be enhanced by a “School Pool” program that will coordinate ridesharing arrangements and increase carpooling, as well as by “School Tripper” bus and shuttle services to schools throughout the County. These programs will combine to have a substantial impact on one of the most significant sources of congestion in the County.

- **Bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be improved throughout the County.**

Bicycle and pedestrian links to all of the major capital projects are included, making it possible to access new transportation alternatives without a car. Bicycle and pedestrian travel in Marin could increase to up to 20% of all trips, and bicycle travel could more than double its share of commute trips with completion of several key projects including major investments in a North-South and an East-West bikeway. These major bicycle and pedestrian corridors are intended to attract a full range of cyclists from commuters who enjoy the fast, flat commute, to recreational cyclists, to those that are connecting to transit services. Pedestrian access will also be improved in these key corridors.





These projects not only provide transportation benefits, but also provide health benefits by creating new opportunities for physical activity and outdoor recreation.

■ **Interchange projects will help relieve local congestion.** The plan addresses a number of critical safety and congestion bottlenecks in the County including:

- U.S. 101/Atherton Avenue
- U.S. 101/State Route 37
- U.S. 101/Lucas Valley Road
- I-580/U.S. 101
- U.S. 101/Sir Francis Drake Blvd. (*Greenbrae Interchange*)
- U.S. 101/Tamalpais Drive
- U.S. 101/Tiburon Boulevard
- U.S. 101/Sausalito (*Alexander Avenue*)

Resolving these interchange problems will provide substantial relief to the local arterials that approach the Highway, potentially eliminating over 1,000 person hours of delay each day. In addition, a major emphasis on the maintenance of our local streets and roads will provide the “smooth sailing” that is needed to operate not only cars, but also transit vehicles and bicycles. Pedestrian improvements including sidewalk enhancements will improve the environment for walking, making it safer and more pleasant.

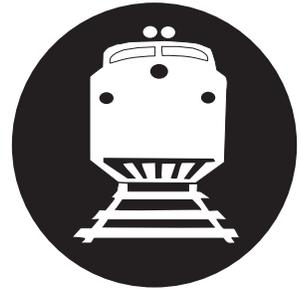
■ **Supportive programs and public-private partnerships work together with these major capital investments to make the entire system work better.** Not every transportation project requires a major capital investment. All projects will be enhanced by a comprehensive Transportation Demand Management program that will enlist the support of Marin County employers to reduce peak period travel demand. At employment sites that have developed comprehensive TDM programs, drive alone trips to work sites have been reduced by up to 15%.

The way we live has a substantial impact on our demand for travel. New transit services can become the focal point for transit-oriented development, allowing us to concentrate anticipated growth into areas that can be well served by transit. In well designed transit-oriented development, residents and employees can have full mobility with many fewer car trips.

■ **Regional and interregional trips will be served by completion of the HOV system on Highway 101, the implementation of a new commuter rail line, increased express bus service and increased ferry service.** Highway 101 continues to be the backbone of travel in the urbanized parts of Marin County, and a great deal of attention must

be given to the burden that freeway congestion places, not just on the highway, but on many local trips. Planning for many of these regional projects is already underway. Final plans for major regional capital projects can be made only after extensive environmental analysis and substantial public involvement. Key projects being studied include:

- **A new commuter rail service could carry over 5,000 daily riders.** The Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) system, proposed from Cloverdale to San Rafael with a planned connection to a ferry terminal, will serve trips inside the County, as well as travel between Sonoma, Marin and San Francisco Counties. Service will be provided every 30 minutes during peak periods, carrying an estimated 5,100 riders per day. During the morning peak period alone, SMART could remove 1,900 trips from Highway 101.
- **Rail stations will become intermodal hubs, with convenient service from local and express buses, and with at least one major ferry link.** Bicycle and pedestrian access will be a part of every station plan, taking advantage of the implementation of the North-South Bikeway which will link all of the communities along the Highway 101 corridor, and will make bicycle travel substantially more convenient.
- **The completion of our High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) system will allow for faster and more effective express bus service.** The Marin-Sonoma Narrows in Northern Marin and Southern Sonoma Counties is the “missing link” in our regional diamond lane system. With the gap closure project in San Rafael already under construction, this remains a critical bottleneck which prevents bus transit from gaining any time advantage over the auto. The Narrows project will provide capacity for all freeway users by putting higher occupancy vehicles in the diamond lane. It is estimated that nearly 500 person hours of delay may be saved every day by completing this project.
- **Express buses within the County and entering the County from all directions will take full advantage of our HOV investment.** A refined express bus plan will be designed to complement, not compete, with the rail service, providing direct links between higher density residential areas and higher density employment sites without requiring a transfer. It is estimated that at least 1,850 new riders will use express buses, even after SMART rail is implemented.





- **Increased ferry service is expected to help keep our interregional trips on transit.** The Water Transit Authority recently completed a plan for expanding the Bay Area's ferry network. The plan recommends significant expansion in North Bay ferry service, including study of additional locations for a North Bay ferry terminal, providing improved services to Marin County. A new terminal is expected to provide the critical link between the proposed SMART rail system and ferry services. The Water Transit Authority is exploring opportunities to ring the bay with expanded ferry services with the North Bay serving as a major node. An estimated 14,400 daily riders will use Golden Gate Corridor ferries to travel to San Francisco in 2025.

Just as there is a local component to our congestion problem, there must be a local component to financing its solution.

TURNING THE VISION INTO REALITY

If we are to maintain our high quality of life in Marin County, we must work together to make this vision a reality. Existing transportation funds will not provide the level of investment that is needed to manage congestion in the County. In fact, existing funds will not even be sufficient to fully maintain the transportation system that we already have.

The total cost of all the projects described in this document is at least \$1.6 billion dollars. Existing revenue can cover only \$367 million, leaving a gap of over \$1.2 billion over the next 25 years if all the projects outlined in this vision are to be implemented.

As the first step towards funding our vision, the County's numerous stakeholders must work together to devise a detailed implementation plan that will prioritize projects, specify funding amounts, provide a strategy for the phased implementation of projects, and establish performance measures for all investments. Once we achieve regional consensus on an implementation plan, we can move forward in partnership with regional, state and federal agencies to generate the funds necessary to implement our transportation vision for Marin County.

It is clear that we will not be able to move forward on all projects at once. But while we must prioritize and phase our investments, we must not lose sight of the important role that

each mode will play in our future. In a vision like this, the overall benefit is many times greater than the sum of the individual benefits from each investment. Only by providing a range of choices will Marin County residents finally be able to enjoy their county without the uncertainty and frustration caused by constant and growing congestion.

While it is impossible to know whether we will be able to fully realize our dream in just 25 years, it is clear that we will never get there unless we start. The 25-year vision for Marin's transportation system is the first step in developing a comprehensive transportation plan that supports our overall goals for the County's future. Building on work that has already been undertaken, the next step will be to agree on what our near-term transportation future should look like, and to identify projects and programs whose implementation will be most critical in realizing our vision for the future. Where we go from here is up to all of us.