

# 6. Next Steps

## CHAPTER GUIDE

**TOPIC:** Documents the priority steps needed to begin implementing the Alameda Countywide Strategic Pedestrian Plan in the five-year period before the first Plan update, expected in 2011.

**AUDIENCE:** ACTIA, the ACCMA, Alameda County's 15 local governments, and other countywide and regional agencies; local and countywide community-based organizations whose missions relate to improving the pedestrian environment throughout the County.

**USES:** To guide work in the context of the Pedestrian Plan's vision and goals, capital and programmatic priorities, and projected costs and revenue that will take place through 2011.

## INTRODUCTION

A great deal of research, analysis, interviews and meetings have gone into the development of the Alameda Countywide Strategic Pedestrian Plan. Combined, this work paints a picture of the County's pedestrian environment in early 2006 and identifies the pedestrian projects, programs and planning desired throughout Alameda County through 2030.

The *Next Steps* chapter describes the priority activities that should occur in the first five years of the Pedestrian Plan's life in order to set the stage for implementing the Plan's remaining efforts. While the focus of this chapter is primarily on actions that will be the responsibility of ACTIA and the ACCMA, many will require partnering with local jurisdictions and other agencies to be accomplished.

## NEXT STEPS

### 1. Prioritize funding investments of countywide significance

ACTIA and the ACCMA need to prioritize pedestrian projects, programs and planning efforts of countywide significance and award funding to the highest priority efforts. In the next five years, there will be several funding cycles for countywide pedestrian and bicycle projects and programs, which should reflect the priorities outlined in this Plan. Furthermore, countywide and local agencies must work creatively and diligently to obtain maximum levels of public and private sources of pedestrian funds as well as attract non-traditional funding sources. Efforts to ensure that pedestrians are "routinely accommodated" in all transportation projects should be supported as a way to design and build needed pedestrian facilities into transportation projects, thereby maximizing the use of public investments. Towards this end, ACTIA and the ACCMA will work with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to implement their recently adopted Routine Accommodation policies.

### 2. Elevate importance of pedestrian planning

The first step toward improving the state of pedestrian planning countywide is to ensure that each of the County's 15 jurisdictions has a current pedestrian master plan, including related design guidelines. Such plans are critical tools for helping local governments prioritize capital projects within their jurisdiction, thus ensuring that projects that are needed most are funded first. Design guidelines ensure that new development and transportation projects are built with pedestrians in mind, so that they do not need to be retrofitted in the future.

Beyond local planning, pedestrian planning at the countywide level is also a critical step toward continuing

## Next Steps

to improve walkability in Alameda County. Toward that end, this Pedestrian Plan should be updated in five years (by 2011) to ensure that priorities are current and new issues are addressed.

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The Plan update will address the following outstanding issues identified during the development of this plan:

- Maintenance needs, including both needs at the local level and in areas of countywide significance;
- Detailed local pedestrian project needs and their associated costs, which should be identified in local pedestrian master plans as they are developed; and
- Detailed collision analysis.

### 3. Support programs shown to be effective

While walkability in Alameda County cannot improve without significant investment in pedestrian infrastructure, programs that encourage walking among focused populations can be just as effective as capital projects. Below are a few programs that are thought to be essential in the near term for creating a community of people who walk regularly.

**Individualized marketing** focuses considerable resources on households in walkable and potentially walkable neighborhoods that are interested in learning more about walking (and biking) for transportation. (Please see *Existing Conditions* chapter and companion *Toolkit* for more information.) Due to the proven effectiveness of such programs, if implemented in the near term, they can quickly expand the ranks of regular walkers, thus building a constituency for future pedestrian improvements. These have proven to be effective in the United States in such places as Portland and Seattle, as well as in several countries throughout the world.

**Safe routes to school programs (SR2S)** promote walking (and bicycling) to school through education, incentives, law enforcement, and engineering measures. SR2S efforts are an effective near-term investment because they improve safety conditions for children, one of the most

vulnerable populations, and educate future Alameda County adults, while improving local walking conditions.

**Walkable community workshops** (also known as walkability audits) are professionally-led workshop/walking tour combinations aimed at broadly assessing pedestrian facilities in a focused area and identifying specific improvements that would make the area safer, more attractive and more convenient to pedestrians. Participants include local transportation engineers, planners, elected officials, pedestrian advocates, and neighborhood residents. These programs are cost-effective and essential in the near term because they result in a blueprint for future pedestrian improvements at the neighborhood level.

### 4. Strengthen the link between walking and public transit

Public transit cannot survive and thrive without good pedestrian access, since there are limits to the quantity of automobile parking that can be provided at each transit stop, station and terminal. Similarly, pedestrians cannot rely on walking without the availability of good public transit for trips longer than typical walking distance. Therefore, walking to public transit facilities is an essential trip purpose in which to invest.



It is important to take every opportunity to reinforce the link between walking and public transportation through investments related to existing and emerging transit

services such as Bus Rapid Transit (see *Existing Conditions* chapter) and way-finding improvements to BART stations (see *Costs and Revenue* chapter). Additionally, both ACTIA and the ACCMA administer several funding sources that invest in improving public transit and access to it. Both agencies can use the information developed in the *Toolkit* to ensure that funded projects are built with the needs of pedestrians in mind.

## 5. Raise awareness of the nexus between walking and public health

In the years immediately before this Plan was developed, research on the relationship between physical activity and public health—particularly obesity—was first being published in medical journals and reported in the popular press. As the benefits of regular physical activity for people of all ages becomes better-understood, there are increasing opportunities to link programs and projects that promote alternative transportation for environmental reasons with those that encourage walking to improve health.

Opportunities include working in collaboration with the Alameda County Public Health Department and other organizations—such as Kaiser Permanente—that are developing programs that promote and support walking. Linking efforts to improve walking conditions in terms of transportation with those that support walking for physical activity broadens the potential audience of each type of program, expands the inventory of potential funding resources for each, and offers people an activity that can satisfy two objectives at once.

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Beyond programs that encourage walking for transportation and exercise, are capital projects that accomplish the same thing. Examples include multi-use trails, hillside stairway networks, and other facilities that provide pedestrians with a pleasant and convenient walking environment. From a countywide perspective, making strides towards completing the Alameda County portions of the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Iron Horse Trail is, therefore, a short-term priority. Similarly,

determining the future of the abandoned Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way, which travels through Oakland, San Leandro, Hayward, unincorporated Alameda County, Union City, and Fremont, in terms of its potential as a north–south countywide non-motorized transportation corridor is also a priority in the first five years of the Plan, so that funding opportunities later in the 25-year planning horizon will not be missed.

## 6. Create an ongoing pedestrian technical advisory committee

An ad hoc committee of local agency planners, engineers, public health staff and others involved with improving the pedestrian environment was appointed to advise the development of the Alameda Countywide Strategic Pedestrian Plan. The advice of this committee, called the Pedestrian Plan Working Group (PPWG), has been invaluable in the process of creating the Countywide Pedestrian Plan.

Participants in the PPWG reported a clear benefit of these meetings in terms of networking and information-sharing, and expressed an interest in continuing to meet in some form. ACTIA will explore how to best provide an ongoing forum for a similar group, perhaps with a broader membership including all Alameda County jurisdictions. The wisdom and experience of such a committee could help ACTIA and the ACCMA continue to address pedestrian planning issues, advise the agencies on how best to implement programs and technical training, and continue to identify institutional obstacles to improving the pedestrian environment and corresponding solutions.

## 7. Invest in education and training

ACTIA and the ACCMA are uniquely suited as countywide agencies with staff expertise in walkability to take on the roles of convener and educator of staff at various other public agencies regarding how to improve walkability throughout Alameda County. Such activities can take the form of publications tailored to Alameda County, such as the companion *Toolkit*, which should be updated annually to stay current; or the coordination of training sessions aimed at traffic engineers, transportation planners, and other local staff, on ways to improve the pedestrian environment. These sessions, which are most effective if conducted on-site at each jurisdiction, are important short-term investments because they can lay the groundwork for improvements

## Next Steps

to the pedestrian environment that will take place over the life of the Plan.

### **8. Develop technical tools**

In addition to training, transportation professionals throughout Alameda County and elsewhere need a number of technical tools to create a truly great pedestrian environment. Tools that were identified in the development of this Plan include countywide pedestrian design guidelines, pedestrian level of service guidelines, and pedestrian collision analysis tools. ACTIA and the ACCMA will explore ways to collaborate with other agencies to develop these resources.