

FY 2008-09 COMMUNITY-BASED TRANSPORTATION PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION

1. Project Description (half page maximum)

The San Jose Redevelopment Agency (SJRA), working closely with local neighborhood and business associations, along with CalTrans, will develop a comprehensive urban design plan for a safe, healthy, and revitalized neighborhood center along The Alameda (State Route 82) in San Jose. A reinvigorated commercial center on this historic boulevard, designed to encourage multi-modal transportation (particularly walking, bicycling, and transit access), will serve residents of surrounding neighborhoods, transit users, and business owners; contribute to a more livable and cohesive community; and foster economic and residential development. The outcome of the project will be *The Alameda: A Plan for “The Beautiful Way”*, covering approximately 1.5 miles along The Alameda from Diridon Station on Cahill Street to Highway 880, together with the major connecting streets of Race Street and Stockton Ave. An oversight committee composed of neighborhood and business representatives together with the SJRA will guide the project.

2. Grant Objectives

Describe how the proposal involves conceptual-level plans or study activities that encourage community-based stakeholder collaboration, partnership, and consensus building through active public engagement.

This project will develop *A Plan for “The Beautiful Way”* including a modified streetscape design, design guidelines, and development standards, to guide planning efforts and public and private initiatives along The Alameda for the next 10 years. The project will follow an iterative, flexible process of community collaboration and outreach to first determine community needs and priorities, and then to get feedback and refinements on proposed solutions. For community interaction, the project will use both traditional methods (flyers,

exhibits, community meetings, etc.) and newer technology appropriate for San Jose, the capital of Silicon Valley, including email and a project website where the public can view and comment on designs and improvements at various stages of the process.

This grant proposal has a significant level of community involvement and collaboration from the start. The grant application was created by a standing committee of representatives of the Alameda Business Association (ABA) and the Shasta Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association (SHPNA) - the largest local neighborhood association, and joined by SJRA. Over the past several years these groups have worked together on projects to enlist community interest and participation in revitalizing The Alameda. (Section 4 in this application gives more details on these projects.) The time is now right to broaden this community outreach effort to involve harder-to-reach neighborhood residents and organizations, to reach out to transit users, to develop professional quality plans and drawings to focus the community discussions and to formally document the community consensus conclusions in the form of a plan that will guide future projects and decisions on The Alameda.

Describe the coordinated transportation/land use or mobility objective that supports livable/sustainable community concepts and promotes community identify and quality of life.

The urban design plan produced by this project will lay the foundation for a vibrant neighborhood destination on The Alameda serving as the commercial anchor for the adjacent neighborhoods and providing service to transit users. Walking, bicycling, and transit use will be encouraged; car trips will be reduced.

The Alameda, a historic transportation corridor between downtown San Jose and the city of Santa Clara, is a segment of the famous El Camino Real. The Alameda is considered to be “the first true road” in California established in 1799 and known historically as “The Beautiful Way.” Currently, at the northern end, The Alameda is one of the primary entry points from Interstate 880 into San

Jose and carries significant vehicle traffic, particularly at commute times (over 30,000 trips per day). At the southern end of the project area is San Jose's major transit center including Diridon Station (San Jose's main CalTrains station and the proposed site of a California High-Speed Rail stop), a light rail station, a major Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) bus hub and a future BART station. Adjacent to Diridon Station is the HP Pavilion, the South Bay's premiere sports and entertainment center, with 160 to 200 major events per year. Major bus service routes to the peninsula travel along The Alameda including the Rapid 522, the backbone of the Santa Clara VTA bus network. The adjacent community includes historic residential neighborhoods along the northern and central sections and emerging higher-density infill development closer to the transit center. The City of San Jose's existing General Plan, Diridon/Arena Strategic Development Plan, and Midtown Specific Plan all encourage preservation of the historic neighborhoods, higher-density development near the transit center and medium-density infill development in other areas. These plans are producing the desired results. In the last 5 years, 2300 units of housing were built in The Alameda district alone. There are over 500 units now in various stages of construction and even more units are in the planning stage.

The Alameda also once was the commercial/retail center for the adjacent community. However, the current streetscape completely fails to meet any "livable community" criteria and the commercial area is struggling. Traffic is intrusive during commute times. Crosswalks are inadequate and do not feel safe. Although The Alameda is a designated bicycle route, there are no bike lanes and no accommodation for bicycles. Access between the commercial area of The Alameda and the transit center (Diridon Station, etc.) is not attractive or comfortable for pedestrians or bicycles. There is no iconic marking of the area defining it as unique. In short, the area does not fill the needs of residents or transit users. On the plus side, The Alameda has unique

assets and great potential. Local residents, transit users, and commuters provide a ready source of potential customers. Wide sidewalks and street trees are already in place. Buildings are on a human scale (2 – 3 stories) and interesting, historic architecture survives. The existing street width allows for intelligent traffic-calming measures. Some seeds of a neighborhood center are in place or on the way – a few shops and restaurants, a drugstore, a Whole Foods store - but are now located in isolated pockets along the boulevard.

Potential improvements to be studied include creating safe, lighted, and well-marked pedestrian crossings; installing landscaped median islands; installing bulb-outs; and improving signage. Potential traffic calming measures will be analyzed. Additional traffic lights may need to be installed. The area could be made more walkable by installing street furniture such as benches for seniors and by adding more attractive landscaping and public art. Street lanes could be reconfigured, and bicycle lanes added. Multimodal forms of transportation such as electrically-powered historic trolleys could be used to better link the transit center to the commercial center. Design and development guidelines will preserve and enhance the existing street scale and character.

Describe how additional benefits will be induced upon the project's implementation.

Economic Benefit: The Alameda has great economic potential which has not yet been realized. Revitalizing the commercial center will provide economic benefits for this district and the adjacent downtown. The local sports arena (HP Pavilion) and the transit center, together with local residents, provide a strong base to make such a district economically viable. In turn, an attractive vibrant retail district will encourage additional higher-density residential development close to the transit center and close to downtown office buildings as envisioned in the San Jose General Plan.

Community Identity, Historic Preservation: The Alameda and its adjacent community have a long history and many historically significant structures. The community would like to build on the theme of the historic boulevard and increase community identity and pride, by installing iconic markings, signage, and monuments defining it as a unique historic destination. This project will demonstrate the need to preserve buildings of historic interest and encourage historic neighborhood preservation.

Model for Similar Areas: State Route 82 extends for 15 miles within San Jose’s boundaries. There are also eight other Neighborhood Business Districts within San Jose. At least several of these areas have similar conditions to The Alameda (i.e. serves as the “main street” for a neighborhood with a mix of single family housing and newer high density development; has a nearby transit center; suffers from a volume of passing vehicles; lacks pedestrian and bicycle amenities as well as cohesive design). This project is expected to provide a template for these areas, both in terms of the community outreach effort and the resulting plan.

3. State Transportation Planning Grant Goals

Smart or strategic land use and opportunities for affordable housing and jobs

Current San Jose land use plans (the City’s General Plan, the Mid-Town Plan, and the Diridon/Arena Plan) call for high and medium density residential development in the area of The Alameda near the Diridon Station transit center. In addition, San Jose seeks to preserve the historic neighborhoods bordering The Alameda. This project will complement and reinforce these land use plans by creating the conditions for an attractive commercial center which is able to serve the current and future residents of this community as well as transit users. This commercial center will encourage new housing in this area and allow more people to live close to transit, close to shops, and close to downtown office development. The area is in a redevelopment project area which

requires developers to set aside 20% of the housing units as affordable. More housing development will also mean more affordable housing. More retail and entertainment will create more jobs. These jobs will be in proximity to affordable housing and a major transit center.

Congestion relief

A vibrant commercial center within the district will create a local destination and discourage “retail leakage” (where residents and employees travel outside the district for their needs). This project will encourage the community to walk or bike to the retail district and support local businesses. The plan will also encourage transit users to use the local shops and encourage residents to walk or bike through this area to the transit center. When residents and commuters are able to fulfill their needs within the district, vehicle trips will be reduced, resulting in less traffic congestion and parking shortages.

Efficient movement of people, goods, and services

The high traffic intersection where The Alameda, Race Street, and Martin Ave. converge now cause vehicles and trucks to emit pollution for long periods of time during long traffic light changes. This intersection is also a major barrier for pedestrians and bicycles wanting to move from one section and side of The Alameda to another. The project will explore ways to redesign traffic flow at that intersection to alleviate these problems.

Currently, deliveries to retail stores on The Alameda are made by trucks traveling on and, in some cases, stopping on The Alameda adding to traffic and congestion. This project will evaluate potential access for deliveries in the rear of some of the buildings, and to change the timing of such deliveries to the least congested times.

Safe and healthy communities

The improved streetscape design coming out of this project will result in traffic calming, increased pedestrian safety, and increased bicycle safety. A strollable commercial center will encourage local residents to walk more and drive less, reducing pollution. Improved access to Diridon Station will also provide better access to nearby regional and city parks and trails, such as the Guadalupe River Park and Trail and the Los Gatos Creek Trail, encouraging longer range walking, running, and biking.

Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit mobility and access

A key characteristic of a successful commercial district along The Alameda is that it should be human scale and be walkable. The Alameda should allow easy pedestrian and bicycle access to and from the adjacent neighborhoods and to and from the Diridon Station transit center. This project will develop an improved streetscape design to achieve these characteristics, building on the existing assets of the street (wide sidewalks, street trees, existing low scale buildings). Possibilities include the addition of bicycle lanes and racks as well as the creation of linkages to existing bicycle trails and lanes (e.g. adjacent streets such as Park Ave. and the Guadalupe River trail). Traffic calming, improved crosswalks, median island construction and landscaping design would assist in the movement of pedestrians across and along this busy thoroughfare. Design guidelines will be developed to preserve and enhance the existing building scale and architectural style to make the area aesthetically attractive to pedestrians. Amenities such as benches, more landscaping, public art, and historic markers would contribute to the walkability of the street.

A key issue for transit use and mobility identified in earlier community meetings is to improve the linkage between The Alameda and the Diridon Station transit center. This project will analyze improvements to the railroad underpass on The Alameda that is now unattractive for pedestrians

and dangerous for bicyclists. Also, the project will study the possibility of using trolleys and shuttles to improve connectivity between The Alameda and the Diridon Station as well as San Jose's downtown district. In addition, transit mobility will be improved by creating more attractive bus stops with better signage.

Public and stakeholder participation

This grant application has been initiated and developed by the community - specifically, the local neighborhood association and the local business association – working together with the San Jose Redevelopment Agency. As this project proceeds, it will continue to be very much community driven, open, and inclusive. The project will employ a wide-spread public outreach campaign and active public engagement. The community, with the help of technical experts, will be actively involved in all aspects of the project: defining the needs and priorities, establishing a consensus vision, developing and investigating possible solutions, and determining the final outcome. Participating groups will include residents (homeowners and renters), neighborhood community groups, numerous local organizations and commuters, working with The City of San Jose Redevelopment Agency and the City, CalTrans, and the Valley Transportation Authority. The outcome of the project will be a product of community direction and input.

Measures to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions

This project will result in reduced air pollution and greenhouse gases by increasing transit, pedestrian and bicycle use, and subsequently reducing vehicle trips. Increased tree and landscape planting will transform The Alameda into a healthier more livable district.

Conservation of energy and other natural resources

This project provides for conservation of energy, since reduction of vehicle trips will result in decreased fossil fuel consumption.

4. Public Participation

This project starts with a strong base of community organizations, interest and involvement. The project will capitalize and build on that base. With the help and guidance of technical experts, overseen by a community based Advisory Committee, active learning techniques will be used to productively involve members of the community in all aspects of the project. Tools and processes will be established to maintain a continuous dialog with and between community members and technical professionals throughout the project.

In the past few years, the community, including business owners and residents, has initiated several successful projects: a vibrant farmers market held weekly during the summer for the past 3 years; a historic walking tour of The Alameda; an annual History Day on The Alameda; a newly published book "*The Alameda, The Beautiful Way.*" Proceeds from the sale of the book have been used to install 10 historic plaques. In the past year, the local business association (ABA) and the largest local neighborhood association (SHPNA) held two well-publicized and well-attended public meetings on "The Future of The Alameda". The group worked with San Jose State University urban planning students to put together a presentation on the problems and challenges facing The Alameda. The findings of the students were presented at a community meeting, together with a "Streetscape 101" presentation by a CalTrans representative. One of the most significant conclusions from this meeting and a subsequent follow up meeting was the need for a broader, more aggressive outreach effort to the community. The group realized that they would need input from transit riders, property owners, renters, residents from other less organized neighborhoods, educational institutions, senior and community centers. Clearly, funding is needed

to take the next step. Professional facilitators, planners, and architects are needed to prepare background material for the community, facilitate the community interaction, develop concept plans and drawings, propose solutions and document the results of an active public process.

This project will be guided by an Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from SJRA, the city of San Jose, Caltrans, community residents, and community business interests.

The project will combine an aggressive outreach effort with an iterative, flexible process of community collaboration. The first phase will build awareness of the existence and purpose of the project, with both targeted methods (through existing community groups and email lists, flyers, door-to-door outreach) and broader scale methods (local media stories and notices, public notices). The second phase will, through community education and interaction, reach a consensus on a future vision for The Alameda, and identify the community's needs and priorities (including both assets to be preserved and problems to be solved) to reach that vision.

Maps, exhibits, and directed walking tours will be developed and deployed (on-line, in neighborhood community spaces) to educate the community on both current conditions and already planned development. Surveys, questionnaires, and online tools will be used to solicit input. Finally, community workshops/meetings will be held to guide community members through the educational and background information, to specifically identify needs and priorities (SWOT – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats - analysis may be a useful tool here), and to reach consensus. In the third phase of the project, potential solutions will be developed, investigated, and evaluated. At this stage, it is anticipated that sub-groups for specific topics can be formed, based on the identified needs and priorities. For example, a sub-group created to address traffic calming and pedestrian safety, another to address transit access, a third to address obstacles to business development, etc. Each sub-group will be led by

technical experts with significant community representation and participation. Methods probably will include focused walking tours, field trips to nearby communities, online designs, maps, and mini-charrettes. At the end of this phase, the sub-groups will synthesize the solutions into a coherent plan, first through sub-group interaction, then with review from the broad community via online exhibits, forums and workshops. In the final phase, the overall plan will be publicized and presented to the wider community for feedback and consensus reached on the final product. Methods will include online presentation and feedback, public exhibits and community meetings.

5. Project Outcomes

The final outcome of this project will be *The Alameda: A Plan for “The Beautiful Way”*. The plan will be presented to the San Jose City Council for approval, making it a living document to guide future public and private development along The Alameda over the next 10 years.

The Plan will include an action plan that specifies the next steps, including timelines, and processes to carry the plan forward to implementation. For example, the project Oversight Committee may be reconstructed and continued to drive forward the implementation effort. Another very possible recommendation and action item from the Plan will be to develop and implement a forms-based code for The Alameda. Other possible action items include:

- Establishment of a Historic Preservation District for The Alameda
- Establishment of a Parking Assessment District for The Alameda
- Establishment of a Property Based Improvement District (PBID) for the ongoing marketing, improvement and upkeep of The Alameda.

In parallel with this effort to develop *A Plan for “The Beautiful Way”*, the City of San Jose DOT is negotiating with CalTrans on the relinquishment of The Alameda/State Highway 82 to the city,

including possible funding for the refurbishment and future maintenance of The Alameda. When that negotiation is completed, this Plan will be an important guide for the city's work on The Alameda. The Plan will also provide the basis for possible implementation funding from the San Jose Redevelopment Agency, and for applications to other funding sources, including the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Transportation for Livable Communities capital grant program, and the MTC's Housing Incentive Program.

Finally, this project has been initiated by an already interested and engaged community. It has political support from San Jose elected officials who understand the potential benefits to the surrounding areas and to the city. As this project broadens community awareness and makes the future possibilities more tangible. Community activism, participation, and sense of ownership will increase and will serve as a force to drive the project into implementation. The plan's basic objective – to build a walkable, livable, economically vital neighborhood commercial center – is consistent with and complementary to San Jose's General Plan and the city's specific plans for nearby areas (the Diridon/Arena Plan and the Midtown Plan). Today, development on The Alameda is active. This plan will provide the framework to stimulate and shape development of this area and, at the same time, recapture the historic ambiance of The Alameda: "The Beautiful Way."