

Mobility Policy Framework

Introduction

The City of Palmdale has embarked on a comprehensive update to its General Plan, called “Envision Palmdale 2045: A Complete Community,” to create a forward-looking document that will serve as the blueprint for the City’s vision through the year 2045. The goals, policies, and actions in Palmdale 2045 will serve as a compass for decision-makers and will shape future plans and actions of the City. This revised policy document will replace the 1993 General Plan.

This mobility policy framework is an interim step in the General Plan Update (GPU) process prior to drafting the elements (or chapters). This framework highlights key outcomes and performance metrics related to mobility and includes a draft policy framework that includes goals, policies, and implementation activities. This policy framework was developed by compiling feedback from community members, General Plan Advisory Committee members, Planning Commission, and City Council. This framework synthesizes critical issues and policy approaches by describing key strengths and opportunities, challenges, and threats, and what we heard from the community.

Where We Are Now

- **The transportation network relies heavily on arterial roadways to move travelers throughout the community.** The City’s roadway network has primarily been developed around a suburban grid system in which arterials are spaced approximately every mile and secondary arterials are spaced every half-mile between major arterials.
- **Arterial network separating neighborhood streets limits connectivity for intracity multimodal travel.** Many residential areas are designed as suburban subdivisions with cul-de-sacs, circuitous street designs, and lack of porous access for non-motorized modes to easily access collector and arterial streets.
- **The pedestrian environment is uninviting and makes walking difficult.** Sidewalk coverage varies between neighborhoods due to differing development standards. Many sidewalks lack tree cover and shade, detracting from the comfort of walking in hot

weather. The Draft Complete Streets Plan (2018) provides guidance for sidewalk amenities moving forward.

- **Wide intersections spaced far away from each other provide a challenge for non-motorized travelers.** Signalized intersections along arterials are often spaced far apart presenting limited safe crossing opportunities for pedestrians. Wide intersections require both a long time to cross with no pedestrian refuge islands as well as increase the amount of time a person has to wait until they are served by the signal due to the long crossing distances and high speeds that the signal timing needs to accommodate.,
- **Bicycle network is disconnected and limited outside of a few neighborhoods within central Palmdale.** Due to the high speeds of traffic along arterials, which provide the necessary connectivity for a bicycle network, facilities must be designed in a way that creates a safe environment. The Draft Active Transportation Plan (2018) provides the framework for improved bicycle connectivity.
- **The existing transit network is concentrated in a few areas and difficult to access.** Four of the eight busiest bus stops within the Antelope Valley Transit Authority (AVTA) system are located within Palmdale. These stops are Palmdale Transportation Center, Antelope Valley Mall, Walmart at Avenue S/47th Street East, and Avenue R/47th Street East. While these activity centers are served by bus transit, it is difficult to get to and from these locations, and to connect to other destinations in Palmdale.
- **Most residents drive to work and many have long commutes.** A vast majority of Palmdale residents (91.4%) commute to work by motor vehicle, of which 76% drive alone.¹ Approximately one third of commuters have a travel time to work of more than one hour. Less than five percent of these long-distance commuters travel to work by public transit.

What We Heard About This Topic

Throughout the GPU process, community input was collected and used to inform the policy framework. The following mobility priorities, concerns, and ideas were identified via a Mobility Microsurvey and at the General Plan Advisory Committee Meeting on February 24, 2021.

Key Mobility Priorities

- Improve pedestrian safety and access across Palmdale roads

¹ See 2019 TAZ Analysis in Existing Conditions Report

- Improve connectivity to retail and parks
- Improve access to existing City trails and hiking trails
- Improve access to social services in Palmdale and surrounding communities
- Improve access and connectivity to economic opportunities
- Expand local public transit service
- Expand on and off-street bicycle network where appropriate
- Encourage walking and biking where appropriate
- Improve the comfort of bike paths and overall walkability
- Flexible on-demand paratransit service
- Improve passenger experience for existing AVTA transit riders
- Support transit-oriented mixed used and multi-family residential development
- Increase Metrolink Antelope Valley Line frequencies and service hours
- Future High-Speed Rail and passenger service to Palmdale Regional Airport

Key Mobility Concerns

- High speeds present safety concerns for all modes of travel on Palmdale roads
- Existing infrastructure needs improvements and/or upgrades
- Palmdale Boulevard (Hwy 138) is a State Route and changes to the right-of-way or design would require Caltrans coordination
- State Route 14 divides the community
- Existing traffic/congestion and commuting patterns (limited ingress/egress points in/out of the City)
- Existing trucking and goods movement contributes to significant freight volumes on many arterials
- Negative perceptions of using public transportation
- Railroad inhibits emergency access to hospitals
- Limited mobility for senior citizens (ACCESS does not serve all parts of the City)
- The eastern portion of the City is historically underrepresented in transportation investments
- Many residents have long commutes
- Delays at railroad crossings

Where we want to be in the future

Vision themes and Guiding Principles

Through the first phase of community engagement, the General Plan team explored how individuals envision the future of Palmdale, what makes it unique and special, and what things residents and businesses would like to change. Summarized into a stand-alone document, the General Plan Vision and Guiding Principles illustrate the future of Palmdale, capturing key values and aspirations, and providing a framework for future decision-making.

The list below represents vision themes and guiding principles that are most relevant to mobility. Visit the Palmdale 2045 website at <https://www.palmdale2045.org/resources> for the complete vision and guiding principles document.

- **Active and vibrant downtown**
 - Create a vibrant and active downtown environment
- **Diverse and high-quality job options**
 - Connect residents with job opportunities in aerospace and other emerging sectors
 - Encourage telecommuting within Palmdale
- **Diverse and resilient local economy**
 - Leverage economic opportunities from an expanded transportation center and potential passenger air service at Palmdale Regional Airport
- **Safe, healthy place to live and work**
 - Improve neighborhood safety
 - Improve access to parks and open space
 - Foster active living with improvements to the pedestrian environment
 - Prioritize walking, biking, and access to local and regional transit
 - Promote living and working in Palmdale and reducing commute times
- **High quality medical and mental healthcare**
 - Improve access to and promote quality healthcare services and facilities in Palmdale
- **Housing options for residents at different stages of life and ability**
 - Connect new development to public transit and open space or public parks
 - Provide additional housing of various types
- **Palmdale's beautiful natural setting**
 - Maintain safe and convenient access to open space and trails
 - Improve connectivity and beautify trails and open space
 - Maintain high air quality

- **Forefront of transportation innovations**
 - Leverage transportation investments in Palmdale
 - Build on High Speed Rail opportunities
 - Bring air service to Palmdale Regional Airport
 - Improve local transit
- **General Plan implementation**
 - Establish metrics for tracking General Plan implementation
 - Regular review and update of General Plan goals and policies

Outcomes

Provided below are the critical outcomes that the Mobility Element of the GPU is intended to achieve by 2045. Outcomes are assigned Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure progress towards reaching Targets set to indicate the success of policy implementation towards meeting the desired outcomes.

- **Outcome: Reduce severe injuries and fatal collisions on the City's roadway network**
 - **Target:** Downward trend of severe injuries and fatal collisions
 - **KPI:** Annual severe injuries and fatalities for people walking, riding bikes, and in vehicles using Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS)
 - **KPI:** Number of intersections and number of miles of the future high injury network that are redesigned to improve safety
- **Outcome: More equitable and reliable access to public amenities, services, and opportunities**
 - **Target:** Upward trend of residents with access to parks and recreation without a vehicle
 - **Target:** Upward trend of residents with access to neighborhood commercial areas without a vehicle
 - **Target:** Upward trend of students with active transportation access to school
 - **KPI:** Percentage of residents within a 20-minute walk/or bike ride of a park, recreation center, or multi-use trail
 - **KPI:** Percentage of residents within a 15-minute transit ride of a grocery store
 - **KPI:** Percentage of residents within a 15-minute transit ride of essential social services
 - **KPI:** Percentage of K-12 and College students who walk, ride, or roll to school

- **Outcome: Increase share of trips in the City made by walking, biking, transit, and shared rides**
 - **Target:** Upward trend in average daily transit ridership
 - **Target:** Upward trend in active transportation trips
 - **Target:** Downward trend in drive-alone commute mode share
 - **KPI:** Average daily transit boardings
 - **KPI:** Percentage of people who walk, ride, or roll to school or work
 - **KPI:** Percentage of commuters who drive alone
- **Outcome: Reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita and per employee**
 - **Target:** Decrease average distance or frequency of home-based drive-alone trips
 - **Target:** Decrease average distance or frequency of commute and work-based drive-alone trips
 - **KPI:** Percentage decrease in VMT per capita
 - **KPI:** Percentage decrease in VMT per employee
- **Outcome: Increase quality of life and economic competitiveness**
 - **Target:** Downward trend in average commute time
 - **Target:** Upward trend in local Air Quality Index
 - **KPI:** Average commute time
 - **KPI:** Percent reduction in GHG emissions

Draft Goals and Policies

- **Goal 1: Build and maintain a transportation system that is safe and comfortable for travelers of all modes regardless of age or ability.**
 - Design and maintain the public right-of-way through a complete streets approach that facilitates safe, comfortable, and efficient travel for all roadway users.
 - Use a systemic safety approach to proactively identify opportunities to improve safety where conflicts between users exist.
 - Identify and program mitigation measures for gaps and deficiencies in the transportation system to accommodate each major transportation mode.
 - Revise, adopt or incorporate, and implement the Draft Complete Streets Plan.
 - Revise, adopt or incorporate, and implement the Draft Palmdale Bicycle Transportation Plan.
 - Develop and adopt a Vision Zero policy and action plan.
 - Develop a Safe Routes for Vulnerable Roadway Users including consideration for Seniors, ADA, as well as Safe Routes to School in collaboration with relevant advocacy and expert groups.

- Complete and regularly update a Local Road Safety Plan (LRSP) that identifies a High Injury Network (HIN) and location-specific improvements.
- Include speed reducing elements along local and collector roadways and within all new private development projects.
- Implement grade separation at railroad crossings where feasible.
- **Goal 2: Build and maintain a transportation system that accommodates future growth and maintains acceptable levels of service for all modes.**
 - Classify streets based on their modal purpose and land use context.
 - Prioritize safety, operations, and comfort for active and transit modes on streets that have been identified as part of the multimodal network.
 - Prioritize safety and mobility for non-motorized modes in all intersection designs.
 - Establish a Travel Demand Management Program to identify programmatic and infrastructure solutions for traffic operations to balance vehicle delay and efficient travel via other modes.
 - Establish level of service standards in coordination with the City of Palmdale's Public Works Department.
 - Prioritize multimodal infrastructure that connects existing development with future infill development areas (i.e., gap closure projects).
 - Establish and adopt local thresholds of significance for transportation analysis within environmental review and develop a mitigation program to support an overall decrease in VMT.
 - Establish Level of Service based Traffic Analysis guidelines, Access Management guidelines, and Local Mobility Impact Mitigation Program for large developments to construct or fund multimodal improvements, implement congestion management strategies, or contribute to ITS projects in correlation with traffic impact analysis.
 - Consider multimodal quality of service with respect to experience stress, connectivity, and safety for streets with a non-automobile priority and ensure the appropriate balance with vehicular operations.
 - Ensure adequate access for trucks serving uses in Palmdale, limiting movements to the designated truck route network.
 - Review the truck route network periodically and update as necessary to minimize impacts on residential neighborhoods while accommodating needs of commercial/industrial uses.
 - Develop and maintain a traffic demand model based upon the designated network, using existing and projected levels to inform land use decisions.
 - Establish development review guidelines that define transportation analysis and site design requirements to address multimodal access needs, connections to the

surrounding street and mobility network, and right-sizes the roadway to the context of the development and its surroundings.

- **Goal 3: Build and maintain a transportation system that provides affordable, equitable, and efficient access to employment centers and essential services.**
 - Make public transit a convenient and reliable option for daily trip making on a local and regional basis.
 - Encourage investments and Capital Projects that reduce first/last-mile barriers to transit stops.
 - Encourage investments and Capital Projects that improve the safety and modal options to access to high quality jobs-.
 - Work with AVTA to enhance the deployment of fixed-route and flex-route transit services including increased frequency and service spans.
 - Work with Metrolink to increase the frequency of on-peak services and later service hours.
 - Work with transit providers to improve the delivery of transit service availability and information in real-time in an easy, reliable, and accessible means.
 - Work with large employers to implement programs that expand access to non-drive alone commute options for all commuters, including hourly staff and contract workers.
- **Goal 4: Build and maintain a transportation system that enhances quality of life and public health.**
 - Prioritize investments that improve access to healthcare and social services.
 - Improve mobility in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy food sources.
 - Prioritize investments that expand access to Palmdale’s parks and trails and support physical activity.
 - Improve multimodal and transit access to parks, recreation facilities, open space, and trails.
 - Create neighborhood streets that unify neighborhoods, reduce vehicle speeds, reduce barriers for people walking, biking, and riding transit, and provide connectivity to collector and regional routes.
 - Create and implement a neighborhood traffic calming program with measures that allow for human activation of residential streets.
 - Design multimodal facilities to a standard that will increase physical activity.
 - Design neighborhood streets in a manner that is logical to travelers, limiting circuitous and dead-end paths of travel; provide cut throughs at cul-de-sacs where possible.
 - Provide human scale lighting along pedestrian thoroughfares, in commercial districts, on trails, and at transit stops.

- **Goal 5: Build and maintain a transportation system that fosters a more active and vibrant downtown.**
 - Encourage wider sidewalks and plazas on downtown streets to enhance placemaking, improve public safety, and support local businesses.
 - Promote and support creative and flexible approaches to parking, including maximizing use of existing public supply and sharing between uses to create a “park once environment”.
 - Enhance the safety and comfort of existing pedestrian street-crossings and reduce the distance between crossings.
 - Implement streetscape design that improves the pedestrian environment and appearance of downtown corridors.
 - Install secure short- and long-term bicycle parking near key destinations, civic buildings, and transit facilities.
 - Establish reductions to the minimum required parking for new development in support of providing on-street parking, long-term bicycle parking, and the implementation of travel demand management strategies.
 - Create a permanent program that reallocates excess public right-of-way and off-street parking for the use of local restaurants and cultural programming, building off the City’s temporary Al Fresco program.
 - Encourage development on empty land adjacent to existing development as a means of filling in the missing gaps in missing infrastructure.
 - Encourage the development of healthy mix of land uses within close proximity that promote internal capture, shared-parking, and de-emphasize the need for single-occupant vehicular travel
 - Balance development intensity and roadway capacity
- **Goal 6: Build and maintain a transportation system that leverages our natural setting and reduces impacts to the environment.**
 - Prioritize transportation investments and strategies that creates opportunities for residents to reduce their Vehicle Miles Traveled.
 - Encourage the development of dense, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented land uses that link affordable housing options to daily needs.
 - Promote trip reduction strategies, including telecommuting, through land-use decisions and TDM programming strategies.
 - Require TDM Plans for major employers, as defined by the Air Quality Management District.
 - Incorporate appropriate landscaping elements as part of roadway projects.
 - Create a program that allows for development to phase frontage improvements in a manner that creates a transportation system that is both right-sized for the

current context and use as well as being flexible to accommodate future growth without an additional cost to the City.

- **Goal 7: Proactively prepare for the future, ensuring that implementation of transportation innovations and regional projects align with the City’s vision.**
 - Support emerging mobility innovations that are focused on improving equitable distribution of mobility services.
 - Develop roadway standards that allow for emerging technologies and practices in the transportation industry to be incorporated in the future with minimal conflict.
 - Coordinate with regional and State agencies to best leverage future roadway, rail, and aviation projects for the benefit of Palmdale residents and businesses.
 - Develop an Emerging Mobility policy that explicitly addresses equitable access to resources and services and is not exclusive to specific service providers, as well as establishes a framework through which new technologies can be assessed and compared fairly.
 - Develop comprehensive regulations and standards for shared and micromobility services that require distribution of data to the City upon request.
 - Seek strategic partnerships to pilot shared and emerging mobility options that meet the needs of Palmdale residents, workers, and visitors.
 - Identify the highest and best use of curb space and repurpose as appropriate (i.e. on-street parking, pick-up, drop-off zones, outdoor dining, etc.).
 - Consider how new projects will accommodate emerging technologies like autonomous and connected vehicles.
 - Consider the location of a future California High Speed Rail station and right-of-way in long term planning efforts and investment prioritization.
 - Engage with partners and key employers to bring scheduled passenger air service to Palmdale Regional Airport.
 - Engage with partners on the feasibility and future construction of the High Desert Corridor (HDC).