APPENDIX B

Traffic Level of Service Calculation Methods

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Level of service (LOS) is a term used to qualitatively describe the operating conditions of a roadway based on factors such as speed, travel time, maneuverability, delay, and safety. The level of service of a facility is designated with a letter, A to F, with A representing the best operating conditions and F the worst.

There are many methods available to calculate the levels of service for the various types of roadways and intersections that comprise San Mateo County's designated system for the 1997 Congestion Management Program (CMP). The components of the 1997 CMP Roadway System include freeways, such as U.S. 101 and I-280; multilane highways; two-lane highways, such as State Route 1 (SR 1), south of Linda Mar; major arterials, such as SR 82 (El Camino Real); and major intersections. Operational analyses of specific weaving sections and ramp junctions have not been included in the 1995 CMP but may be added for subsequent CMPs.

AB 471 and AB 1963, the CMP legislation, require that methods of calculating levels of service defined either by the latest version of the *Highway Capacity Manual* (HCM) or by the Transportation Research Board's *Circular 212* be used for the analysis of CMP roadways. The latest update to the HCM published in 1994 specifies level of service methods for freeways, multilane highways, two-lane highways, arterials, freeway weaving sections, ramp junctions, signalized intersections, and unsignalized intersections. The TRB's *Circular 212* describes methods for signalized and unsignalized intersections.

The level of service (LOS) calculation methods found in the 1994 HCM for freeways, multilane highways, two-lane highways, and arterials and the calculation for signalized intersections based on TRB's *Circular 212* method are described in this appendix.

Level of Service Calculation Methods

The methods selected to calculate levels of service for the roadway (freeway, multilane highway, two-lane highway, and arterial) segments and intersections included in the CMP network are described below:

Freeways

A freeway is defined as a divided highway facility with two or more lanes in each direction and full control of access and egress. It has no intersections; access and egress are provided by ramps at interchanges.

According to the latest version of the *Highway Capacity Manual* (1994 HCM), the LOS of freeway segments is based on the density of vehicles, expressed in passenger cars per mile per lane. The LOS can also be evaluated with volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratios, average travel

speeds, and maximum service flow rates. The specific LOS criteria for freeways are presented in Table B-1. Illustrations of the various levels of service are presented on Figure B-1.

The selected LOS method for freeway segments is based on calculating V/C ratios for each direction of travel, wherein the traffic volume for each segment is divided by the capacity of the segment. The volumes are obtained from counts for existing conditions or from a travel forecasting model for future conditions. The capacity is estimated as the number of lanes multiplied by 2,200 vehicles per hour per lane four four-lane freeway segments and 2,300 vehicles per hour per lane for segments with six or more lanes. The V/C ratios are calculated and related to LOS based on the relationships presented in Table B-1.

Another method of calculating a freeway segment's level of service is to determine the average travel speed from floating car runs. Descriptions of the average travel speeds for each LOS designation are also presented in Table B-1.

Multilane Highways

Multilane highways generally have posted speed limits of between 40 and 55 miles per hour (mph). They usually have four or six lanes, often with physical medians or two-way left-turn lane medians, although they may also be undivided (have no median). Unlike freeways, multilane highways are interrupted by intersections or driveways.

The level of service criteria for multilane highways are similar to the criteria for freeways. The specific criteria from the HCM are presented in Table B-2. The LOS calculation method is identical to the calculation method for freeways. The only difference is the range of V/Cs and speeds for each LOS designation. The maximum ideal lane capacity for a multilane highway segment is 2,200 vehicles per hour.

Two-Lane Highways

A two-lane highway is defined as a two-lane roadway with one lane for use by traffic in each direction. Passing of slower vehicles requires use of the opposing lane. As volumes or geometric constraints increase, the ability to pass decreases and platoons of vehicles are formed. The delay experienced by motorists also increases. The LOS for two-lane highways is based on mobility. The specific LOS criteria from the 1994 HCM are presented in Table B-3.

For two-lane highways, the selected method, based on V/Cs, takes into account the volume in both directions. The total volume is divided by the total capacity of 2,800 vehicles per hour. The corresponding V/C is correlated to a LOS based on the V/C ranges in Table B-3. Average travel speeds for each LOS designation are also presented in this table.

Table B-1

1994 HCM Level of Service Criteria for Basic Freeway Sections

	70 mph Free-Flow Speed				65 mph Free-Flow Speed				60 mph Free-Flow Speed			
LOS	Density[a] (pc/mi/ln)	Speed[b] (mph)	Maximum[c] V/C	MSF[d] (pcphpl)	Density[a] (pc/mi/ln)	Speed[b] (mph)	Maximum[c] V/C	MSF[d] (pcphpl)	Density[a] (pc/mi/ln)	Speed[b] (mph)	Maximum[c] V/C	MSF[d] (pcphpl)
A	≤ 10.0	≥ 70.0	0.318/0.304	700	≤ 10.0	≥ 65.0	0.295/0.283	650	≤ 10.0	60.0	0.272/0.261	600
B	≤ 16.0	≥ 70.0	0.509/0.487	1,120	≤ 16.0	≥ 65.0	0.473/0.457	1,040	≤ 16.0	60.0	0.436/0.412	960
C	≤ 24.0	≥ 68.5	0.747/0.715	1,644	≤ 24.0	≥ 64.5	0.704/0.673	1,548	≤ 24.0	60.0	0.655/0.626	1,440
D	≤ 32.0	≥ 63.0	0.916/0.876	2,015	≤ 32.0	≥ 61.0	0.887/0.849	1,952	≤ 32.0	57.0	0.829/0.793	1,824
E	≤ 36.7/39.7	≥ 60.0/58.0	1.000	2,200/2,300	≤ 39.3/43.4	≥ 56.0/53.0	1.000	2,200/2,300	≤ 41.5/46.0	53.0/50.0	1.000	2,200/2,300
F	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable	Variable

[a] Density in passenger cars per mile per lane.
[b] Average travel speed in miles per hour.
[c] Maximum volume-to-capacity ratio.
[d] Maximum service flow rate under ideal conditions in passenger cars per hour per lane.

≤ less than or equal to
≥ greater than or equal to

Note: In table entries with split values, the first value is for four-lane freeways, and the second is for six- and eight-lane freeways.

Source: Transportation Research Board, *Highway Capacity Manual, Special Report 209* (Washington, D.C., 1994), pp. 3-9.

Table B-2

Level of Service Criteria for Multilane Highways

	60 mph Free-Flow Speed				55 mph Free-Flow Speed				50 mph Free-Flow Speed			
LOS	Density[a] (pc/mi/ln)	Speed[b] (mph)	Maximum[c] V/C	MSF[d] (pcphpl)	Density[a] (pc/mi/ln)	Speed[b] (mph)	Maximum[c] V/C	MSF[d] (pcphpl)	Density[a] (pc/mi/ln)	Speed[b] (mph)	Maximum[c] V/C	MSF[d] (pcphpl)
A	≤ 12	≥ 60	0.33	720	≤ 12	≥ 55	0.31	660	≤ 12	≥ 50	0.30	600
B	≤ 20	≥ 60	0.55	1,200	≤ 20	≥ 55	0.52	1,100	≤ 20	≥ 50	0.50	1,000
C	≤ 28	≥ 59	0.75	1,650	≤ 28	≥ 54	0.72	1,510	≤ 28	≥ 50	0.70	1,400
D	≤ 34	≥ 51	0.89	1,940	≤ 34	≥ 53	0.86	1,800	≤ 34	≥ 49	0.84	1,670
E	≤ 40	≥ 55	1.00	2,200	≤ 41	≥ 51	1.00	2,100	≤ 43	≥ 47	1.00	2,000
F	> 40[e]	< 55[e]	-[e]	-[e]	> 41[e]	< 51[e]	-[e]	-[e]	> 43[e]	< 47[d]	-[e]	-[e]

[a] Density in passenger cars per mile per lane.
[b] Average travel speed in miles per hour.
[c] Maximum volume-to-capacity ratio.
[d] Maximum service flow rate under ideal conditions in passenger cars per hour per lane.
[e] Highly variable, unstable.

≤ less than or equal to
≥ greater than or equal to

Source: Transportation Research Board, *Highway Capacity Manual*, Special Report 209 (Washington, D.C., 1994), pp. 7-8.

Table B-3
Level of Service Criteria for General Two-Lane Highway Segments

		V/C Ratio[a]																		
		Level Terrain							Rolling Terrain							Mountainous Terrain						
			% No-Passing Zone							% No-Passing Zone							% No-Passing Zone					
LOS	% Time Delay	Avg.[b] Speed	0	20	40	60	80	100	Avg.[b] Speed	0	20	40	60	80	100	Avg.[b] Speed	0	20	40	60	80	100
A	≤ 30	≥ 58	0.15	0.12	0.09	0.07	0.05	0.04	≥ 57	0.15	0.10	0.07	0.05	0.04	0.03	≥ 56	0.14	0.09	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.01
B	≤ 45	≥ 55	0.27	0.24	0.21	0.19	0.17	0.16	≥ 54	0.26	0.23	0.19	0.17	0.15	0.13	≥ 54	0.25	0.20	0.16	0.13	0.12	0.10
C	≤ 60	≥ 52	0.43	0.39	0.36	0.34	0.33	0.32	≥ 51	0.42	0.39	0.35	0.32	0.30	0.28	≥ 49	0.39	0.33	0.28	0.23	0.20	0.16
D	≤ 75	≥ 50	0.64	0.62	0.60	0.59	0.58	0.57	≥ 49	0.62	0.57	0.52	0.48	0.46	0.43	≥ 45	0.58	0.50	0.45	0.40	0.37	0.33
E	> 75	≥ 45	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	≥ 40	0.97	0.94	0.92	0.91	0.90	0.90	≥ 35	0.91	0.87	0.84	0.82	0.80	0.78
F	100	< 45	--	--	--	--	--	--	< 40	--	--	--	--	--	--	< 35	--	--	--	--	--	--

[a] Ratio of flow rate to an ideal capacity of 2,800 passenger cars per hour in both directions.

[b] Average travel speed of all vehicles (in mph) for highways with design speed ≥ 60 mph; for highways with lower design speeds, reduce speed by 4 mph for each 10-mph reduction in design speed below 60 mph; assumes that speed is not restricted to lower values by regulation.

≤ less than or equal to

≥ greater than or equal to

Source: Transportation Research Board, *Highway Capacity Manual, Special Report 209* (Washington, D.C., 1994), pp. 8-5.

Arterials

Levels of service for arterials are dependent on the arterial class denoted as Type I, II, or III. Type I arterials are principal arterials with suburban design, 1 to 5 signals per mile, no parking, and free-flow speeds of 35 to 45 miles per hour (mph). Type III arterials have urban designs, with 6 to 12 signals per mile, parking permitted, and are undivided with free-flow speeds of 25 to 35 miles per hour. Type II arterials fall between Type I and III and have free-flow speeds of 30 to 35 miles per hour.

The LOS for an arterial is based on maneuverability, delays, and speeds. As the volume increases, the probability of stopping at an intersection due to a red signal indication increases and the LOS decreases. The specific LOS criteria from the HCM are presented in Table B-4.

For the CMP, a calculation method based on V/C was selected. Volumes on each roadway segment in each direction are divided by the capacity, estimated to be 1,100 vehicles per hour per lane. The capacity was estimated based on a saturation flow rate of 1,900 vehicles per lane and the assumption that El Camino Real would receive 60 percent of the green time.[1] With the assumption that streets perpendicular to El Camino Real would receive 40 percent of each intersection's green time, the reduction in El Camino Real's capacity due to intersecting streets has been accounted for in the method used to analyze levels of service of arterial streets. Except for the 16 designated intersections, the operations of individual intersections, which are the locations where a street capacity is most constrained, are not analyzed for the CMP. Therefore, the levels of service presented for various roadway segments along El Camino Real are likely to be better than the level of service of individual intersections.

The V/C for arterials is correlated to LOS based on the information in Table B-5. The average speeds for each LOS designation are presented in Table B-4.

[1]The estimated capacity for El Camino Real was calculated by multiplying 1,900 vehicles per hour per lane by 0.6, to arrive at 1,140 vehicles per hour per lane which was then rounded off to 1,100 vehicles per hour per lane.

Table B-4
Level of Service Criteria for Arterials

Arterial Class	I	II	III
Range of Free-Flow Speeds (mph)	45 to 35	35 to 30	35 to 25
Typical Free-Flow Speed (mph)	40 mph	33 mph	27 mph

Level of Service	Average Travel Speed (mph)		
A	≥ 35	≥ 30	≥ 25
B	≥ 28	≥ 24	≥ 19
C	≥ 22	≥ 18	≥ 13
D	≥ 17	≥ 14	≥ 9
E	≥ 13	≥ 10	≥ 7
F	< 13	< 10	< 7

mph miles per hour
≤ less than or equal to
≥ greater than or equal to

Source: Transportation Research Board, *Highway Capacity Manual, Special Report 209* (Washington, D.C., 1994), pp. 11-4.

Table B-5
CMP Level of Service Criteria for Arterials[a] Based on Volume-to-Capacity Ratios

Level of Service	Description	V/C[b]
A	Free-flow conditions with unimpeded maneuverability. Stopped delay at signalized intersection is minimal.	0.00 to 0.60
B	Reasonably unimpeded operations with slightly restricted maneuverability. Stopped delays are not bothersome.	0.61 to 0.70
C	Stable operations with somewhat more restrictions in making mid-block lane changes than LOS B. Motorists will experience appreciable tension while driving.	0.71 to 0.80
D	Approaching unstable operations where small increases in volume produce substantial increases in delay and decreases in speed.	0.81 to 0.90
E	Operations with significant intersection approach delays and low average speeds.	0.91 to 1.00
F	Operations with extremely low speeds caused by intersection congestion, high delay, and adverse signal progression.	Greater Than 1.00

[a] For arterials that are multilane divided or undivided with some parking, a signalized intersection density of four to eight per mile, and moderate roadside development.
[b] Volume-to-capacity ratio.

≥ greater than or equal to.
< less than.

Source: Transportation Research Board, *Highway Capacity Manual, Special Report 209* (Washington, D.C., 1994).

Signalized Intersections

The TRB *Circular 212* Planning method is the selected level of service calculation method for the designated intersections in the San Mateo County's CMP Roadway System. A signalized intersection's level of service, according to the method described in TRB *Circular 212,* is based on dividing the sum of the critical volumes by the intersection's capacity. This calculation yields the volume-to-capacity ratio (V/C). The critical movements are the combinations of through movements plus right-turn movements if there is no exclusive right-turn lane, and opposing left-turn movements that represent the highest per-lane volumes. Descriptions of levels of service for signalized intersections, together with their corresponding V/Cs, are presented in Table B-6.

Table B-6
Intersection Level of Service Definitions

Level of Service	Interpretation	V/C Ratio
A	Uncongested operations; all queues clear in a single signal cycle.	Less Than 0.60
B	Very light congestion; an occasional approach phase is fully utilized.	0.60 to 0.69
C	Light congestion; occasional backups on critical approaches.	0.70 to 0.79
D	Significant congestion on critical approaches, but intersection functional. Cars required to wait through more than one cycle during short peaks. No long-standing queues formed.	0.80 to 0.89
E	Severe congestion with some long-standing queues on critical approaches. Blockage of intersection may occur if traffic signal does not provide for protected turning movements. Traffic queue may block nearby intersections(s) upstream of critical approach(es).	0.90 to 0.99
F	Total breakdown, stop-and-go operation.	1.00 and Greater

In the TRB *Circular 212* method, the capacity of an intersection is based on an average saturation flow rate and percent lost time. The saturation flow rate is the maximum number of vehicles per lane that can pass a fixed point in one hour with 100 percent green time. The average saturation flow rate measured in San Mateo County is 1,980 vehicles per hour of green per lane (vphpgpl). The lost time is the time when vehicles are not entering the intersection due to changes in signal indications. Percent lost time is the lost time divided by the cycle length. The average percent lost time measured in San Mateo County for intersections with four or more phases is 12 percent. The intersection capacities, based on San Mateo County data, for signalized intersections with two, three, and four or more signal phases are presented in Table B-7. These capacities are used with the *Circular 212* Planning method to evaluate the levels of service for San Mateo County's CMP intersections.

Table B-7
Intersection Capacities

Number of Signal Phases	Capacity (in vph)
2	1,850
3	1,760
4 or more	1,700