

## Hofweber, Tom

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**From:** Chris Rall [cjr16@humboldt.edu]  
**Date:** Monday, March 12, 2007 10:44 AM  
**To:** Hofweber, Tom  
**Subject:** General Plan Comments (Energy Element)

Hi Tom,

I submitted this on the planning commission website, but it appears that email will not be checked again until the 20th, which is after the public hearing this Thursday.

-Chris

Dear Humboldt County Planning Commission,

I would like to comment on the draft Energy Element in Humboldt County General Plan. I would like to urge the adoption of "Alternative A." As a coastal community, we are vulnerable to higher intensity storms and sea level rise made possible by increases in global temperature resulting from burning of fossil fuels. Natural gas production in North America is declining, and declines in world oil production are on the horizon. We need to move aggressively to achieve a greater degree of sustainable energy security. Some additional comments follow.

I could find no mention of wave energy in the draft Energy Element. Wave energy represents great potential for electricity generation in our county. It compliments solar electric generation well because it is a relatively consistent source, and strong in the winter when there is less potential for solar generation. PG&E has already begun work on this in our area. We need to support wave generation development that does not adversely impact the environment.

Transportation is the most important sector to address with regard to energy. It represents the largest chunk of energy use. While electricity is generated from a variety of sources, our transportation system is less flexible because virtually all vehicles run on oil-derived fuels. It is also arguable that this is the most inefficient sector, with occupants regularly using vehicles well over ten times their weight, thus requiring ten times the energy to move the passenger. Our car-based transportation infrastructure is expensive to build and maintain, and car ownership and use is expensive for citizens. For these reasons, it is important that we address transportation as part of the energy element, and integrate transportation policy with our energy goals.

Below are comments on important transportation provisions in the draft energy element:

### E-P15 Transportation Management Plans

Staff comments that it does not clearly define which developments would be required to submit transportation plans. This should be defined and this provision should be included, since it has great potential to redirect our development to be less car-dependent.

### E-P17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity

Staff remarks that this is included in trails planning. Trails planning does not include sidewalks, and road widening to incorporate bike lanes are this is more feasible than trails. An example would be 255 between Eureka and Arcata, which could be inexpensively widened to add bike lanes using a combination of county and CalTrans funds. Instead, this road has remained narrow and hazardous, deterring potential

Manila-Arcata bicycle commuters, while discussion of a Eureka-Arcata trail drags on for years.

E-P18. Inclusion of Bicycle Facilities.

E-P19. Community design planning.

E-P20. Transit-oriented development.

Staff comments say E-P18 is included in the circulation element. Staff comments that E-P19 is included in trail planning. Staff comments that E-P20 is incorporated in the Land Use and Circulation Elements. None of these plans is yet available on planupdate.org. Transportation is an energy issue, so if the Land Use and Circulation Elements, and trail planning are where these provisions must be placed, then our energy element goals must be addressed in those elements.

E-P21. Energy conservation efforts in transit.

E-P22. Telecommunication systems.

Staff comment is that these provisions are already included in the Comprehensive Action Plan for Energy. Googling for this document reveals only the staff comment on this Energy Element and not what it refers to. A more clear explanation of this staff comment would be appreciated.

Many of the improvements to transit which E-P21 proposes already exist: bike racks on buses, bike racks at bus stops, and inter-modal transit facilities. Alternative fuel fleets will be necessary, but what we need in the near term, is improvement in the frequency and speed of our regional service, and improvement in coordination with local transit services to provide more efficient service so ridership is not limited to those who have no other choice. One way toward that end is to investigate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for the Humboldt Bay Area. BRT is a system that provides many of the benefits of rail transit, such as fast reliable service, but is much cheaper, and easier to implement in phases. It works by providing dedicated lanes, traffic signal priority and / or queue jumping to keep buses from getting stuck in traffic. Existing freeways can be used for non-congested parts of the route. Stations are spaced far enough apart to assure fast travel times. Ticket purchase before boarding and platform-level entry and exit are sometimes incorporated to shorten stop times.

City Transit Services such as Arcata and Mad River Transit Service (A&MRTS) and Eureka Transit Service (ETS) should be better coordinated with RTS, distributing and collecting passengers out of and into the RTS system. Coordination between city and regional bus service should be built upon with the development of BRT. Passenger payment should be better coordinated, allowing for discounts on transfers, and cooperative agreements to develop a universal bus pass good on multiple transit services.

Improving internet connectivity, and encouraging telecommuting will benefit energy conservation and our economy.

Thank you for reading and considering these comments. I appreciate your hard work on this important document.

Sincerely,  
Chris Rall

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Christopher J. Rall  
707.826.9175  
HSU Green Wheels  
<http://www.humboldt.edu/~wheels>  
HSU Wildlife  
<http://www.humboldt.edu/~wigs>