

**LOS ALTOS HILLS CIRCULATION & SCENIC ROADWAYS ELEMENT  
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT DATED 12/2/98  
Prepared by the Los Altos Hills Civic Association**

**INTRODUCTION**

Los Altos Hills ("the Town") periodically reviews its overall policies to ensure that these policies keep pace with the times while meeting Town goals. The Town retained an independent consulting firm to propose revisions to the Circulation and Scenic Roadways Element of the Town's General Plan (the "Plan"). This Plan focuses on the Town's circulation (in other words, its roadways and streets).

The City Council will meet on Wednesday 1/20/99 to review the Plan. Since the Los Altos Hills Civic Association ("LAHCA") is committed to ensuring that the Town's residents are always informed of key actions planned to be taken by Town government, LAHCA prepared this summary. We strongly encourage you to obtain the complete 24-page proposed Plan from Town Hall, so you can read it in its entirety. The proposed Plan (except for the diagrams and charts) is also available at [www.losaltosonline.com/lah/docs](http://www.losaltosonline.com/lah/docs).

The previous Plan was adopted in 1975. This new Plan, once adopted, may also be on the books for twenty years or more. Therefore, your feedback is very important; it will affect our quality of life in Los Altos Hills. Ordinances and policies stem from the intent of the General Plan.

**PURPOSE OF THE CIRCULATION PLAN**

"To reinforce and maintain the rural residential nature of the circulation system".

**THE TOWN GOAL**

"To maintain our quiet residential roads in good repair, in a visually pleasing manner, in a safe condition, to discourage through-traffic and to assume responsibility for private roads only when they have met Town standards. The [roads] should be compatible with the rural nature of the community – a system that makes the community relatively impermeable to motor vehicles and open and safe to those on foot, bicycle and horseback."

**DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE PROPOSED PLAN**

The remaining 18 pages of the Plan explain the Town's proposed sub-goals and objectives, and list numerous proposed policy statements. In the interest of brevity, this LAHCA summary does not list all of these proposals. Instead, we have chosen to focus on the proposals which we believe require input from the residents.

<b>Circulation Plan Proposal</b>	<b>Civic Association Response</b>
<p>The Plan contains several items which are designed to discourage commuters from using our streets to bypass congestion on I-280, Foothill Expressway and Page Mill. Page 7: "The intensity of existing or proposed land uses shall not provide justification for widening roadway pavement widths". Page 13: "The Town shall discourage the widening of any surface roads except where critical for safety purposes."</p>	<p>Prior to determining whether or not to widen a road, the Town should evaluate each location on a case-by-case basis with resident input.</p>
<p>Page 8. "New or expanding development that will impact a road, whether private or public, should be required to improve the roadway surface and width to provide for adequate emergency access."</p>	<p>This requires builders and residents to upgrade a sub-standard roads when development will impact a road. The word "impact" should be defined to ensure that road upgrades are required only when appropriate.</p>
<p>Page 8. Develop right of way standards to generally accommodate roadway pavement, drainage, vegetative screening, utilities, slopes, and pathways, and to avoid excessive cuts or fills. A general guide for width would be 60 feet, although this will vary depending on conditions.</p>	<p>Sub-dividers and remodelers may be required to donate a portion of their land along a road to complete a 60 foot road right-of-way. This would result in a net loss of countable acreage and in some cases reduce a lot's size to less than 1 acre. This may be of grave concern to many residents. A 60 foot right-of-way, which is sufficient for a 4 land road, may be excessive in many cases.</p>

<p>Page 8. Approximately 50% of the Town's roads are privately owned and maintained. The Plan presents two competing alternatives for <b>maintenance of private roads</b>:</p> <p>a) "Dedication of private roadways to public ownership when requested by affected property owners, when they have been upgraded to current Town standards and where all necessary dedications have been offered by adjacent property owners."</p> <p>b) Private roads remain private "except where the Town determines the need to bring into public ownership any ... connecting roads"</p>	<p>The Planning Commission and City Council are currently supporting Alternative A.</p>
<p>Page 10. "Driveways should be minimized within the required side yard setback area to provide for landscaping, to enhance privacy, and to maintain a safe distance between adjacent driveways."</p>	<p>This item is not in keeping with a recent City Council motion. In a meeting attended by a large number of residents, the Council unanimously voted to overturn a Planning Commission ruling to remove driveways and turnarounds from setbacks. We believe a correction is due on this item.</p>
<p>Page 13. "The construction of sound walls shall be prohibited along the Interstate 280 corridor." Page 23 notes that "the Town occasionally receives complaints regarding noise from I-280, particularly from residents of properties abutting the freeway".</p>	<p>If Caltrans were to build sound walls along I-280, it could greatly reduce the amount of road noise which currently impacts most of our residents. Although the abutting residents would receive the most benefit from sound walls, spillover I-280 noise impacts most homes within a one to two mile radius of I- 280. Sound walls would only be visible from the I-280 and from a few abutting streets.</p>
<p>Pages 13 &amp; 14. The Town shall "require conservation easements ... and require increased setbacks where necessary..." And "amend the site development and subdivision codes to allow for conservation easements along roadways."</p>	<p>Although we strongly support the rural nature of the Town, we want to ensure that the Town does not abuse its power by requiring homeowners to inappropriately dedicate land and/or easements to the Town.</p>
<p>Page 13. "All roadway cut and fill scars shall be reduced to a minimum for any road improvement."</p>	<p>This statement should be clarified to minimize visible cut and fill scars, after re-vegetation of the affected area.</p>
<p>Page 20. "Bicycle traffic shall be accommodated by discouraging auto traffic." Page 21. The Town should "provide signage identifying County bicycle routes."</p>	<p>Although we strongly support bicycle access to our roads, we do not believe that this should be at the expense of convenient auto traffic. We believe this is inappropriate since it would give bicyclists a false sense of security while biking on our narrow, winding roads.</p>
<p>Page 20. The Town should "support the provision of park-and-ride lots in close proximity to the El Monte Road and Magdalena Avenue ramps at I-280." However, page 18 says that the Page Mill lot is only "about 50 to 60 percent utilized."</p>	<p>Additional park and ride lots may be unnecessary in view of the excess capacity available at the Page Mill Road lot and proposed Magdalena &amp; El Monte sites need input from residents.</p>
<p>Page 24. The Town should "emphasize the classification of Arastradero Road and Fremont Road as collector streets to provide additional leverage for negotiations as neighboring jurisdictions build out."</p>	<p>The LAHCA does not understand the consequences of this proposal without further study of the Town's rules.</p>

### **CONCLUSION**

The Civic Association believes there are areas of public concern with the circulation element. We recommend input and possible modification on points noted above. **Please attend the public meeting on January 20<sup>th</sup> to ensure that your voice and opinions are heard.**

**You may wish to fax your concerns to Town Hall at 941-3160.**