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GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND NETWORK DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



The Community Connectors are envisioned as a network of transformative active transportation corridors that enhance connectivity throughout the Coachella Valley, primarily by improving access between the CV Link and points of interest in the surrounding communities. Beyond improving regional and local mobility, the Community Connectors are intended to support broader regional priorities, including affordable housing production, social equity, transportation mode shift, climate action, and climate resilience.

These priorities align with the objectives of the REAP 2.0 program, which provided partial funding for development of the Coachella Valley Community Connectors Plan. REAP 2.0 supports planning efforts that accelerates infill development; increases housing supply, choice, and affordability; and reduces VMT per capita.

Building on these priorities, a Plan goal and supporting objectives were established to guide development of the Community Connectors network. A network planning framework, grounded in the Plan's goal and objectives, was then used to identify and evaluate potential Community Connector alignments and establish a cohesive regional network.

PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The following goal was established to express the overarching aspirations of the Community Connectors Plan:



GOAL:

To extend local connections to the CV Link to help fulfill CVAG's vision of a more active, livable, equitable and sustainable Coachella Valley.

This goal reflects the intent to extend the reach and benefits of CV Link, the region's cornerstone active transportation facility, into surrounding communities. The concepts of an active, livable, equitable and sustainable Coachella Valley reflect broader aspirations to improve public health and quality of life, expand access to opportunity, advance social equity, and support regional climate action.

Four objectives were developed to provide further direction for achieving this goal and to guide development of the Community Connectors network.

OBJECTIVES:

1

Connect Communities to Everyday Destinations

2

Advance Equity and Support Housing

3

Make Alternatives to Driving More Viable

4

Establish an Implementable and Fundable Network

OBJECTIVE

1

CONNECT COMMUNITIES TO EVERYDAY DESTINATIONS

Identify walking and bicycling routes which connect the CV Link to residential areas, schools, parks, community centers, and other destinations serving daily needs.



Town Square Park, Cathedral City

This objective provides specificity for the types of local trip-attracting destinations the Community Connector corridors should improve access to. During the existing conditions analysis, key destinations throughout Coachella Valley were identified, including schools, parks, community and civic facilities, employment hubs, retail and commercial centers, recreational amenities, and other community destinations and points of interest. Feedback from constituent public agencies and Tribal groups in the Coachella Valley region helped further refine these destinations. Their locations and concentrations were then used to inform development of Community Connector alignments and identify opportunities to improve access between communities and CV Link.

OBJECTIVE

2

ADVANCE EQUITY AND SUPPORT HOUSING

Promote active transportation infrastructure within disadvantaged communities to accelerate infill development, increase housing supply and options, improve housing affordability, and to affirmatively further fair housing practices.



Desert Hot Springs

This objective guided the identification of disadvantaged communities and planned or targeted affordable housing infill sites throughout the Coachella Valley. An Equity Index was developed (Chapter 2), which identified disadvantaged areas in the region based on an overlay of CalEnviroScreen score, Free and Reduced Lunch Program eligibility, collisions weighted by severity and density, disability density, and percentage of zero-vehicle households. These input measures represent areas which experience some combination of social, environmental, health, and/or transportation disadvantages.

Planned and targeted affordable housing infill sites were obtained through available regional and local data, including adopted housing elements of jurisdictions in the region and verified by feedback obtained from constituent public agencies and Tribal groups.

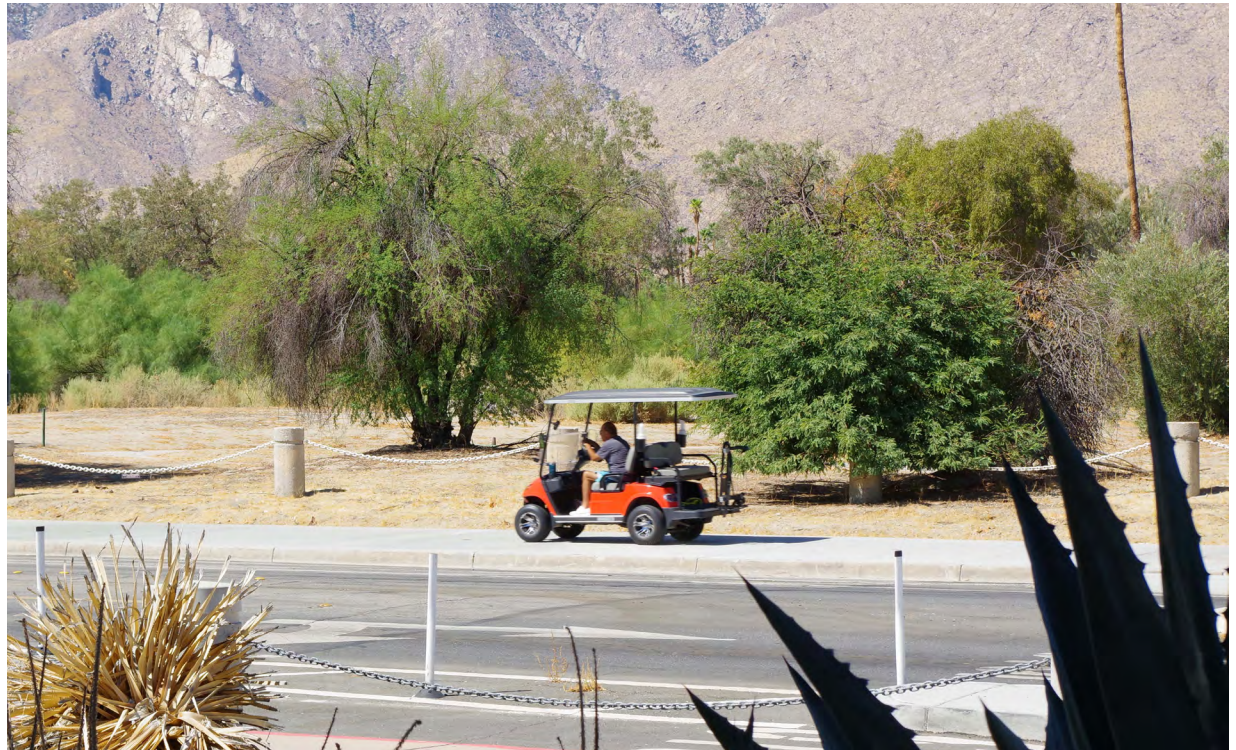
The Equity Index and affordable housing opportunity sites helped guide the development of the Community Connector alignments, ensuring they reach and serve disadvantaged areas and provide connections to affordable housing opportunity sites, thereby supporting the housing and equity objectives of the REAP 2.0 program.

OBJECTIVE

3

MAKE ALTERNATIVES TO DRIVING MORE VIABLE

Make transportation alternatives to driving – such as walking, bicycling, and usage of neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) – more viable, to improve sustainability and help reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).



Palm Desert

This objective informed a network planning approach focused on creating comfortable, low-stress connections that can make active transportation a more practical option for everyday trips. Where feasible, the Community Connectors emphasize facilities that provide greater separation from motor vehicle traffic and a higher level of comfort than conventional Class II bike lanes and Class III bike routes.

The network also recognizes the importance of strategic roadway corridors that provide critical connections across barriers or close gaps in the regional active transportation system. In some locations, these corridors were retained within the network despite potential implementation challenges because of their importance to overall connectivity.

OBJECTIVE

4

ESTABLISH AN IMPLEMENTABLE AND FUNDABLE NETWORK

Produce a plan that identifies and prioritizes connector routes to the CV Link and guides future funding pursuits for their rapid implementation.



CV Link rest area near Ramon Road, in Cathedral City

This objective emphasizes moving Community Connectors from planning toward implementation. CV Link rest areas, which are activation spaces adjacent to CV Link access points that are programmed with placemaking and trip-supporting amenities, were considered in developing the network because of their potential to serve as important connection points between CV Link and surrounding communities.

The objective also informed the project prioritization process. Criteria were developed to consider factors such as improved accessibility to destinations from disadvantaged communities, connecting affordable housing infill opportunity sites, improving bicycling safety and comfort, consistency with local planning efforts, and consideration of cost and feasibility. Together, these criteria help identify Early Action Projects that provide strong community benefits, are competitive for grant funding, and have the greatest potential to advance toward implementation.

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

A network development framework was established to guide the identification and refinement of Community Connector alignments. The framework translates the Plan's goal and objectives into eight network planning principles that consider regional and local priorities, connectivity, equity, demand, user experience, and implementation potential:





Building on Past Planning Efforts

Community Connector alignments should build upon existing and planned bicycle and active transportation networks identified through local and regional planning efforts. Alignments should complement planned projects, leverage opportunities created by other transportation investments, and incorporate input from local agencies and Tribal governments. This approach helps strengthen consistency between the Community Connectors network and local priorities while avoiding duplication of previous planning efforts.



Network Connectivity

Community Connector alignments should provide coverage across the region to form a grid-like network surrounding the CV Link, close significant regional transportation gaps, and permeate major physical and infrastructural barriers that impede active transportation connectivity, such as the Whitewater River and Interstate 10.

Connector corridors should also serve surrounding communities and destinations while maintaining reasonably direct connections between CV Link and their termini. Overly circuitous alignments and unnecessary deviations should be avoided to the extent possible.

Concept rendering of the Arts & Music Line





Geographic Equity

The Community Connectors network should include diverse geographic coverage and coordination with all cities, unincorporated communities, and Tribal nations of the region. Furthermore, the network should balance regional connectivity and priorities with the needs and preferences identified by individual communities and local agencies.



Social Equity

Community Connector alignments should improve active transportation access within communities experiencing greater social, environmental, health, or transportation disadvantages. Equity-need areas identified from Chapter 2's Equity Index measure were considered during network development.

Alignments should also improve connections to planned and targeted affordable housing and infill opportunity sites, helping expand access to destinations and transportation options for residents who may benefit most from improved active transportation infrastructure.

Class II Bike Lane on Palm Drive in Desert Hot Springs





Supporting Everyday Active Transportation

Although improving connections to CV Link is a central purpose of the Plan, Community Connectors should also function as useful active transportation corridors independent of CV Link. Alignments should support local and intercommunity walking, bicycling, and other active transportation trips by connecting neighborhoods with destinations and to other parts of the regional active transportation network.



Serving Demand

Connector alignments should provide good coverage in high population and high employment areas. They should also provide connections between cities with high inter-city trip demand and serve community points of interest, resources, and trips fulfilling peoples' daily needs.

Bicycle rentals in Downtown Palm Springs





Providing Safety and Comfort

Community Connectors should provide safe and comfortable facilities that can serve users of a broad range of ages and abilities. Where feasible, alignments should follow corridors capable of providing low-stress bicycling conditions, generally corresponding to Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) 1 or 2, and supportive pedestrian environments. Corridors where these conditions cannot reasonably be achieved should generally be avoided unless they provide an important connection that cannot be accomplished through a practical alternative alignment.

Collision history should also be considered when evaluating potential alignments. Where safety concerns exist, recommended facility types and improvements should seek to reduce conflicts and improve comfort and safety for people walking, bicycling, and using other active transportation modes.



Feasibility

Community Connector alignments should consider physical, operational, right-of-way, and other implementation constraints while taking advantage of opportunities to deliver high-quality active transportation facilities. Where multiple alignment options provide similar connectivity and benefits, preference should generally be given to those with a more realistic path toward implementation.

The resulting projects should balance benefits and costs, position CVAG and its partner agencies to compete effectively for funding, and provide a practical pathway toward implementation.

Separated CV Link facility using a raised buffer and flexible posts

