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Vice Chancellor Gary Matthews
UC San Diego
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla, California 92093

RE: Smart Transportation Solutions Beyond Car Storage for UC San Diego

Dear Vice Chancellor Matthews:

On behalf of Circulate San Diego, whose mission is to create excellent mobility choices and vibrant, healthy neighborhoods, we are writing to provide comments for how UC San Diego can improve mobility for the university of which we are variously alumni and currently enrolled.

We appreciate that the Transportation Services Department is soliciting input from the campus community through their [IdeaWave platform](#), about how to address the University's various transportation needs. While the initial request for public input appears to be focused on the supply, pricing, and location of parking, car storage exists as a component, and consequence, of the broader campus transportation ecosystem.

We are submitting this letter to suggest a variety of other non-car tools that can be used to minimize the need for new parking, and to provide cheaper, faster, more convenient, and more environmentally friendly alternatives to adding more car traffic within and around UC San Diego. Improving non-car transportation choices will help achieve UC San Diego's [Climate Action Plan](#),¹ and the UC System's [Carbon Neutrality Initiative](#).² As UCSD is one of the region's largest commute generators, improvements to non-car transportation choices will also help the City of San Diego reach the ambitious goals outlined in its own [Climate Action Plan](#).³ As an important employer and center of excellence in the region, UC San Diego has an opportunity to lead by example on smart transportation choices.

¹ UC San Diego, Climate Action Plan (December 2008), available at http://sustainability.ucsd.edu/files/UCSD_Climate_Action_Plan_12-08.pdf.

² UC Office of the Presidency, Carbon Neutrality Initiative web page, available at <http://ucop.edu/initiatives/carbon-neutrality-initiative.html>.

³ City of San Diego, Climate Action Plan (December 2015), available at <https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/genplan/cap>.

I. Parking Alone is not the Answer

Looking ahead, simply adding new on-campus parking or lowering prices will do little to alleviate congestion or reduce commuters' stress levels. Increased supply of such auto-centric infrastructure leads to increased driving until travel times are as long as before, if not worse. Not only do such projects fail to improve the driving experience, but they also reduce the attractiveness of alternative options as bike lanes are removed to accommodate more cars, buses become stuck in traffic and lose riders due to unreliability, and pedestrians become much more vulnerable to collisions. This problem, which we frequently encounter as part of our work, is known as induced demand.

Better multi-modal access to the campus would go a long way towards improving regional connectivity. We are very encouraged by recent campus-area transportation improvements such as upgrades to MTS bus services, construction of the Gilman Transit Center, and opening of bike paths west of Library Walk and along Hopkins Lane. The opening of the Mid-Coast Trolley Extension later this decade will further diversify the methods students, faculty, staff, and visitors use to access campus.

II. Prior Planning Work at UC San Diego

Fortunately, UC San Diego already examined a variety of tools and projects that can further improve transportation to and around campus.

UC San Diego recently completed a [Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Planning Study](#) in 2012 ("2012 Study")⁴ which details a variety of projects to help improve connectivity for the campus.

The 2012 Study showed that if campus bicycle and pedestrian combined modal share were increased to just 15% (still a far cry from other UC campuses such as Santa Barbara and Davis, which have combined modal shares of around 50%) parking demand would be reduced by 1,370 spots. This reduction would save approximately \$27.5 million. Campus-generated Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) would be reduced by 9,000 miles daily, or 1.62 million miles annually, reducing the campus's carbon footprint by 1.25 million pounds per year.⁵

⁴ UC San Diego, Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Planning Study (2012), available at <http://physicalplanning.ucsd.edu/plans/bike.html>.

⁵ Assuming there are 20 "school days" in a month and that the number of student commutes is relatively low in the June – August time frame, then it is probably safe to say that there are 9 months per year with heavy student commuting. So 9 months x 20 days = 180 commuting days. 180 commuting days x 9,000 miles/day = 1,620,000 VMT reduction. A very impressive number! One could even place a CO₂ value on that reduction. The average US vehicle gets 25.3 mpg. (University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, Monthly monitoring of vehicle fuel economy and emissions (April 4, 2016), available at http://www.umich.edu/~umtriswt/EDI_sales-weighted-mpg.html.) 1.62 million divided by 25.3 = 64,032 gallons of gasoline. One gallon of gasoline yields 19.6 lbs of CO₂ when burned. (U.S. Energy Information Administration, How much carbon dioxide is produced by burning gasoline and diesel fuel? (July 7, 2015), available at <http://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.cfm?id=307&t=11>.) So a VMT reduction of 1.62 million would yield a GHG reduction of 1.25 million lbs of CO₂ per year (64,032 gallons of gas not burned x 19.6 lbs CO₂ per gallon = 1,255,027 lbs).

Active Transportation planner Sam Corbett's [presentation](#) at UC San Diego's 2008 Sustainability Conference⁶ discussed a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program that laid out even more ambitious goals, aiming to reduce parking demand by 4,300 spaces by 2020. This would help the university accommodate increasing enrollment without constructing new parking structures that take up space better used for other endeavors.

Corbett's same presentation shows that the percentage of UC San Diego commuters that access the campus by single-occupant automobiles declined every year but one between 2001 and 2008. This shows that UC San Diego can successfully provide access to campus by non-car modes.

III. Recommendations

We have considered several important steps to help accomplish better non-car transportation choices, summarized below. Given the rapid development occurring near the university this is by no means an exhaustive list. Many of these improvements would require participation from the City of San Diego and local transit agencies, and UC San Diego cannot implement them alone. Nonetheless, the university can and should engage these local entities as appropriate.

a. Separate rights-of-way for pedestrians, bikes, and cars:

Despite completion of some projects listed in the 2012 Study, on-campus dedicated bike rights-of-way are few and far between. This means that almost all bicyclists have to either share lanes with cars or thread their way through crowds of walkers, which is especially hazardous between classes. Some of the bicycle projects in the 2012 Study that have not been built for aesthetic or other reasons could be reexamined and implemented.

While some of the major walkways are closed to bikes during peak times, there are no policies preventing pedestrians from using thoroughfares intended to be for bikes (such as the new Class I paths west of Library Walk), increasing the risk of collisions. San Diego State has developed a potentially more effective solution, with portions of main campus thoroughfares clearly striped for bikes.

⁶ Sam Corbett, Presentation at UC San Diego 2008 Sustainability Conference, "If You Build It – They May Not Come! - How to advance sustainable transportation AND save your campus \$50 million," available at <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/circulatesd/pages/465/attachments/original/1460405092/Aug2930TransportationCorbett.ppt?1460405092>.



San Diego State painted bike lanes on its major campus thoroughfares (above left), a solution UC San Diego should consider on heavily used routes such as Ridge Walk (above right).

UC San Diego can also work with the City of San Diego and MTS to improve infrastructure leading into the campus. Cycling and pedestrian infrastructure in surrounding neighborhoods, especially the UTC area east of I-5, also has a lot of room for improvement as the current, auto-dominated environment discourages students from biking to campus. San Diego's Bicycle Master Plan includes new or extended bike lanes on La Jolla Village Drive, Villa La Jolla Drive, Nobel Drive, and Gilman Drive. The university should encourage local officials to prioritize these projects.⁷ Bus lanes could be explored on some of the wider streets such as La Jolla Village Drive, Genesee Avenue, and Nobel Drive, ensuring traffic congestion does not delay riders and make them late to class.

Additionally, university officials could work with DecoBike, San Diego's bikeshare system, to install stations on and near campus, giving students the option to bike to and from school without incurring the expense of purchasing a bicycle or worrying about theft and maintenance. Bikeshare systems also give cyclists additional flexibility, as they can easily ride a bike in one direction but use a different transportation mode when heading the other way in situations such as bad weather, hilly terrain, or darkness.

b. Improve connectivity between graduate student housing and campus:

A large apartment complex for graduate students, One Miramar Street/Mesa Housing, is located across I-5 from the main campus. The only entrance and exit for users of all transportation modes is located on the far (East) side, forcing any pedestrians or cyclists to take a circuitous route.

There is currently no bike lane on La Jolla Village Dr. There is a school-operated shuttle serving the

⁷ San Diego Bicycle Master Plan (Northern Area), available at https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/planning/programs/transportation/mobility/pdf/6_1_proposed_network_n1.pdf

complex, but it operates on weekdays only and according to word of mouth is slow and unreliable, likely due to its indirect route utilizing congested roads. (Andy Furillo, one of the co-authors of this letter, decided to live at a private complex on Gilman Drive with much better transit access and a bike lane to campus, but at the cost of much higher rent that includes an unused bundled parking spot).

On the side of the complex facing campus (West) there is a steep, unlit path leading down to La Jolla Village Drive, but there are numerous signs stating that it is illegal for pedestrians to use this route (nevertheless, some students do). This path was slated for upgrades in the 2012 Plan, but the changes have yet to be implemented. If a stairway were constructed close to where the path is now, and a bus stop built at the bottom of it (several MTS routes already run down La Jolla Village Dr.), access to campus would be much easier for residents and it is likely fewer students would drive.

c. Work with MTS to ease overcrowding on the SuperLoop bus routes (201/202):

It is not uncommon for these buses to skip stops because they are too crowded, likely causing some students to buy cars and drive. Use of articulated buses on the route this year has helped, but during peak times service is still problematic. This likely gives many students who were raised in the suburbs and are riding the bus for the first time a negative perception of transit, encouraging them to become car commuters.

The Mid-Coast Trolley will provide a new option for some students but will probably also bring additional passengers that will transfer from the trolley to the buses, meaning SuperLoop ridership will remain very high and could potentially even increase after the new line opens.

A public education campaign encouraging students to make more room for other riders (buses have been observed to skip stops when packed in the front, though fairly empty at the back) would be beneficial. Increased service frequencies and/or a new school shuttle route that would provide an alternative to the SuperLoop for some riders may be needed as well.

d. Subsidize transit for faculty and staff:

The system-wide transit pass for students introduced in 2014 is very successful, as can be seen by the high bus ridership in the campus area. Similar benefits for faculty and staff would help diversify their commute options. Such a program, which the university proposed in 2008,⁸ would not only make it easier and more enjoyable for employees to access campus, but would likely be cheaper than constructing new parking to accommodate existing transportation demand.⁹ If university employees try transit and have a positive experience, they may be motivated not just to commute by bus or train but to consider these options in their personal lives as well, further reducing their carbon footprint.

e. Start a “Safe Routes to Campus” initiative:

Since every student or employee’s transportation pattern is unique, input from the campus community is vital to improving connectivity in the campus area. Surveying or polling students and employees

⁸ UC San Diego Guardian, “Officials Weigh Parking Options” (January 21, 2008), available at <http://ucsdguardian.org/2008/01/21/officials-weigh-parking-options>.

⁹ See Streets Blog, “True Story: Buying Transit Passes Is Cheaper Than Building Garages” (Marcy 24, 2016), available at <http://www.streetsblog.net/2016/03/24/true-story-buying-transit-passes-is-cheaper-than-building-garages>.

regarding locations and corridors where additional active transportation or transit infrastructure would be most beneficial (rather than just asking about parking) and encouraging them to try non-automobile modes would help maximize the efficacy of projects chosen for implementation. Similar programs are common and successful around schools and school districts, in “Safe Routes to School” efforts.¹⁰

f. Improve connectivity between Sorrento Valley Station and campus:

Located less than a mile from the north end of campus, this rail station is served by the Coaster as well as three daily Amtrak Pacific Surfliner trains in each direction. The Amtrak trains primarily serve the station in the evening at times when the Coaster does not operate.

The rail lines serving the station serve as an important commute artery from North County, and are also heavily used by students visiting family or friends in other parts of the state on weekends and holiday breaks. However, currently the only transit provided between the station and campus is a university-operated shuttle line that runs on a circuitous route, meaning that even if on schedule it can take as long as 20 minutes to reach its final destination despite the short distance. The shuttles only operate during the day on workdays and connect to Coaster trains only, cutting off access to the station on nights, weekends, and holidays. The area around the station is dark and desolate at night. The only direct bicycle route involves a hazardous stretch on the shoulder of I-5, and pedestrian infrastructure connecting the station to campus is non-existent.

SANDAG’s 2050 Regional Transportation Plan includes a Class I bike path parallel to the freeway that will help alleviate this problem (mentioned in the 2012 Study), but the hilly terrain will continue to serve as a deterrent to many riders.

University officials should work with the city and SANDAG to maximize the benefits of the station’s close proximity. SANDAG is currently exploring the possibility of constructing an aerial tram that will connect the station with the UTC neighborhood and Sorrento Mesa. If the campus were to be connected to such infrastructure, many commuters from North County and points north would be encouraged to try transportation modes other than driving.

g. Work with the city to reduce minimum parking requirements for neighborhoods adjacent to campus:

Currently, San Diego’s municipal code mandates higher parking minimums for residential complexes and businesses in “college areas” than in other neighborhoods. For UCSD, the raised requirements are in effect for not just zones adjacent to campus, but the entire UTC neighborhood, despite this area being relatively well-served by transit. Thus, developers and business owners are forced to construct additional parking spots, the cost of which is frequently bundled into students’ rent or living costs.

This policy encourages students and other residents to bring cars to school (and to own more cars than they would otherwise), increasing both neighborhood traffic congestion and demand for on-campus parking beyond what the free market would naturally generate. If these minimums were reduced,

¹⁰ See Caltrans, Safe Routes to School Program webpage, available at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/saferoutes/saferoutes.htm>.

access via other transportation modes would become easier and commuters to campus would feel less need to own cars or drive them.

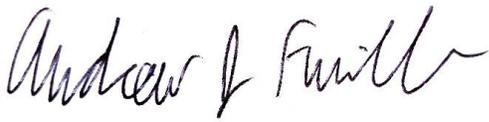
IV. Conclusion

While the UC San Diego campus will likely always require car parking, the solution to more access to campus is not storage for more cars. Instead, achieving the climate goals for the campus, the UC system, and the City of San Diego, will require refocusing transportation planning toward non-car modes. The best way to facilitate easier and more affordable access to campus is to prioritize options other than the automobile, allowing commuters to use the transportation mode they prefer, while also reducing the university's carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions.

UC San Diego is a beacon for excellence not just in the academic world, but as a unique and influential institution for San Diego. Action by UC San Diego on smart transportation choices will be recognized for its regional leadership and followed by others in San Diego.

Thank you for your time. We would be happy to hear any comments about methods you feel could help improve our ideas, as well as any other suggestions. We look forward to working with you further.

Sincerely,



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