Dear City Council,

I am a member of the BPAC, but would like to comment as an individual on item 6.1 Active transportation plan scoring criteria.

My concerns are:

1) You are being asked to evaluate a scoring rubric without seeing it in action, e.g. seeing how a sample of (e.g. recent or in-progress) projects, which you are familiar with, would be scored.
2) The scores are independent of project feasibility (e.g. cost, funding availability), which jeopardizes the ability of the city to deliver on its priorities.
3) The people who are defining the projects are also the ones who are scoring them.
4) While the ATP combines the previous bicycle and pedestrian plans, the scoring criteria allocate just 7.5 points for completing the all-ages and abilities bike network, but 42.5 for pedestrian-oriented criteria.

I'll elaborate on each of these in turn

1) Having been on a scoring committee for 2016 Measure B active transportation planning grants, I learned that scoring can have unexpected results, e.g. many projects scoring similarly, with one differentiating category having unexpected importance as a result, even if that category did not have a lot of points. But this was not clear until the first round of projects were scored, and I believe the points were readjusted for the next cycle. The cycle there is 2 years. If the city won't have a chance to readjust the rubric for another 5 years (or maybe until the next ATP?), is it really wise to blindly adopt a scoring rubric without seeing how it plays out for recent projects that are familiar? The scoring criteria here are substantially different from the criteria in the previous ped and bike plans, and also different from e.g. the scoring rubric for 2016 Measure B ATP planning funding. Meaning that I don't think we've seen this combination, with these details, applied to ATP projects before.

2) The prior pedestrian plan had, as part of its scoring rubric, a feasibility category. I believe this (or something outside of the scoring rubric, but that would still have the effect of getting stuff done) is needed given the city's slow track record of implementing projects, even prioritized ones (see e.g. the 2015 bicycle plan's list). Recently, the VTA BPAC reviewed a complete streets project that had a large funding gap. I asked the project lead what made the project so expensive, and they said something to the effect of "Paint and flexposts are cheap. Changing surface levels and green elements are expensive." So I don't think that the scoring criteria

have no fiscal impact, as the memo states. Perhaps the overall ATP budget allocation will not change, but the cost of the projects might.

There should be a discount function for when we get active transportation infrastructure. If it's a perfect piece of infrastructure but due to cost we don't get it until 2035, well, that's 5 years past the vision zero deadline, and 10 years into the 20 years we have given ourselves to become a carbon-neutral city. In the meantime, people are risking their lives trying to get places without a car, and lots of car-emitted CO_2 is warming the planet for another 10 years.

3) It seems that all projects should add green elements to the extent permitted by space and budget. But if this is not done (e.g. green elements are not added to a project even though they could be), then it seems like ranking can be changed at the discretion of staff, which is not necessarily bad, but just confusing.

4) I count 42.5 points that are anchored on utility primarily to pedestrians:

Pedestrian

points	name	comment
10	Supports school children	limited to a short 5 to 10 minute walking radius centered at the school, and would not e.g. award a Rengstorff improvement points because it provides access to Los Altos High School by bicycle (even though many high schoolers use it for this).
10	Supports other key destinations	5-minute walk or fronts the destination
5	First and last mile connection	5-to-10 minute walk
7.5	Fills a gap in existing sidewalk network	primarily pedestrian, though bicycles could sometimes use sidewalks in a pinch
5	Improves pedestrian network density	block length less important for bikes
5	reduces pedestrian crossing distance	sometimes helpful to bikes via slowing cars down due to smaller curb radius, but primarily a ped improvement

total: 42.5

primarily bicycle or scooter

7.5	Fills a gap in All Ages and Abilities (AAA) bicycle network	

total: 7.5

A factor of five (42.5 vs. 7.5) seems like a big imbalance in theory. It could be that once penciled out on sample projects it would turn out that projects that score highly for the pedestrian-oriented criteria also nearly equally benefit bicyclists, because e.g. the project might include a segment within 0.25 mile of transit, but extend 1 mile, which helps bicycles for that full mile, etc., but I think this is all the more reason to see the scoring criteria in action before giving them a stamp of approval.

Finally, I find that the emphasis on scoring and ranking fits a piecemeal approach, but the overall goal of the plan is to provide a connected active transportation *network*. The cities that have seen huge gains in bicycling (like Paris and Seville), did so at a fraction of the per-mile cost of Mountain View's projects, by building out a network in a short period of time. The Mountain View projects that in my view have made the biggest difference per cost to pedestrians improved our pedestrian network overall: putting in lead-pedestrian intervals at traffic lights, four-way stop intersections close to schools, repainting close-to-school crosswalks, (hopefully) no right turn on red at dangerous intersections etc. These seem to happen almost under (my) radar, and I'm not sure that they all show up as big projects to be ranked against others. Calderon is an example of an under-the-radar bike lane project that I've observed having a positive impact on biking, even though I don't think it qualifies as an AAA facility.

We might come up with a very fine list of ranked projects, and maybe even a few of them will be implemented, but what could we do if we had an equivalent budget of $(?) and asked staff to use it most effectively to make the city as walkable and bikeable as possible, as soon as possible? I know that grant applications for state and federal funds, etc., make a build-the-network approach complicated, but I look at ATT 1, Map of Community Concerns Related to Active Transportation, and I see a finite set of roads in red, and I think, "Let's just do it! Let's complete these streets and be done with the bare minimum we need to do. California St and El Camino are getting done this year, just a few streets left!"

In short, I don't think the city should adopt a scoring scheme without seeing even one prior project scored, and I think it is important to not lose sight (in all the fun of ranking and prioritizing) of the need to build an ATP network *soon*, whether that is incorporated into the scoring criteria or by other means.

Thanks for reading!

Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

Wanted to share a few comments sine I won't be able to attend your meeting on Tuesday.

I was pleased with the most recent active transportation scoring criteria (to rank the top corridors and to rank the safety corridors) as both were based on hard onjective data (demographics for equity and crash/collision data for safety priorities. I am not as pleased with some of the fuzzy criteria introduced in this latest formula:

1. " Addresses community concerns" up to 10%. This seems based on a community feedback density map. The underlying data is biased. As a frequent commenter myself,I know that folks providing such feedback are not very diverse in terms of demographics. I also don't believe comments were limited to Mountain View residents. I personally don't think we should use biased and subjective data n the scoring criteria. It could for instance offset the up to 15% objective criteria in support of lower income residents

2. Supports school children up to 10%
The current criteria would effectively exclude the thousands of Mountain View kids attending public schools in Los Altos (Los Altos School District residents and Los Altos High School students). I feel that the criteria should also apply on projects that remove or attenuate the barriers on routes to school For example, Rengstorff Grade separation as the tracks are a major barrier for Los Altos High School students or improvements on San Antonio/Showers or improvements on just about El Camino Real crossing or close to my home improvements on El Monte.

3. Improves first-/lastmile connection to transit
First the criteria is within 5mn or 10mn walking distance. Except for many some olympian speed walkers, this doesn't equate to 1 mile :) Average time for walking a mile is probably more like 20mn (more if you take into account the interminable delays waiting for a green crossing signal :)).
Second, the last criteria: "Project is within a 10-minute walk (0.5 mile) of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor" should define what are the major transit stops in Mountain View. Also it doesn't help to get to a high quality transit corridor ....if the transit stop is another 30mn away.

4. Sustainability and Biodiversity (10%)
 I support the goal and think that every project should be as sustainable and biodiverse as possible. It should be a mandate for every project but don't think it should be in the scoring criteria as unlike other criteria it's not an existing condition but more a function of the project design. In other words, you would be assigning a lower priority to a project when the City failed to design it with sustainability and biodiversity in mind. That's even more problematic if you applied that criteria to older projects that might have already have been designed and/or budgeted without that requirement.

Finally, I am confused with how that scoring criteria might be used. According to the staff report:

"Should Council approve the recommended scoring criteria, staff will develop a list of projects based on prior plans, existing conditions analysis, community input, and staff evaluation. These projects will then be prioritized using the scoring criteria to create a project priorities list."

This risks reshuffling yet again the priorities for projects that have been delayed a few times already (El Monte Corridor for instance). It would also seem unfair to "ding" older projects because they hadn't been designed or budgeted by the City to meet the Sustainability and Biodiversity rubrique.

Sincerely,

Serge Bonte