



September 25, 2024

Transportation Authority of Marin
900 Fifth Avenue, Suite 100
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: September 26, 2024 TAM Board of Commissioners Meeting Agenda Item No. 7 —
Countywide Transportation Plan Board Update and Release of the Draft Plan

Dear Transportation Authority of Marin,

We are concerned that the current approach to defining the Primary and Secondary Active Transportation Network in the Marin Countywide Transportation Plan is misguided. Based on our conversations with TAM staff, we understand that the current thinking is that the Primary Network consists of those bikeways to be prioritized for near-term development, while more long-term bikeways are relegated to the Secondary Network.

In fact, a better approach to the Primary and Secondary Active Transportation Network already exists in multiple County of Marin planning documents going back three decades:

- The 2001 *Marin County Unincorporated Areas Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*
- The 2008 *Marin County Unincorporated Areas Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*
- The 2018 *Marin County Unincorporated Areas Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*

We have attached pages 78 – 81 from the 2008 *Marin County Unincorporated Areas Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* as **Exhibit 1** of the **Appendix** to this letter. Page 81 of the 2008 *Plan* is of particular significance, as it contains a map of Marin County’s Primary Bikeway Network. We strongly recommend that TAM use the 2008 Primary Bikeway Network map as the basis for the Primary Network Map in the current *Countywide Transportation Plan*. This work has already been done. There is no need to reinvent the wheel here.

Think of the Primary Network as the “backbone” of Marin County’s Active Transportation Network. It is what arterials are to the road network, but for multi-modal users. It is made up of the main inter-community north-south and east-west routes and their main connectors. Two of these inter-community routes — The North – South Greenway and the Cross – Marin Bikeway — follow in the footsteps of Marin County’s historical railroad routes. They do this for a good geographical reason: The historical railroad routes follow the most direct and flattest routes between Marin County’s cities and communities. A third inter-community route — The North – South Bikeway — runs parallel to the North – South Greenway, but whereas the North – South Greenway is located mostly along the east side of Highway 101 between San Rafael and Novato, the North – South Bikeway runs along the west side of Highway 101, closer to the main population centers along the San Rafael - Novato corridor.



WTB-TAM recommends the following changes and additions to the Primary Active Transportation Network as it currently appears in the Draft *Countywide Transportation Plan*, summarized below and mapped in **Exhibit 2** of the **Appendix** to this letter.

A. CHANGE the FOLLOWING ROUTES FROM SECONDARY NETWORK to PRIMARY NETWORK:

- A1. Bellam Boulevard from the North – South Greenway to Kerner Boulevard
- A2. Andersen Drive from the North – South Greenway to East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard
- A3. The East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard I-580 flyover
- A4. The Southern Segment of the North – South Greenway Gap Closure Project in Larkspur and Corte Madera
- A5. The Alto Tunnel and its approach pathways (Menke Park in Corte Madera to Vasco Court in Mill Valley)
- A6. East Blithedale Avenue, Tiburon Boulevard, and the Tiburon Rail Trail from the North – South Greenway in Mill Valley to Main Street in Tiburon

B. ADD the FOLLOWING ROUTES to the PRIMARY NETWORK:

- B1. Lucas Valley Road and Smith Ranch Road from Las Gallinas Avenue to the North – South Greenway
- B2. The North San Rafael Promenade from Las Gallinas Avenue to the North – South Greenway
- B3. The Civic Center Loop (Civic Center Drive and North San Pedro Road) from the North – South Greenway to Los Ranchitos Road
- B4. The Cross – Marin Bikeway from B Street to A Street (via the Safeway Path) and Andersen Drive from A Street to Lindero Street
- B5. Andersen Drive from the Cross – Marin Bikeway to the North – South Greenway
- B6. The Highway 101 Overcrossing from Francisco Boulevard East to Francisco Boulevard West in the vicinity of Harbor Street or Medway Road in San Rafael's Canal Neighborhood
- B7. Bellam Boulevard from Kerner Boulevard to the San Francisco Bay Trail

Respectfully,

Patrick Seidler
President, WTB-TAM

Matthew Hartzell
Director of Planning, WTB-TAM

**Exhibit 1:
Pages 78 - 81 of the 2008 *Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan***

5.3 Long Term Vision

Marin County and its unincorporated communities are already recognized as some of the most livable communities in the country. One of the aspects that make a community livable is that people feel comfortable walking or bicycling there, whether they be school children or senior citizens. The long term vision of this Plan is to make unincorporated Marin County a model for livable communities, a place where there is a balance between the automobile and alternative modes, where the fragments of existing bikeways are connected to provide a consistent experience from community to community. In addition to the policies recommended in Chapter 2, this Plan provides the following physical and program improvements to help reach this goal. Because this plan is limited in scope to the unincorporated areas of Marin County, coordination between the County DPW, local cities and towns, the Transportation Authority of Marin, Caltrans and transit agencies, among others, will be critical to the realization of this countywide vision which goes beyond the North-South Bikeway and extends into every community in the County.

5.3.1 *Primary System*

The County Bikeway System is composed of a primary and secondary bikeway system, with the primary system utilizing existing and proposed local bikeways, providing critical inter-

**Exhibit 1 (continued):
Pages 78 - 81 of the 2008 Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and
Pedestrian Master Plan**

community and regional connections, and serving all of the primary activity centers in unincorporated Marin County. Secondary and local systems provide important connections to local neighborhoods and other destinations, acting as feeder routes to the primary system. It is important to note that the portions of the primary and secondary bikeway system described here are located in unincorporated Marin County. Where the bikeway system is located in one of the numerous small pockets of unincorporated Marin County adjacent to incorporated towns and cities, this plan attempts to coordinate improvements with the plans of those incorporated areas.

5.3.2 Northwestern Pacific (SMART) Railroad Right of Way

The proposed Primary Bikeway system described in this section and the Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NWP) are so intertwined that it is useful to discuss the history of this railroad in the context of the proposed bikeway improvements. The NWP and its predecessors actually helped form the transportation system as it is known today in Marin, predating the development of a roadway system. Starting from the 1860s, a railroad system developed that eventually connected virtually all Marin communities to ferry service to San Francisco. By the early 1900s, an efficient double-track electric commuter rail operation brought commuters from the growing Marin towns to schools and work on a daily basis. By the 1940s, however, increased competition from the automobile led to the abandonment of the electric commuter service and eventually to the abandonment of the entire system south of Ignacio. North and east of Ignacio, freight service is still provided by Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority (NWPRA).

At the time of abandonment of the tracks south of Ignacio, the Northwestern Pacific Railroad was a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. Subsequently, the Southern Pacific was purchased by the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). For some time the area north of Larkspur Landing along the NWP right-of-way was owned by the Golden Gate Bridge District, purchased with Federal Highway Administration funds for the purposes of developing a bus way system. As of this writing, the entire NWP right of way from Cloverdale in Sonoma County to Tiburon in Marin County is under ownership of the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit district.

SMART was formed on January 1, 2003 as a new regional transportation district to oversee the development and implementation of a “rail with trail” passenger rail service and multi-use pathway in Sonoma and Marin Counties. In 2006 SMART released the Final Environmental Impact report for this proposal, described in detail in Chapter 2 of this plan. The SMART proposal appeared on the Marin and Sonoma ballots in November 2006 as a sales tax measure, which was defeated by voters by a 1.3% margin. The status of future SMART efforts on the NWP right of way is unknown at this time, though the agency plans to seek funding again in the future. The viability of sharing the NWP right-of-way in Marin is inextricably linked to the future rail transit use of the corridor from Larkspur Landing northward.

The legacy of the NWP system on the transportation system of Marin is strong. The general location and layout of streets and downtowns in Marin were largely determined by the railroad tracks. In many locations, such as Center Boulevard and the eastbound lanes on the Miracle Mile (Red Hill Avenue), the railroad right-of-way was used for new roadways. In other places, the railroad right-of-way was converted to multi-use trails, including most of the multi-use trails

**Exhibit 1 (continued):
Pages 78 - 81 of the 2008 Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and
Pedestrian Master Plan**

Proposed System & Improvements

in southern Marin. The physical legacy of the railroad is evident in many places, such as the trestle and drawbridge over Corte Madera Creek, the San Rafael depot, the Mill Valley Depot, and the numerous tunnels.

The NWP system is strongly linked to bicycle use in the county not just because it serves, in areas, as a bikeway now, but because it duplicates many of the same routes used by bicyclists throughout the County everyday—with one major exception. While the tracks provided direct, level connections between Marin’s communities, bicyclists must now traverse steep hills to travel between towns. Bicycles, like trains, prefer the most level, direct connection possible between two points. The legacy of the NWP is the bicycling community’s desire to re-establish these corridors where they are intact, to take advantage of what is a unique historic County resource that is virtually flat and largely grade-separated from streets, roads, and highways .

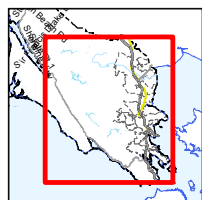
The old narrow gauge section of NWP from Fairfax west through San Geronimo Valley to Pt. Reyes Station and then northward through Marshall, Tomales, and on to the Valley Ford, Russian River, and Cazadero areas that also offers a tremendous resource. The Samuel P. Taylor Park pathway already utilizes portions of this right-of-way.

5.3.3 Tunnels

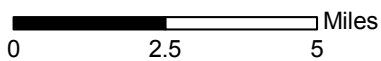
There are a total of 8 historic railroad tunnels in Marin County. Most of the tunnels are within various city limits, but the portals, tunnels and approaching right of way for most tunnels are under control of the County, SMART or the railroad. The CalPark Hill tunnel is located within the Larkspur and San Rafael city limits, but is owned by SMART. The Alto Tunnel is located almost entirely within incorporated Mill Valley and Corte Madera, with a small section of the approach on the south side under the County of Marin and Union Pacific ownership.

Tunnel	Length (ft)	Year Built	Status
Alto Tunnel	2,182.9	1884	Closed with partial collapse
CalPark Hill Tunnel	1,104.6	1884	Closed with partial collapse
North Tomales Tunnel	1,706.4	1875	Rock
Puerto Suello Tunnel	1,350.5	1879	Closed; Good condition
Tiburon-Reed Tunnel	566.2	1884	Closed; unknown
Reed-Meadowsweet Tunnel	1,848.8	1884	Closed; unknown
South Tomales Tunnel	98.4	1874	Rock
Whites Hill Tunnel	3,190.2	1904	Closed; substantial collapse

**Exhibit 1 (continued):
Pages 78 - 81 of the 2008 Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan**



MARIN COUNTY - PRIMARY BIKEWAY NETWORK



- Primary Network
- +— Historic Northwestern Pacific Railroad
- ▨▨▨▨ Historic Rail Tunnels



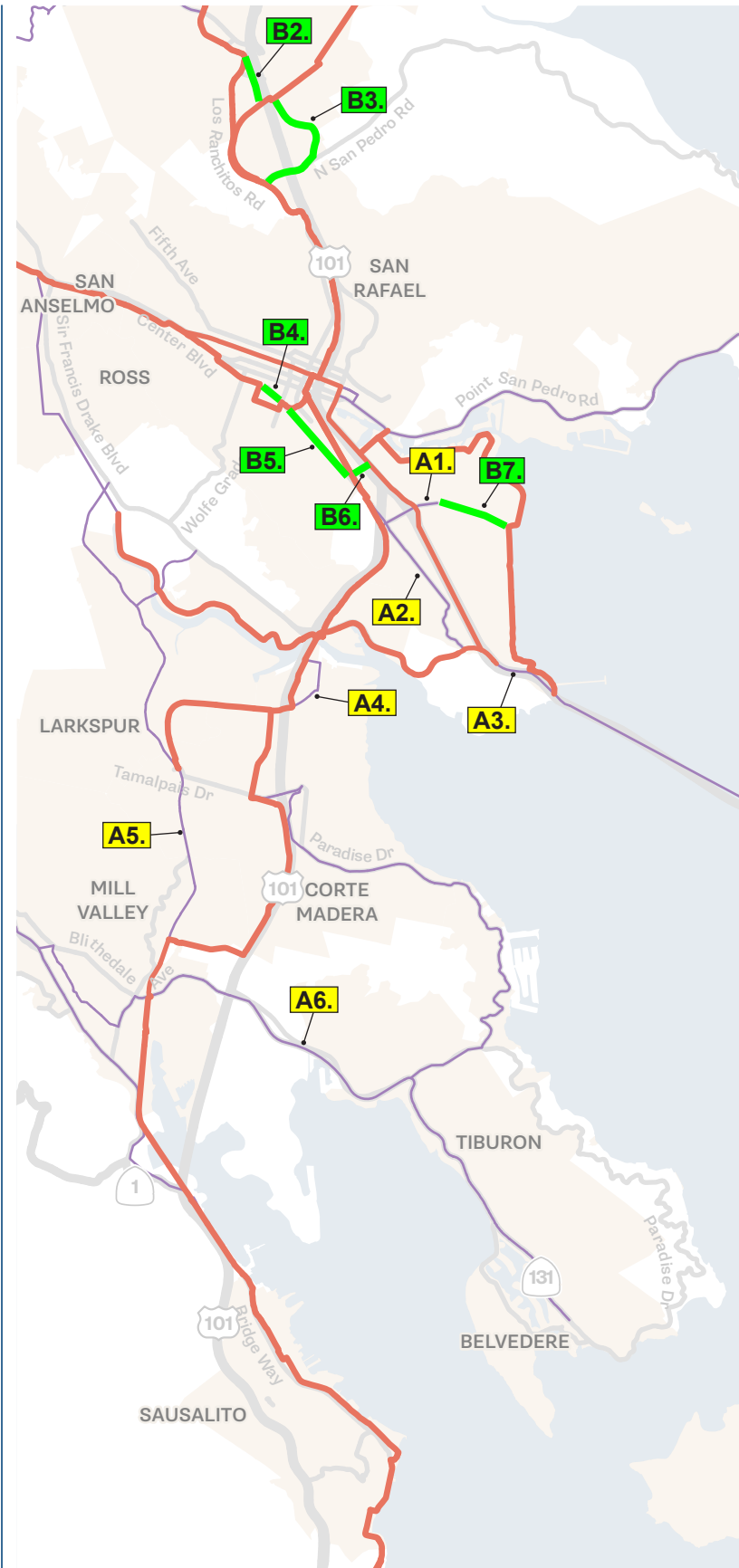
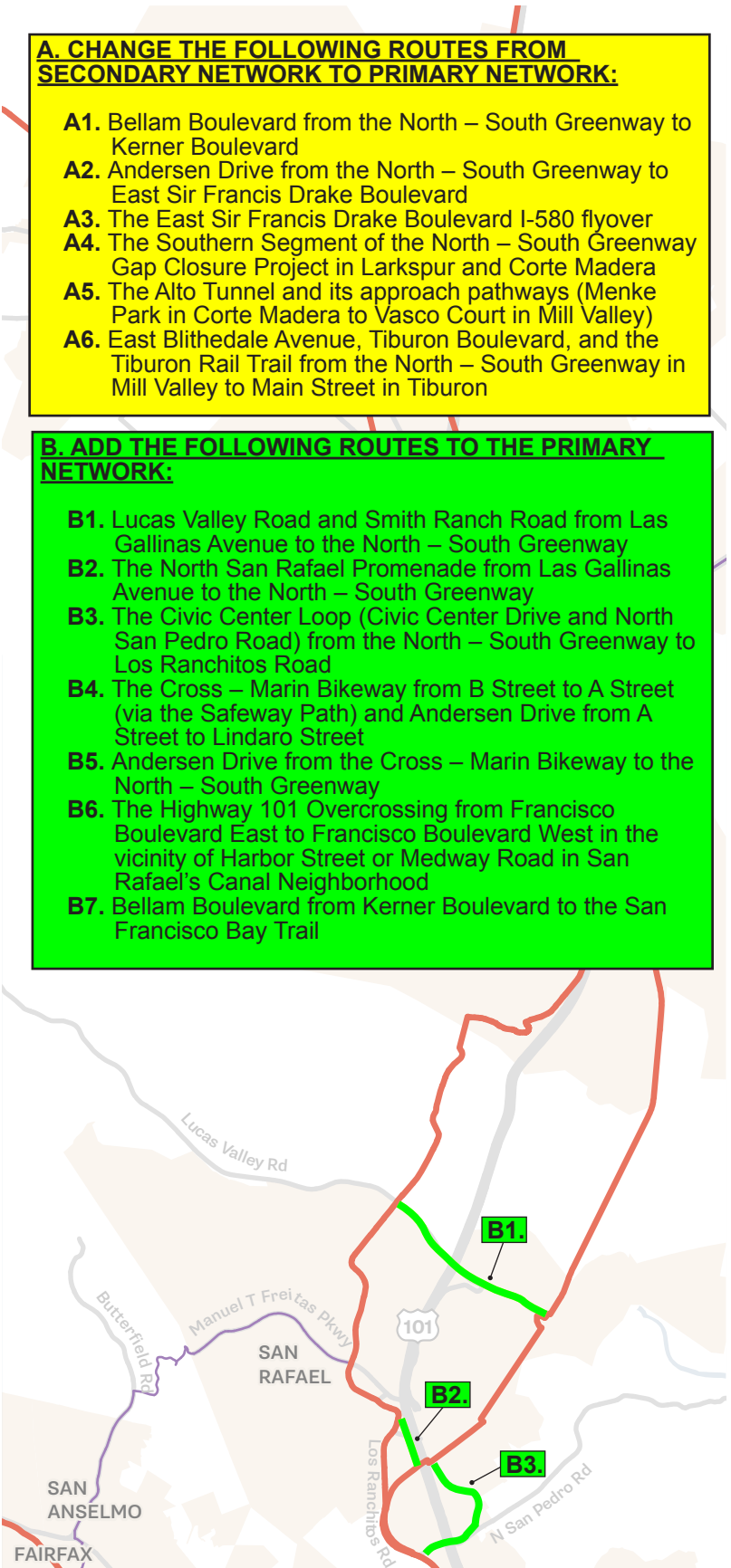
Exhibit 2: WTB-TAM Recommended Changes to the *Marin Countywide Transportation Plan* Active Transportation Primary Network

A. CHANGE THE FOLLOWING ROUTES FROM SECONDARY NETWORK TO PRIMARY NETWORK:

- A1. Bellam Boulevard from the North – South Greenway to Kerner Boulevard
- A2. Andersen Drive from the North – South Greenway to East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard
- A3. The East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard I-580 flyover
- A4. The Southern Segment of the North – South Greenway Gap Closure Project in Larkspur and Corte Madera
- A5. The Alto Tunnel and its approach pathways (Menke Park in Corte Madera to Vasco Court in Mill Valley)
- A6. East Blithedale Avenue, Tiburon Boulevard, and the Tiburon Rail Trail from the North – South Greenway in Mill Valley to Main Street in Tiburon

B. ADD THE FOLLOWING ROUTES TO THE PRIMARY NETWORK:

- B1. Lucas Valley Road and Smith Ranch Road from Las Gallinas Avenue to the North – South Greenway
- B2. The North San Rafael Promenade from Las Gallinas Avenue to the North – South Greenway
- B3. The Civic Center Loop (Civic Center Drive and North San Pedro Road) from the North – South Greenway to Los Ranchitos Road
- B4. The Cross – Marin Bikeway from B Street to A Street (via the Safeway Path) and Andersen Drive from A Street to Lindero Street
- B5. Andersen Drive from the Cross – Marin Bikeway to the North – South Greenway
- B6. The Highway 101 Overcrossing from Francisco Boulevard East to Francisco Boulevard West in the vicinity of Harbor Street or Medway Road in San Rafael's Canal Neighborhood
- B7. Bellam Boulevard from Kerner Boulevard to the San Francisco Bay Trail



— Primary AT Network — Secondary AT Network
— WTB-TAM Recommended Additions to Primary AT Network