



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** April 5, 2012

**To:** Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

**From:** Rochelle Wheeler, Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator

**Subject:** **Input on 2012 Countywide Pedestrian and Bicycle Manual Count Program**

### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) review and provide comments on the possible approaches to the 2012 bicycle and pedestrian manual count program.

### Summary

Alameda CTC has conducted annual bicycle and pedestrian counts since 2008 in coordination with other partners in an effort to better understand bicycling and walking trends over time and to estimate the effectiveness of funding for these modes. Staff are planning to again conduct bicycle/pedestrian counts in 2012. At a minimum, staff propose to conduct counts at 63 sites throughout the county in 2012, as has been done in the previous two years. The locations would largely match those counted in 2010 and 2011, in order to maintain longitudinal data, but would be modified to reflect input gathered. In an effort to respond to Commission input from 2011, and to improve the countywide trend data, staff are also considering adding additional count locations, modifying how frequently counts are conducted, adding counts in the weekend time period, and improving the automated bicycle/pedestrian counter hardware. Staff request input on these possible changes to the 2012 count program.

A final list of count locations and a request to authorize funding for the 2012 counts will be brought to the BPAC's next meeting.

A Counts Report, summarizing the count trends since 2002, and the count data collected in 2011, including the list of 63 count sites, is included as a separate BPAC agenda item.

### Discussion

Since 2002, Alameda CTC, in partnership with other agencies, has conducted bicycle and/or pedestrian counts around the county in selected years, and since 2008, it has conducted both

bicycle and pedestrian counts every year at locations throughout the county. These efforts have provided a wealth of data to help understand countywide trends in walking and bicycling.

In 2010, a set of 63 locations was selected for conducting annual counts in Alameda County, and in that year and last year (2011), the same 63 locations were counted. Last year, the Alameda County Transportation Advisory Committee (ACTAC) and the Commission's Planning Policy and Legislation Committee (PPLC) provided input on the count locations, and recommended some modifications to the 63 count locations. These comments, with staff responses in italics, are summarized below:

#### October 4, 2011, ACTAC Meeting Input

- Count locations should reflect where people are biking/walking, which may change over time. *Staff will monitor the count locations over time, and add or delete locations based on that evaluation.*

#### October 10, 2011, PPLC Meeting Input

- Many questions on why the 63 count locations were selected, in particular: signalized versus unsignalized locations, locations with lower bike and pedestrian volumes that are not near populated areas, and locations that used to have more biking before improvements were made to nearby routes.
- May be better to add in new sites, rather than continuing to count at historic locations that are less desirable.
- Consider how the count locations could be used to assess the effectiveness of Safe Routes to Schools programs, possibly by adding more count locations near schools with active programs.
- Consider counting at BART stations.
- Make sure that recreational cycling is included.
- Work with local staff on assessing and incorporating their goals for the count program. Also, include zoning, building and planning staff along with businesses and schools, and local residents in deciding on where to count.
- Specific input received on re-considering the count locations in: Newark, San Leandro, and Hayward.
- *Staff clarified why these particular count locations were selected in the Board memo and will bring back to the committees options for modifying the locations for 2012 and beyond. This will be done in consultation with the local jurisdictions, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Commission.*

#### *Approach Options*

Depending on negotiations with the count contractor, \$15,000 in funding should cover the cost for counting at 50 locations, with MTC covering the costs for the additional 13 locations through their regional count program, for a total of 63 sites. For the list of 63 locations, staff will make recommendations to add or delete certain locations, to respond to the specific comments received in 2011.

With additional funding, additional work could be conducted, to both respond to comments received from ACTAC and the PPLC in 2011, and to improve the countywide trend data. The approaches below could be implemented individually, or in combination.

1. **Increasing the total number of sites counted, to more accurately reflect biking and walking throughout the county.** A rough national standard for representative counts is to count one location for every 15,000 people. If followed, this would result in 100 count locations needed in Alameda County to most accurately reflect trends. In order to possibly assess the data at the planning area level, these counts would need to be distributed throughout the county based on population of planning areas, as the 63 locations currently are. With the additional funding amounts, additional sites could be counted, increasing the total to 78 or even 100 for the county.

Funding Amount	Current # of Sites	Additional Sites	Total Sites
\$15,000	63	0	63
\$20,000	63	15	78
\$30,000	63	37	100

Alameda CTC will also contact local jurisdictions, to see if their local count data could supplement the countywide data, to help reach the 100 count mark.

2. **Counting on weekends.** The Commission expressed a desire to capture trends in recreational bicycling in the county. This is partially already done by collecting data from automated counters along multi-use trails throughout the county, but providing on-street counts on the weekends would supplement this data. Currently all data is collected Tuesday through Thursday, as is typically done for motor vehicle counts. Additional weekend counts could be conducted at a subset of the current locations, or at new locations targeted to recreational riding. For this option, staff would recommend that a minimum of 10 to 15 locations be counted in order to see a countywide trend. This would cost \$3000 to \$5000.
3. **Improving automated counter data.** Alameda CTC owns three automated bicycle/pedestrian counters, which were purchased in 2008. Staff are exploring either replacing or upgrading these counters, to allow remote download of count data, which would save resources needed to manually collect and download data. Staff are also exploring purchasing additional counters to increase data on trail usage. Costs for this effort are being researched and will be brought to the BPAC meeting.
4. **Count less frequently.** In order to defray the costs of adding additional count locations, counts could be conducted less frequently than annually – possible every two to five years.

The BPAC is requested to provide input on their priority for the above approach options.

**Next Steps**

A revised list of count locations will be prepared to reflect input from the BPAC, input received from the ACTAC and the Commission in 2011, and also local jurisdiction input. This will be brought to the next BPAC meeting, along with a funding level recommendation for the 2012 count program. Staff will then bring this count list and funding recommendation to ACTAC and the Commission for approval in June 2012. If approved, counts would be conducted in September and October 2012.