

Introduction

WHY A COUNTYWIDE PEDESTRIAN PLAN?

Walking is an essential element of everyday life. Everyone walks (or uses a mobility device) each day, whether to school, to visit a neighbor, for exercise, for errands, or to catch a bus. Walking is the only type of transportation common to all. In Alameda County, over 500,000 trips are made on foot daily. After driving, more people walk than use any other transportation mode.

Walking is an integral component of vibrant, livable places, and a key element of the transportation system. Walking connects people to their cars or bicycles, to the bus, train, or ferry, and to their final destination. Walking contributes to creating healthy communities by reducing the number of vehicles on the road—thereby improving air quality—and improving public health, by reducing the rate of obesity, which is linked to heart disease and diabetes.

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Alameda County communities have many of the attributes that can create a “culture of walking,” including a temperate climate, mainly flat geography, few gaps in each city’s sidewalk network, and development patterns that were established, in many parts of the County, before the automobile. Indeed, with the exception of San Francisco, more people are walking in Alameda County for a greater share of their trips than anywhere else in the Bay Area. Despite these qualities, the pedestrian environment in most parts of Alameda County presents many challenges to those who are walking or would like to walk.

This first-ever *Alameda Countywide Strategic Pedestrian Plan* was written to assess the walking environment throughout the County in 2006, and to identify the capital improvements, planning efforts, and encouragement and education programs needed over the next 25 years to increase the use and safety of walking throughout Alameda County. Specifically, the Plan was written to:

- Describe the existing pedestrian environment and plans for improving walkability throughout the County;
- Isolate the institutional obstacles to making these improvements and to propose solutions;
- Identify and prioritize projects, programs and plans of countywide significance;
- Estimate the cost to deliver these efforts; and
- Lay out a course of action to fund and implement these countywide priorities over the next five years, until the Plan’s first anticipated update.



Unlike other modes of transportation, which rely on networks that travel longer distances, most walking trips are short, and take place within a relatively small area. Therefore, the pedestrian environment is largely conceived of, financed and planned at the local level. However, it is useful to also look at walking from a countywide perspective. Funding is often dispersed at the countywide level, so understanding how and why people are walking throughout the County can aid in

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making funding decisions. Coordination is needed to build and maintain facilities that cross jurisdictional borders. Finally, the “network” that enables pedestrians to travel longer distances is transit. Because the County’s transit agencies serve communities countywide, walk access to transit can be examined and improved more systematically at the county level.

Local pedestrian master plans, where they exist, are essential documents for identifying improvements to the pedestrian environment that are needed at specific locations and for integrating the concept of walkability into other local planning documents. By contrast, this Countywide Plan concentrates on identifying and prioritizing pedestrian projects, programs and planning efforts of countywide significance.

Defining Walking

Walking is defined broadly in this Plan, to encompass pedestrian mobility in all its aspects. Walking includes travel on foot and with the assistance of wheelchairs, canes, and other mobility devices. Walking includes local trips, integration with transit, and physical activity.

Plan Development and Adoption

Two Alameda countywide transportation agencies play a significant role in planning and financing improvements to the pedestrian environment: the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA) and the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACCMA). The Countywide Pedestrian Plan was developed by the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA) between June 2005 and September 2006. This work was primarily advised by ACTIA’s standing Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) and an ad hoc technical committee convened for this project, the Pedestrian Plan Working Group. In addition, ACTIA’s Paratransit Advisory and Planning Committee (PAPCO), and the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency’s Technical Advisory Committee (ACTAC) also reviewed and commented on drafts of the Plan.

This Pedestrian Plan was adopted by both ACTIA and the ACCMA and will serve as a guide for planning and funding pedestrian projects in Alameda County.

ALAMEDA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

The Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA) is the public agency that administers Alameda County’s half-cent sales tax for transportation projects and programs. This tax was authorized by Measure B, originally approved by the voters in 1986 and reauthorized in 2000. Five percent of Measure B revenue is allocated to bicycle and pedestrian projects and programs.

ALAMEDA COUNTY CONGESTION MANAGEMENT AGENCY

The Alameda County Congestion Management Agency is tasked with planning and implementing congestion management projects and programs, including those aimed at bicyclists and pedestrians. The ACCMA administers many bicycle and pedestrian funding sources, including Alameda County’s portion of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Program (see *Funding* chapter for more information).

Relationship to the Countywide Bicycle Plan

The Countywide Pedestrian Plan fills a void in countywide pedestrian planning, and serves as the companion to the Alameda Countywide Bicycle Plan. In 2001, the ACCMA Board adopted the first Countywide Bicycle Plan, which was updated in 2005-06. The Bicycle Plan documents existing conditions for bicyclists throughout the County, proposes projects and programs to improve the bicycling environment, and provides guidelines and best practices for constructing bicycle facilities.

The Countywide Bicycle Plan was updated during the same period that the Countywide Pedestrian Plan was developed. Wherever possible, efforts were made to coordinate these two non-motorized transportation plans. Areas where the two plans were coordinated include cost estimating (primarily for multi-use trails), revenue projections, mapping and, in order to leverage future funding, efforts to show how pedestrian capital projects of countywide significance coincide with projects on the updated Countywide Bicycle Network. Furthermore, both plans cite the need to design facilities that take both

bicycles and pedestrians into consideration and that also avoid potential conflicts between the two modes. (See Appendix I for further information on the relationship between the two plans.)

PLANNING FOR PEDESTRIANS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Smart Growth

Walking is the oldest form of transportation and is gaining stature as a critical component of the transportation system. This trend is especially apparent through a movement called **smart growth**, which is influencing how cities across the nation are growing and being redeveloped. The basis of smart growth is to revitalize existing neighborhoods while promoting transit, bicycling, and walking in order to create vibrant, interesting, and healthy communities. Beyond the aesthetic appeal of walkable communities, cities are pursuing smart growth strategies in an effort to reduce traffic congestion and to offer residents, employees, and visitors the opportunity for physical activity on their way to work, school and errands, thereby counteracting the national trend toward obesity and other health effects related to physical inactivity.



An important component of smart growth is **transit-oriented development (TOD)**, which calls for densely

developed, mixed-use, walkable communities built adjacent to and oriented toward rail stations, ferry terminals, and along transit streets (see *Existing Conditions* chapter for more information). Such development encourages walking by providing a safe, convenient and pleasant pedestrian environment and by building shops, restaurants, parks, civic buildings, and other services in close enough proximity that walking becomes the quickest and easiest transportation mode for many trips, and the use of public transit is increased.

A traffic engineering technique called **traffic calming** is related to smart growth and TOD in that it prioritizes people over motor vehicles in the design of neighborhood streets. Traffic calming measures are intended to enhance pedestrian safety and encourage safe driving by slowing vehicles and reducing cut-through traffic on local neighborhood routes. Measures include raised crosswalks, roundabouts, speed humps and chokers (see companion *Toolkit* for more information).

Why Walking Matters

The ability to walk safely and conveniently, for recreation and travel, is a crucial component of livable communities. Civic leaders who care about traffic, public health and safety, economic development, or building a sense of community have a stake in ensuring that the local pedestrian environment is safe and inviting.

Walking is the one transportation mode that everyone uses at some point for each and every trip, so everyone benefits when walking is safer and more convenient and attractive.

But who benefits from a walkable community? Walking is the one transportation mode that everyone uses at some point for each and every trip, so everyone benefits when walking is safer, more convenient, and attractive. School children get exercise, can be independent, and learn that most outings offer more than one transportation choice. Commuters can experience a day without parking, and longer intervals between fill-ups at the pump. Our aging population remains independent longer by staying active and not relying on their ability to drive. Local shops thrive when drive-by traffic becomes walk-in business. By improving access, ridership increases on public transit systems. Neighborhoods

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become safer with more eyes on the street and fewer cars on the road.

In Alameda County, 90 percent of AC Transit bus passengers and almost one-quarter of BART passengers reach transit on foot. There are more than a half-million daily walk trips in the County, not including walk-to-transit trips; this represents 12 percent of all trips, and is higher than either the regional or national averages. With the improvements envisioned in this Plan, a culture of walking is within reach.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The Alameda Countywide Strategic Pedestrian Plan was written for practitioners, policy-makers, community members, community-based organizations, potential funders and others who have a stake in improving walkability in Alameda County. Following this introduction are six chapters and ten appendices. Each chapter begins with a synopsis of the chapter's content, its intended audience, and how the information contained in the chapter can be used. The appendices provide the detailed information that forms the basis of the Plan's data and analysis.

In addition, a *Toolkit for Improving Walkability in Alameda County* is being published simultaneously, both online and in print, as a companion to this Plan. The *Toolkit* is a resource guide to assist local jurisdictions and other agencies in improving the pedestrian environment by providing an overview of, and web-based links to, innovative pedestrian planning practices, pedestrian facility design, funding, and numerous other ideas for improving the pedestrian environment.

Below are brief descriptions of the Plan's six chapters:

- ➊ **Existing Conditions** describes the walking environment in Alameda County and plans to improve walkability throughout the County. This chapter provides a wealth of detailed information which can serve as a reference for public agency staff, advocates and others who are unfamiliar with pedestrian facilities in portions of or throughout Alameda County.
- ➋ **Institutional Obstacles** documents nonphysical barriers that can stand in the way of needed improvements to the pedestrian environment. This chapter can be used by locally-elected officials, transportation planners and commissioners, land use planners and planning

commissioners, traffic/transportation engineers, and developers to help identify obstacles to walking and learn about innovative solutions to such barriers.

- ➌ **Vision and Goals** describes what the pedestrian environment in Alameda County could look like in 2030, and the goals and strategies necessary to enable this vision to be realized. This chapter will be of interest to locally-elected officials, transportation planners and commissioners, land use planners, and planning commissioners. It can be used to link the findings of the *Existing Conditions* and *Obstacles* chapters to opportunities that ACTIA and ACCMA have to influence the pedestrian environment in Alameda County.

- ➍ **Countywide Priorities** defines and describes Alameda County pedestrian-related capital, programmatic and planning efforts of countywide significance. This chapter will be of interest to local governments, non-profit agencies and locally-elected officials in understanding the countywide pedestrian funding priorities.

- ➎ **Costs and Revenue** provides an analysis of the estimated cost to deliver the pedestrian projects, programs and plans of countywide significance described in Chapter 4 and the revenue expected to be available in Alameda County for these efforts through the Pedestrian Plan's 25-year horizon. This chapter can be used by ACTIA and the ACCMA to develop prioritization criteria for the funding sources they administer.

- ➏ **Next Steps** 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. This information is useful to ACTIA, the ACCMA and Alameda County's 15 local governments, and local and countywide community-based organizations whose missions relate to improving the pedestrian environment throughout the County.