

# WHITE PAPER: GROWTH WITHOUT GRIDLOCK

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conventional wisdom suggests that economic growth and related physical building projects cannot occur without major traffic impacts. Recently however, many places have cracked the code and found ways to achieve economic development without traffic gridlock.

1. Measure, monitor, improve. To reduce trips and improve incentives, one must understand how people travel, and the choices available to them.
2. Organize a nonprofit Transportation Management Association to provide trip reduction for everyone, not just big employers
3. Make taking transit cheaper than parking, by setting parking prices appropriately and providing discount transit
4. Use parking revenues to invest in vehicle trip reduction
5. Make shuttles open to the public, to get the benefit of first-last mile connections

## GROWTH WITHOUT GRIDLOCK

In the mid-20th century, the basic assumption for transportation and land use planning was that everybody drives. The critical factor in planning for development was providing enough vehicle parking and road capacity for everyone. But the results were undesirable. In lower density areas, traffic congestion intensified, and building more road capacity generated more driving congestion. Free or low cost parking, made other alternatives more expensive, so people chose to drive. By designing streets primarily for the automobile, walking and biking declined, and congestion worsened.

In the late 20th century and early in the 21st, some suburban cities and individual employers started down a different path. They realized that the amount of driving people choose can vary tremendously, depending on the cost and convenience of the choices available to them. By changing the incentives and choices, these places have been able to reduce the amount of driving from 70-80% (average for US suburbs) to under 50%.

What these successful places have been able to do is not magic. Below is a set of best practices that can help achieve growth without gridlock.

## MEASURE, MONITOR, IMPROVE: SET TARGETS AND PROVIDE REPORTS

Rather than assuming driving was a foregone conclusion, places began to measure transportation modes, monitored potential trip reduction and mode shift opportunities over time, and set goals from those trends. In 1994 the Lloyd District in Portland set a goal to reduce its drive-alone mode share from 80% to under 50%. Analyzing improvements helped the district put strategies in place to reach the goal. Currently only 40% of trips are from single occupancy vehicles.

Measuring and reporting is a crucial to attaining these goals. User surveys and reports on mode splits & vehicle trips are compiled annually at a minimum. Surveys can allow a city to understand the origins and destinations of area residents and workers, and to improve transportation strategies. Technologies such as loop detectors or cameras can be used to automatically take vehicle counts without labor-intensive in-person manual surveys. These are critical tools that enable large employers and successful jurisdictions to continuously reduce vehicle trips over time.

## GREEN PLANNING ACTION

In the Bay Area, employers such as Google, Facebook, and Stanford have employed strong measurement, monitoring, reporting of employee trips to help develop incentives for their employees.

### **ORGANIZE: NON-PROFIT TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION**

The Lloyd District also set up a non-profit Transportation Management Association to help all businesses & residential developments in the area take advantage of trip reduction strategies. With this approach, the city doesn't need to require each development applicant to run its own shuttles, manage its own carpool programs, discount transit pass/parking cashout benefit programs, and provide user education about transportation choices. Instead, the developments can pay into a fund that manages these benefits for all participating developments.

New developments are required to participate, and participation is optional for existing businesses and residential developments. In other cities, TMA participation becomes a popular "perk" for existing developments whose users want the same benefits as new developments. Cities like San Mateo and Mountain View are also starting to implementing TMAs to support new tenants & residents at newly approved larger developments (North Whisman & Bay Meadows, respectively).

### **INVEST: PARKING BENEFIT DISTRICT FUNDS FOR TRIP REDUCTION**

It is a good practice to aggregate fees from change area paid parking to save for future parking structures, which can consolidate parking and allow more land for development. It is even better practice to utilize the fees from change area paid parking and utilize some of the revenues into services that reduce vehicle trips and defer the need for expensive parking structures.

This strategy was critical for Boulder to gradually reduce vehicle trips in its downtown area. Boulder started with very poor public transit, and used parking revenues to gradually develop a well-used shuttle system.

### **SHUTTLE: OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Shuttles provide critical first/last mile connections to backbone transit (ie Caltrain). A benefit of the "TMA" approach is that shuttles are required to be open to the public. The Stanford Marguerite shuttle system is open to the public, and is the most heavily used shuttle system connecting to Caltrain. These days, a key component of "open" shuttles involves making the shuttle schedule available on Google Transit and 511.org, so users who are planning trips can find the route from their origin to their destination.

Shuttles are an opportunity to connect people. For example, if many people are coming to work from an area that is not in the Caltrain corridor, the city can work with VTA to improve bus service. If there are many people driving 1-4 miles, within easy cycling distance, the city can identify barriers to cycling and prioritize projects within the city, county, and Caltrans to address the barriers.