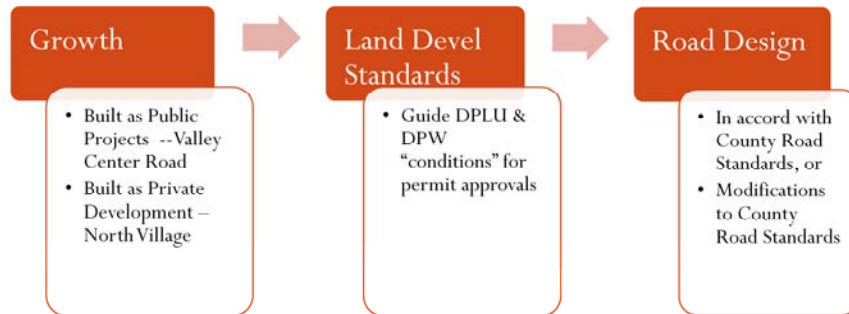
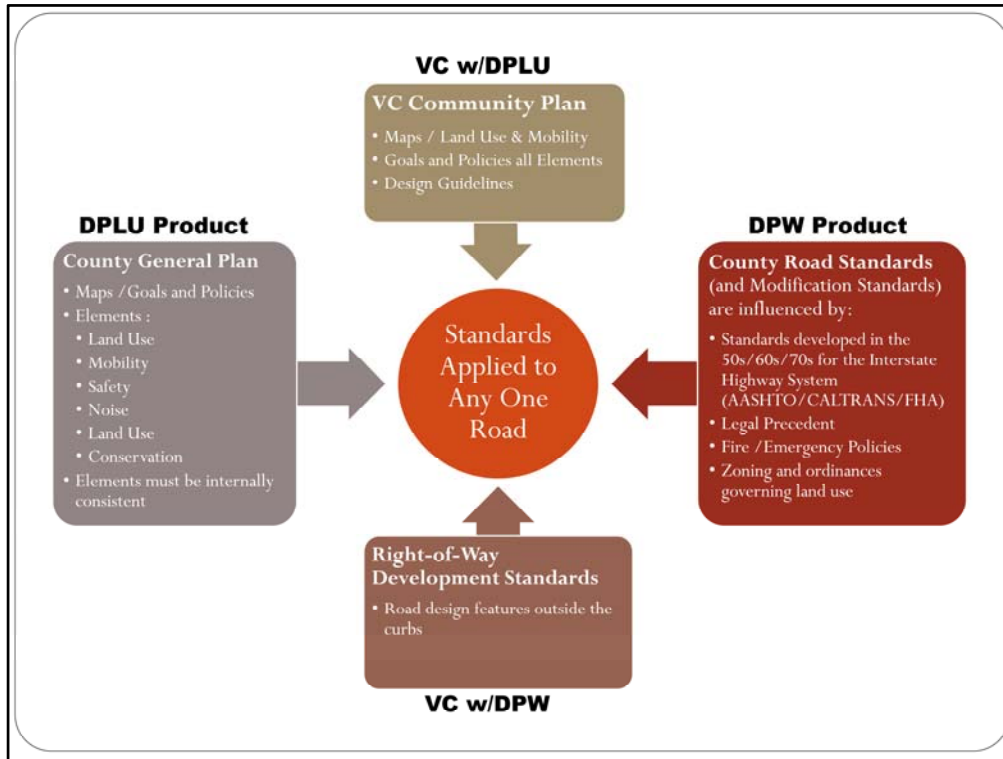


This is a brief explanation about how roads come to be built in Valley Center.

How Do Roads Happen?



Roads in Valley Center are improved, or built initially, in one of two ways. Most roads nowadays are built by private development – as part of the residential, or commercial project. The County requires as a condition of granting a building permit that the developer construct or improve roads to handle the traffic being generated by the development. The idea is that development should pay for the infrastructure that is necessary to support it. Public road projects are the second way that roads are built. Valley Center Road is an example of a County Capital Improvement Project. Public projects are funded in a number of different ways and initiated by the County. Roads are built to engineering and design standards that are assembled by the County Department of Public Works (DPW). Road Standards can be modified to accommodate special situations. For example, Valley Center Road has been built to slightly modified standards; the travel lanes are a bit narrower than the standard for a major road.



Design and engineering standards that are applied to a particular road are determined by the Department of Public Works and the Department of Land Use based on a number of different criteria that originate in different places. General regulations combine with some local preferences to come up with the final design of the road. Land development is governed by the County General Plan. County Road Standards come from the Department of Public Works (DPW). In addition to the published County Public Road Standards, there are allowable modifications to the plain vanilla standards. County Road Standards come from federal and state road standards, all of which were developed in the 1950s-1970s during the expansion of the Interstate highway System.

Community Planning Areas, such as the Valley Center Community Planning Area, also have developed design guidelines and standards for their own areas. The Valley Center Community Plan and the Valley Center Design Guidelines both contain descriptions of design features that the community prefers. For instance, most roads in Valley Center are meant to have rolled asphalt curbs, or no curbs, instead of concrete curbs, and drainage swales instead of gutters. Communities can also develop their own design standards for the areas of the public right-of-way that are OUTSIDE the curbs. Community Right-of-Way Development Standards apply to things like designs for landscaping, street lights, and benches.

Current County Road Standards

Automobile Focused

- Auto capacity-based without other criteria.

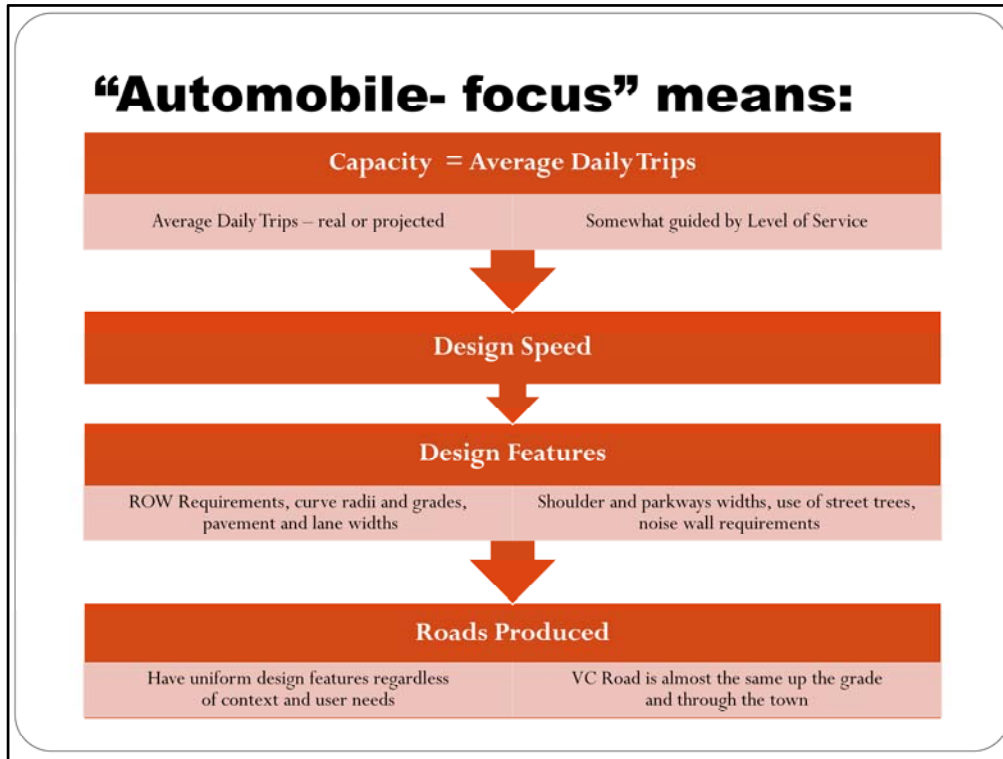
At the Expense of Other Users

- Pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, community activities

Ignores Differences of Context

- Village, semi-rural, rural
- Local character
- Historical references

County Road Standards concentrate on moving automobiles from one place to another as quickly as possible. Until recently many jurisdictions shared the idea that roads are for cars – at the expense of other users of roads, such as cyclists and pedestrians. This thinking is changing in many parts of the country, and in many other jurisdictions, such as CALTRANS and the Federal Highway system. New thinking begins with the idea that roads are PUBLIC PLACES. Therefore, road design needs to vary in different places depending on the areas that roads traverse, and the activities of different people who are using them. Road standards need to be more varied and flexible.



When we say that road standards are “automobile focused” this means that road design options neglect other users. For example, road design pretty much begins with what engineers call the “design speed” of a road. The design speed is determined by the number of automobiles the road needs to handle, and a set of assumptions that have been around since the 1950s that connect faster speeds to higher volume. Once the design speed has been determined, that “metric” and the assumptions that go-along with it determine all of the other design features of the road, such as the curve radii, line of sight requirements, degrees of grade, lane widths, shoulder widths and so forth. In San Diego County, design features do not vary within road categories – no matter what the surrounding area is. For example, Valley Center Road is a major road. The road design up the grade (where there are no businesses, cross-streets or driveways to turn into) is the same as the design through town where fast traffic makes it very difficult to pull into local businesses, your cross street or driveway.

The design speed also hooks into other ordinances that determine how the road edge will look. For example, trees are prohibited along the edges of roads where the design speed is greater than 40 mph; and, noise ordinances require the construction of sound wall barriers along roads that generate noise levels greater than a certain level. Because sound is a function of speed and volume together, the design speed of a road determines whether your community’s streets will be lined with walls.

Example: Valley Center Road

Design Speed = 55 mph

- Roads are built to be “safe” at 10-15 mph above the design speed
- Drivers travel at speeds that “feel safe” – established by the physical characteristics of the road
- Long term speed limits are established by the 85% rule: speed limit is set at what 85% of drivers drive

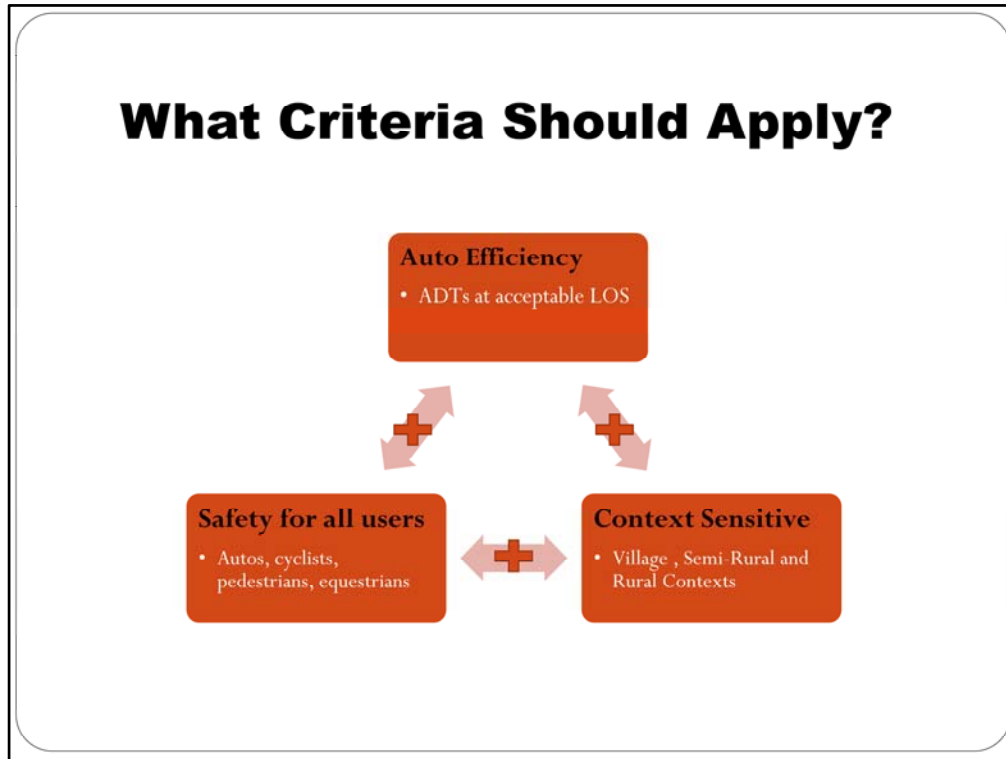


- Noise = 82 DcB – mitigation required at 60
- No trees in ROW above 40 mph

Studies show that the physical characteristics of a road are what make drivers feel comfortable at a particular speed. A wide, straight road (like a freeway) feels safe at a high rate of speed. A narrow curving road feels safe at much slower speeds. A road built to a design speed of, say, 55 mph, is built to feel safe (and be safe) at speeds 10-15 mph faster than that. This is why a lot of drivers are travelling on Valley center Road at 60-70 mph. Valley Center Road is built to a design speed of 55 mph.

Long term speed limits are established by what is known as the “85% rule.” This means that the speed limit is set, by law, at the speed which 85% of the cars are travelling when the survey is taken. Because the road has been designed to make drivers feel comfortable at 55-70 mph, most drivers drive at those speeds.

What Criteria Should Apply?



Critics of current road standards argue that automobile efficiency is important, and that other things are also important. Road standards should also ensure the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. And they should also be sensitive to the variety of different contexts that they traverse. For instance, Valley Center Road UP THE GRADE should be a faster road than Valley Center Road through town. Through town, critics say, traffic should be slower so that pedestrians can cross safely, and so that drivers can SEE local businesses, cross roads and driveways and turn safely into them.

Context Sensitive Roads

- Road design varies depending on context and uses

Examples of village roads – commercial and residential



Examples of semi-rural and rural roads



How Do We Decide What We Need?

Flexible, Comprehensive
County Road Standards

- Efficiency and safe for all users in a variety of contexts

Applied wisely in our
Mobility Element

- Knowledge of implications of noise mitigations, landscaping limitations, aesthetics

Detailed in our local
planning documents

- Community Plan, Design Guidelines, Community ROW Development standards

Enforced

- DPLU, DPW
- Planning Group, Design Review Board

When we think about roads in Valley Center it's important to think about all the different contexts we have here, and to think about what we want different roads to be in different places. These ideas should be incorporated into the documents that govern development in Valley Center. It is the job of the Valley Center Planning Group and the Valley Center Design Review Board, and the County, to make sure that our planning documents are upheld when development takes places.

Next Steps...

County Road Standards

- Planning Commission and BOS to review and approve
- Summer 09

Write VC Community Plan

- Coordinate land use with mobility goals, policies, vision.
- Maps – designations, classifications
- Now - Fall 2009

Public Comment – EIR

- Review impacts of land use options to VC roads
- Summer 2009

Community ROW Development Standards

- Design features outside the curb
- Fall/Winter 2009

Valley Center is right now in the middle of a very large project to rewrite our Community Plan, and our Design Guidelines, and to prepare our own Community Right-of-Way Development Standards. You can get involved in these projects by contacting the Valley Center Planning Group, or the Valley Center Design Review Board.