

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Solano Transportation Authority (STA), in cooperation with four of its member jurisdictions (Solano County, and the cities of Fairfield, Vacaville and Suisun City), have identified the Jepson Parkway as a priority transportation project.

They have also recognized the unique opportunity of this corridor to be a model for linking land use, streetscape design and transportation. Various segments of the route have been in the planning and design stages for many years. At its most basic level, the Jepson Parkway provides a continuous four-lane roadway from the I-80/Leisure Town Road interchange in Vacaville to the State Route 12/Walters Road intersection in Suisun City (see Figure 1). The project utilizes existing roadways and roadway extensions through the cities of Vacaville, Fairfield and Suisun City and the County of Solano. At a more innovative level, the Jepson Parkway provides opportunities for bus and rail transit, bicycle and pedestrian travel and high quality streetscape treatment that buffers adjacent land uses from the road and offers an aesthetic benefit for the length of the Parkway.

The project responds to a series of critical immediate needs. It provides an essential north-south connection in Solano County supporting the continued vitality of the three cities, several emerging job centers, Travis Air Force Base and local destinations such as schools and neighborhoods. The project relieves existing and future traffic congestion problems. Several of the roadway segments currently operate at low levels of service at peak hours and these levels are expected to degrade over time. The project also addresses serious safety problems on narrow, disconnected road segments. Four of the top 40 high accident locations in Solano County are found along the Parkway route: Walters Road and Air Base Parkway, Peabody and Vanden Road, Peabody and Cement Hill Road, and Vanden and Cannon Road. Additionally, the project provides a safer alternative for autos, bicyclists and pedestrians to the at-grade railroad crossing at Peabody Road and the Union Pacific Railroad. The project offers opportunities for safe and attractive bicycle and pedestrian facilities along the entire Parkway where few currently exist. And, finally, it integrates opportunities for improved transit, bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the County with local land use and development opportunities.



Jepson Parkway Concept Plan 1

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In response to these critical needs, the Jepson Parkway was designed with the following transportation objectives:

- Implement safety improvements at various locations and road segments;
- Promote linkages between future land uses and transportation facilities to reduce the need for vehicle trips and take advantage of transit, rideshare, bicycle and pedestrian modes;
- Relieve existing and anticipated traffic congestion on local north-south routes in Solano County;
- Provide improved and new transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; and
- Provide a grade-separated crossing of the Union Pacific Railroad.

Construction of the Parkway, including the implementation of safety-related measures, will achieve a number of additional community benefits:

- Create a safe, efficient transportation network for the movement of people and goods within Solano County;
- Protect residents living adjacent to roadways in the corridor from the impacts of existing and anticipated future traffic levels using landscape and noise buffers;
- Provide traffic signals at major junctions along the corridor to improve access and safety for existing uses;
- Provide efficient local streets to serve local trips that currently have to use the freeway system; and
- Improve access for emergency vehicles and transit services.

The project involves the cooperative efforts of each of the local jurisdictions, the STA, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Caltrans and other related agencies. The project as currently budgeted is expected to cost approximately \$74 million (in 1998 dollars) and will be phased over time. Approximately two-thirds of the funding has been secured. Appendix B shows the various road segments, their estimated costs and projected completion dates.

PURPOSE OF THE JEPSON PARKWAY CONCEPT PLAN

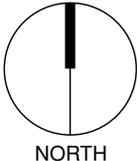
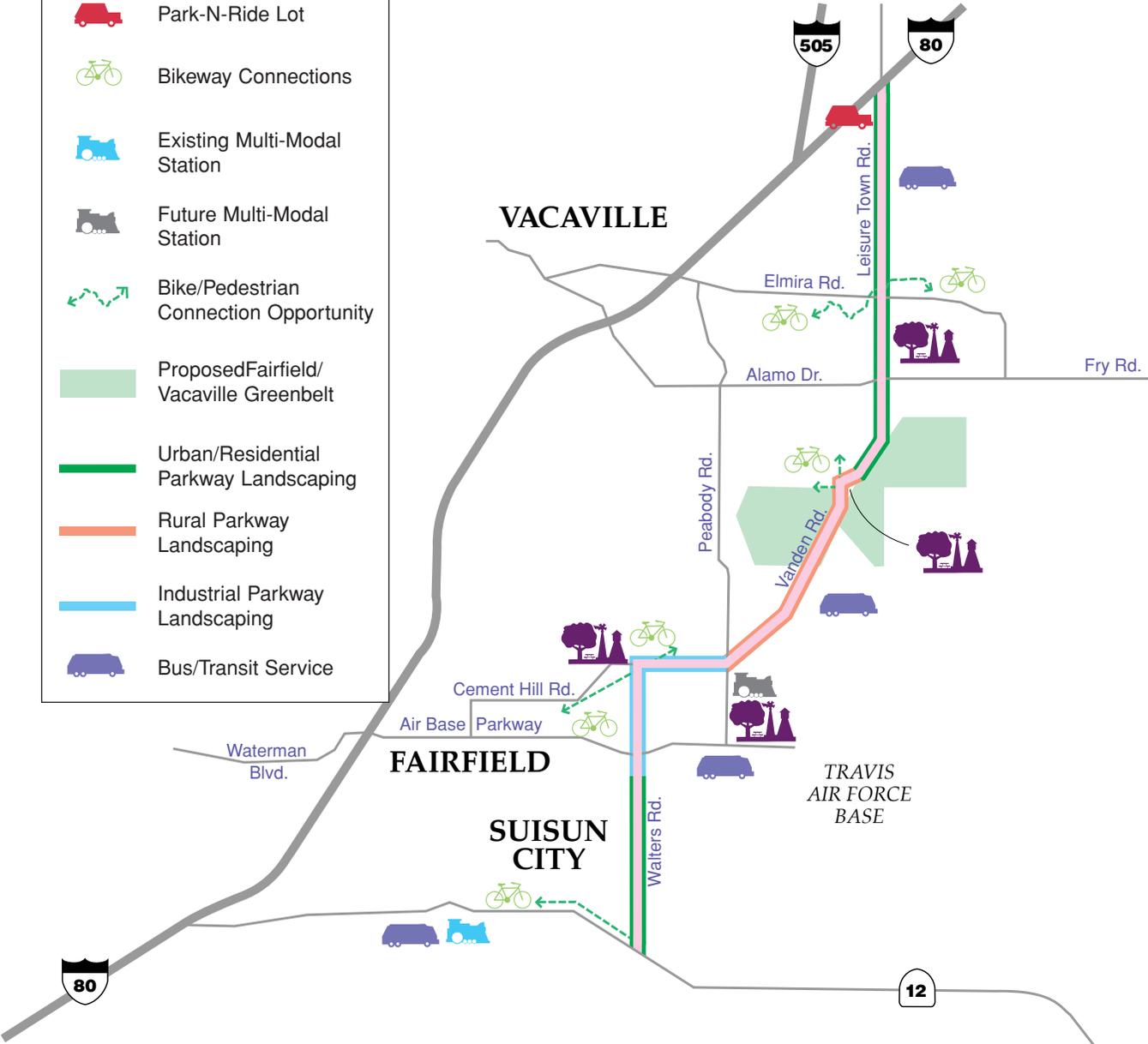
The roadway project was initiated to address growing traffic problems and safety issues in the area. However, over the past several years, in response to community concerns and discussions with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the STA concluded that the Jepson Parkway could also become a model for an integrated transportation corridor. An integrated corridor could broaden the Parkway to include transit, bikeway/pedestrian elements, landscape design, and open space protection and guidelines for adjacent lands as features in a single comprehensive plan.

Recognizing the value of the Jepson Parkway as a model for an integrated transportation corridor, the MTC funded this study through a grant from its Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) program. The TLC program provides seed money to support transportation-related projects designed to help revitalize urban neighborhoods and make them more pedestrian friendly.

JEPSON PARKWAY CONCEPT PLAN

LEGEND

-  Jepson Parkway
-  Staging Areas
-  Park-N-Ride Lot
-  Bikeway Connections
-  Existing Multi-Modal Station
-  Future Multi-Modal Station
-  Bike/Pedestrian Connection Opportunity
-  Proposed Fairfield/Vacaville Greenbelt
-  Urban/Residential Parkway Landscaping
-  Rural Parkway Landscaping
-  Industrial Parkway Landscaping
-  Bus/Transit Service



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The opportunity to expand the roadway project to encompass other related transportation and community goals was stimulated by community discussions. The public and various jurisdictions raised questions and issues regarding possible land use and neighborhood impacts stemming from the Parkway. These discussions and the search for solutions created the opportunity to explore alternative transportation and bikeway connections, opportunities for landscape and aesthetic treatments, design guidelines for adjacent land uses compatible with transit, and open space and habitat protection. Given the inter-related aspects of the corridor, a formal study was needed to examine these features with the specific characteristics of the area and to provide guidelines for subsequent design and development of the Parkway in light of these findings.

This report documents the Jepson Parkway Concept Plan and its community input process. To ensure comprehensive input, the study convened and facilitated a dialogue between various stakeholders of the project including developers, neighborhood groups, environmentalists, staff from STA, the cities, the County and MTC, community representatives and others. This was done to ensure that the resulting plan reflected community feedback and priorities.

This Concept Plan is a framework to implement various inter-connected projects along the Parkway. Some aspects of the Plan will be modified, revised and improved over time as detailed engineering or environmental information becomes available. In addition, as the communities and neighborhoods continue to have input into detailed design decisions, the Concept Plan will be improved and refined.

Following this section, the report documents the following:

- Chapter 1 describes existing conditions on the route and the community input process;
- Chapter 2 lists the goals and objectives of the Plan;
- Chapter 3 provides transit-related improvements;
- Chapter 4 provides bicycle and pedestrian improvements;
- Chapter 5 provides landscape and open space opportunities;
- Chapter 6 provides suggestions for adjacent land uses and design guidelines along the corridor to link transit, bicycle and pedestrian opportunities with future development;
- Chapter 7 provides a roadway phasing and management plan for the Parkway; and
- Several appendices provide additional information including a description of individual “livable communities” project components.

EXISTING CONDITIONS ON THE ROUTE

The alignment for the Jepson Parkway starts at the Interstate 80/Leisure Town Road interchange in Vacaville and ends at State Route 12/Walters Road intersection in Suisun City. The corridor is approximately 12 miles long. Existing roads along the route include Leisure Town Road, Vanden Road, Cement Hill Road, and Walters Road (see Figure 2). A wide range of existing land uses are located along these roads including agricultural, commercial, industrial, military and residential.

The northern most part of the roadway is at Leisure Town Road and Interstate 80. Today, Leisure Town Road is primarily a two-lane undivided road between Interstate 80 and Alamo Drive. Three sections of the road have been widened to provide a second southbound lane. The west side of Leisure Town

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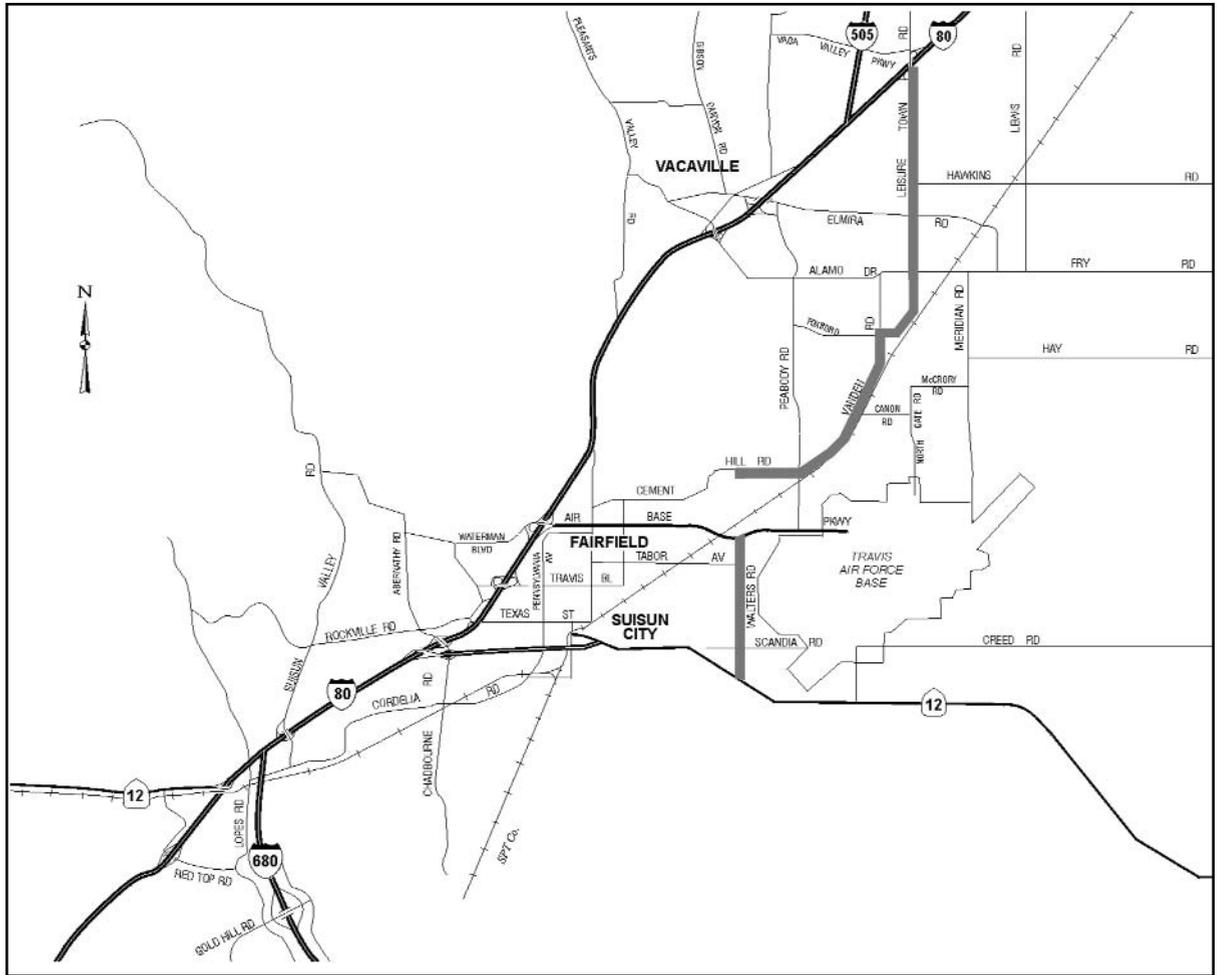


Figure 2: Existing Road Segments

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Road in Vacaville is a mix of commercial, recreational, institutional and light industrial areas. The east side of Leisure Town Road is a mix of commercial, rural residential and agricultural uses.

Leisure Town Road was extended from Alamo Drive to Vanden Road in October of 1998. This portion of the road is a two-lane undivided road. It is bounded by agricultural land on both sides. The Vacaville General Plan calls for additional residential development between Leisure Town Road and Nut Tree Road, as far south as the existing City limit.



Vanden Road, between Peabody and Leisure Town, is a two-lane rural road bounded primarily by grazing land. The City of Vacaville intends to extend Foxboro Parkway east from Nut Tree Road to intersect with Vanden Road. The intersection will align with Leisure Town Road.

Other uses along Vanden Road include several industrial sites near its intersection with Peabody Road, a storage facility, a small extension school, and two single family homes. An overcrossing for an abandoned railroad spur crosses Vanden Road approximately 1,500 feet north of Peabody Road. The Solano County General Plan calls for continuation of agricultural land uses along Vanden Road with continued industrial uses in existing locations.

The mainline for the Union Pacific Railroad, which runs from the San Francisco Bay Area east through Sacramento and across the Donner Summit in the Sierra Nevada, intersects the corridor near its mid-way point. The only existing north-south railroad crossing in the corridor is on Peabody Road, a two-lane undivided road. The at-grade Peabody Road crossing of the Union Pacific Railroad is located in close proximity to intersections with Vanden Road and Markley Lane. Markley Lane is a local east-west street that provides access to Vanden High School and Golden West Middle School.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The City of Fairfield is currently overseeing the construction of a segment of the project to address specific safety concerns. The project, now under construction, shifts the intersection of Vanden Road with Peabody Road approximately 200 feet to the north to align with Cement Hill Road at a new signalized intersection. A County-wide Travel Safety Plan prepared by the Solano Transportation Authority in 1998 indicated that the Peabody Road/Vanden Road and Peabody Road/Cement Hill Road intersections were both on the list of the top 40 accident locations for the calendar years 1995 through 1997. The Fairfield General Plan calls for a mix of land uses in this area including industrial, commercial, residential and recreational.

Travis Air Force Base, the County's largest employer, is located near the south end of the corridor. Industrial uses are located immediately west and north of Travis Air Force Base along Peabody Road and Air Base Parkway. Cement Hill Road is an undivided two-lane road with industrial uses located on the north side of the roadway. There are also a number of schools in and around Travis that are served by these road segments.

The southern most portion of the route follows Walters Road between State Route 12 and Air Base Parkway. Walters Road is bounded primarily by residential uses on the west and grazing land on the east, with a portion in industrial uses. The southern portion of Walters Road from State Route 12 to Bella Vista Road is a four-lane divided boulevard. The central portion from Bella Vista Road to East Tabor Avenue is an undivided two-lane road and the northern portion from East Tabor Avenue to Air Base Parkway is an undivided four lane road. The southern four-lane portion is a completed section of the Parkway, and has residential uses on each side. The General Plan for Suisun City calls for completion of several residential master planned projects along the corridor in its jurisdiction.

No bus routes currently serve travel between Suisun City, Fairfield and Vacaville along the Jepson Parkway corridor. However, there are three bus routes that come into contact with the Jepson Parkway. These include bus service to Travis Air Force Base provided via a single route from central Fairfield.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND OUTREACH PROCESS

Overview

A variety of public outreach methods were used to solicit the concerns and input from the community. These included stakeholder interviews, community workshops, and neighborhood meetings, as well as regular meetings with the STA Board Sub-Committee for the Jepson Parkway and the Technical Working Group for the Parkway. The Board Sub-Committee consists of four elected officials from the STA Board who oversee and guide the project. The Working Group consists of staff members from the planning (or community development) and public works departments of each of the member jurisdictions, STA staff members, Caltrans, MTC, several consultants and other interested agencies. The Concept Plan has been a topic of discussion at regular meetings with these two groups over the past several years. In addition, STA staff and consultants met with representatives from each of the member jurisdictions to develop details for their respective local segments.

The groundwork for the Concept Plan was developed through a series of meetings held during the late summer and early fall of 1998. These included meetings with the STA Board Sub-Committee and Working Group, as well as a field tour. Information provided at this early stage established a framework of goals and objectives to provide the foundation for the integrated corridor concept.

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Following these initial meetings, fifteen one-on-one interviews were conducted with key community stakeholders representing a broad range of viewpoints. These included interviews with representatives for the chambers of commerce from each of the three cities and the County, environmental groups, neighborhood groups, city and County planning representatives, elected officials and local development interests.

The City of Vacaville held subsequent meetings, both in the neighborhoods potentially impacted by the proposed Jepson Parkway, and before the Planning Commission and City Council. Representations of the neighborhood groups identified eleven criteria, described in detail in Appendix B, that they felt an alternative should meet. A number of alternative concepts were presented and analyzed by City of Vacaville staff. On November 23, 1999, the Vacaville City Council approved an alternative design concept that retains the current location of Leisure Town Road, but provides a 35' to 55' buffer with extensive landscape to reduce impacts on nearby existing or future residences. The specific design details of the landscape buffer will entail additional involvement of area residents.

Following the interviews and focused meetings, the STA staff and consultants held two broad community workshops. The workshops were designed to identify concerns and questions and solicit ideas about land use, open space, landscaping, bicycle travel and related topics from the community. A wall graphic was produced at each of these meetings and individual comment sheets were collected. Over 60 people attended each of the workshops representing neighborhoods, agencies and many diverse interests in the area. The first workshop was held in the County near Vanden Road in the fall of 1998. The second workshop was held in Vacaville in the spring of 1999.

The two workshops were followed by focused meetings with specific neighborhoods and interest groups as a follow-up to particular issues. Concurrently, additional meetings were held with the Jepson Parkway Working Group and STA Board Sub-Committee to ensure consistent direction in light of new information provided during the community and neighborhood workshops. The information and ideas provided by the public and the various agencies have been incorporated into this summary report.

In addition, there were individual meetings between the four participating agencies and STA staff. These meetings were very helpful in developing detailed input on the planning, design, funding and scheduling issues pertaining to each segment.

Results and Responses

Each community workshop began with a presentation on the status of the Jepson Parkway Project and the objectives of the Concept Plan. Presenters emphasized advantages to be gained from linking land use and alternative transportation decisions with future roadway planning. Following these presentations, participants from the community offered their impressions of the project. During this portion of each workshop, a variety of questions were raised and issues identified that reflected a range of opinions regarding the project.

A number of participants indicated why they believed the Parkway is needed and its future benefits including the need to correct existing safety and traffic capacity problems along the corridor. Other participants did not want the project to move forward at all, particularly in light of growth-inducing concerns and neighborhood impacts. Others expressed concerns about specific design aspects of the project or a particular segment of the roadway. The Concept Plan has attempted to address and/or incorporate many, if not all, of the concerns that were raised.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The following general issues were raised and discussed at the workshops and meetings:

- Potential growth-inducing impacts of the Parkway;
- Direct environmental impacts of the project;
- Neighborhood impacts such as noise, traffic and air quality;
- Traffic congestion and safety improvement needs;
- Need for bicycle and pedestrian linkages;
- Need to address neighborhood design issues on a case-by-case basis;
- Use the corridor plan to protect and preserve open space along the route;
- Provide opportunities for use of alternative transportation options;
- Develop an overall strategy to manage and maintain the Parkway in a consistent manner;
- Keep the road at no more than four lanes; and
- Include substantial landscaping along the route and other amenities like signals, rest stops and medians.

Appendices A and B provide a detailed summary of public comments at the neighborhood and community workshops. Appendix A also includes a brief response on how the issues are being addressed.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

2 . GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Jepson Parkway is a complex long-term project with multiple components and jurisdictions. As such, changes and improvements will occur over time as implementation proceeds. The Concept Plan needs to be reviewed and revisited every few years to identify progress, update specific projects and modify designs to reflect changing conditions and community needs.

GOALS

Building on the information generated during the public process, the STA Board Sub-Committee developed working goals and objectives for the plan. The following represent the overall goals for the project. They are intended to direct and focus further planning and design efforts on each segment of the Parkway as it is developed.

1. The Parkway should integrate multiple modes of safe and efficient travel including vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian and transit..
2. The plan encourages local jurisdictions to develop land use/transportation strategies that integrate future commuter rail, bus, park-and-ride, bicycle and pedestrian facilities into urban development where it is planned.
3. The Jepson Parkway should be an innovative four-lane roadway between I-80 at Vacaville and Highway 12 at Suisun City that emphasizes multi-jurisdictional cooperation and community involvement.
4. Strategic open space acquisitions should be used to preserve the designated Fairfield-Vacaville greenbelt area as a community separator between the two cities.
5. Consistent landscape and streetscape improvements should be used to enhance the unique visual environment of the Parkway.
6. This project promotes the continued vitality of Travis Air Force Base, Fairfield, Suisun City, Vacaville and Solano County, and emerging business parks in the corridor by upgrading and linking the narrow and unsafe local roads that now provide access to these job centers, adjacent neighborhoods, and schools.

OBJECTIVES

In addition, the following more specific objectives are intended to guide future planning and implementation of the Jepson Parkway.

Fundamental Roadway Concept

- The route should be a four-lane continuous parkway serving local traffic between I-80 at Vacaville and Highway 12 at Suisun City to link neighborhoods, schools, parks, downtown centers and job centers.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Minimize driveway cuts, intersections, median breaks and other roadway interruptions (particularly in the rural segments) to ensure maximum efficiency of vehicle travel.

Multiple Modes of Transportation

- Design the route as a multi-modal corridor that enhances opportunities for transit use and alternative travel modes.
- Design the route to ensure safe and comfortable bicycle and pedestrian travel opportunities, particular for existing and planned residential neighborhoods and schools.
- Maximize bicycle connections to existing and planned bicycle facilities along the route.
- Identify strategic locations for bus stops and park-and-ride/carpooling lots taking into account existing and planned land uses, and desired destinations.
- Identify “activity nodes” or staging areas for bike and vehicle travel. These may be associated with transit or may be stand-alone. Consider the types and levels of improvement including recreation, shade, water, restrooms, landscaping and signage.
- Analyze the area in and around the proposed multi-modal station to ensure that linkages to future local streets, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are maximized.

Corridor Identity and Image

- Establish a clear and consistent identity for the entire route so it is easily recognizable to the community using name, signage and landscaping.

Aesthetic Concept

- Identify existing natural features and landscapes that are unique and attractive along the route. Maximize identification of and views to such features in the design of the Parkway. Determine the appropriate visual environment for each type of road segment including urban, suburban, rural and open space/habitat. Each segment could receive specialized treatment.
- Design a consistent system of landscape improvements that can make the corridor an attractive and inviting route for travelers using native species that are drought-tolerant, wind resistant and low-maintenance.

Land Use and Development

- Develop a set of suggested principles and guidelines that can assist local jurisdictions in future consideration of land use plans and development projects as they relate to the Jepson Parkway. These guidelines should emphasize compatibility and connection with transit and alternative transportation modes, as well as a pedestrian/bicycle scale to promote more livable communities.
- Provide landscaping and noise mitigation to buffer the impacts of the Jepson Parkway on existing and planned residential development.

Open Space Concept

- Identify potential areas for acquisition of open space (in fee title or conservation easements) that have been designated as greenbelt by the cities and the County. Use federal, state and local funds as available to protect environmentally sensitive areas and/or greenbelts between communities and enhance the corridor.