



Connections

December 2008

Transit, Bike & Pedestrian Safety

This is the second article in a series on transportation issues.

Rural communities face different pedestrian, bicycle, and transit safety issues than more urbanized areas. While infrastructure remains a problem in rural areas, distance is often a more important factor in determining transportation choices. However, many people in rural communities still walk or bike to nearby destinations (including transit stops). In fact, many rural residents—youth, elderly, disabled, low income, or those without access to an automobile—are dependent on walking, bicycling, or taking transit to access desired goods, services, activities, and destinations such as medical services, education, and employment.

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Upcoming Workshops

Transportation Working Group
(Current Conditions & Innovations)
December 11, 10 a.m.

Land Use Working Group
(Innovations)
December 11, 2 p.m.

Learn more at:
www.sacog.org/rucs

Placer County Tour Highlights

Cold-fighting mandarins, hand-massaged persimmons and many more unique agricultural products were highlighted on the **November 13** Placer County Ag Tour.



Hoshigaki, hand-massaged persimmons, at Otow Orchard in Granite Bay

Nearly 50 elected officials, staff and community members from across the six-county region were led by Placer County marketing guru Joanne Neft and

Agricultural Commissioner Christine Turner.

While traveling up Interstate 80, Placer County Transportation Planning Agency Executive Director Celia McAdam gave an overview of the carpool and auxiliary lane projects on I-80 and the Lincoln Bypass. That was followed by an overview from county staff about a new project, Placer Legacy, to conserve open space and habitats.

The first stop was Beard Ranch, which like many small agricultural operations faces challenges that force owners to maintain full-time jobs to make ends meet. The next stop, Twin Peaks Orchards is another small operation facing regulatory challenges.

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A Rural Perspective on Land Use

As part of the current conditions inventory of land use policies in the Sacramento region, SACOG looked across the region at different treatments of the urban-rural interface. In some places, such as Yolo County, this interface is distinguished by a hard “edge”—a stark transition from urban area to agricultural land. In other places, such as Sutter County, this interface is characterized by a soft “edge”—a gradual transition from urban to agricultural uses through the use of rural residential zones (also known as ranchette, or agricultural-residential).

Both types of transitions between urban and rural areas have benefits and drawbacks. The Innovations Phase of the Land Use Working Group will examine policy innovations that address the urban-rural interface, with an aim at preserving agricultural viability in these areas. Some of the questions that will be addressed:

- Where are development pressures greatest?
- Where do county policies intend to preserve agriculture?
- What sorts of policy innovations protect and maintain agricultural viability?
- What sizes and types of buffers work best at protecting agricultural operations at the urban-rural edge?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks to different policy innovations?

On **December 11**, the second workshop of the Land Use Working Group will explore the viability of innovative policies aimed at this edge issue. An Innovations section of the Land Use Working Paper will be posted to the RUCS Wiki on **December 5** for additions and comments from the public and stakeholders. For more information contact Kacey Lizon at (916) 340-6265 or klizon@sacog.org.

Safety (continued)

Without amenities like sidewalks and bike lanes, bicyclists and pedestrians are more at risk to be involved in an accident.



California's pedestrian and bicyclist fatality rates are higher than the national average. In 2006, the SACOG region's rural areas experienced 18 fatal or severe injury pedestrian collisions and 13 fatal or severe injury bicycle collisions.

For rural transit safety, the biggest concern is that rural routes often do not have regular fixed stops. Those wishing to board a bus must flag it down while waiting on the side of the road. Bus pullouts or waiting areas are rare, so passengers are subjected to high-speed traffic while they wait. Some rural operators do deviate from the fixed route to drop passengers at or nearer to their final destination.

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Stay current on rural-urban issues
at www.sacog.org/rucs

From the Farm to the School Cafeteria

Farm to school programs are expanding throughout the country. Places as diverse as New York City and Davis have implemented healthy school food programs and programs connecting schools to local farms, to the benefit of positive changes in student behavior. The Davis farm to school program is a thriving program. School meals come from local farms; schools have established their own gardens, recycling and composting programs; and students participate in nutrition and food education, as well as farm tours.

The school district developed a Food and Nutrition Policy that includes a stated goal of "providing seasonal fruits and

vegetables, including local produce, when appropriately available and cost effective."

Davis Farm to School Connection has worked in close collaboration with the Davis Joint Unified School District to increase farm fresh foods in school food offerings and meet other goals. Beginning this school year, Measure Q, a voter-approved parcel tax in Davis, is providing \$70,000 annually for additional farm fresh produce in the school lunch program.

For more about the Davis program, visit www.davisfarmtoschool.org. Information about farm to school programs nationwide can be found at: www.farmtoschool.org.

Placer (continued)

Twin Peaks has had trouble getting approval to make and sell value-added products on their orchard.

Participants got a dose of synephrine (a natural antihistamine) at Tony Aguilar's Highland Orchard, which produces 12 acres of premiere mandarins. A recent USDA study determined that Placer County mandarins contain six times more synephrine than most citrus fruit.

Auburn rancher Dan Macon spoke to the group about the importance of identifying and training the next generation of farmers, since the average farmer is over 57 years old.



The tour also stopped by Newcastle Produce (above), a market opened to support local farms and bring food closer to consumers.

Otow Orchard, the last tour stop, specializes in Hoshigaki, or hand-dried persimmons, which are hand-peeled, hung in the sun and massaged by hand 16 times over six weeks.



Patti Beard
at the
Beard Ranch
in Auburn

Wiki allows input on rural issues

SACOG is using a wiki tool to get input and feedback from a broad group of stakeholders on RUCS research. The wiki also allows anyone interested in the project to comment.

A wiki allows collaborative work on documents using a web browser. One of the best-known wikis is Wikipedia, a collaborative encyclopedia.

Each RUCS Working Group is using the wiki to develop and get input on its working paper. A draft Land Use paper is online now; Transportation and Local Markets papers will be added this month. Anyone interested in rural-urban issues in our region is encouraged to view draft papers and add comments on the wiki at: www.sacog.org/rucs/