

Pedestrian Survey Report

The City of Albany conducted a Pedestrian Survey in 2007 with the purpose of identifying resident's concerns about barriers to walking and accessibility in the City. The survey was first conducted at the Solano Stroll in 2007 and at the Senior Center by the end of the same year. In addition, copies of the questionnaire are available at the library and on-line at the City's website where residents can still take the survey.

Up to date, 74 hard copies of the survey were returned and about 30 on-line surveys have been taken. The survey explored the walking habits of the individual filling out the questionnaire and those of the members of the household. The following is a summary of the hard copy survey responses.

The first section asked how many days and minutes the respondent and his or her household members walk for shopping, school, work, exercise, or other activities. According to the survey, going shopping and walking to recreational/fitness activities were the top destinations for walkers, followed by walking to school, walking to run miscellaneous errands and walking to a transit station. The distribution of walkers going shopping is mostly done between one and two days a week for most respondents and members of their households. It is interesting to note that 75% of those who walk to school do so five days a week. Thirty six percent of those walking to recreational activities indicated that they walk between one (18%) and two days (18%) a week to conduct that activity. Respondents who indicated that they or members of their household walk to a transit station do so, either one (29%) or five (29%) days a week.

The average number of minutes that takes to walk to school for 31% of the respondents is between 0-5 minutes, followed by 23% of respondents who said that it took them between 25 and 30 minutes. The Safe Routes to School effort is organizing walking school buses from the different neighborhoods to the three elementary schools. Some of these buses may take about 25 minutes to reach the school.

Twenty-nine percent of the respondents going shopping spent between 15-20 minutes walking while another 18% took between 35-30 minutes walking to reach their shopping destinations. The shopping districts in Albany are located along San Pablo and Solano Avenues. In addition, there are two main shopping attractors located in the neighboring cities: El Cerrito Plaza Shopping Center located in El Cerrito, and the East Mall located in Richmond.

Of those responding to the survey, including members of their household, 24% take transit three or more times per week. Interesting to note is that 60% of respondents including members of their households do not take transit at all. This may indicate a higher reliance on the private automobile, proximity to their work place, or simply that transit is not convenient for them.

Thirty three percent of the respondents indicated that they or/and members of their household bike three or more days a week while 67% indicated that they did not bike.

About one percent of the respondents and members of their households use wheelchair, 3% use a walker and another 4% use a cane.

The next section explored automobile ownership and number of licensed drivers per household and vehicle parking. Roughly 44 percent of the respondents have two licensed drivers in their households, followed by 42% of the respondents whose households had only one licensed driver. Only 8% of respondents have households with no licensed drivers while 2% of respondents have more than three licensed drivers in their households. Regarding vehicle ownership, 45% of the respondents have a one-vehicle household, while 34% have two vehicles and 12% have no vehicles in their household. Twelve percent of those responding to this question had no vehicles.

The next question asked where vehicle owners (including members of the respondents' household) park their vehicle. Thirty-two percent park their vehicle on the street, 26% on their driveway and 12% in their garage.

The next question asked respondents to list and rank their major concerns about walking in their neighborhoods. The following table lists their concerns and their rankings:

Major concerns about walking in Albany					
1=not a concern, 5= Major concern	1	2	3	4	5
Speeding cars/unsafe driving	13%	8%	15%	19%	44%
Missing segments of sidewalk	36%	21%	21%	4%	17%
Inadequate sidewalk	49%	26%	12%	7%	7%
Vehicles parked on sidewalks	40%	29%	14%	7%	10%
Missing/inadequate crossings	40%	35%	14%	7%	5%
Missing/inadequate curb ramps	69%	12%	10%	2%	7%
Crime	23%	27%	16%	16%	18%
Visually unappealing surroundings	41%	34%	10%	10%	5%
Lack of interesting destinations within walking distance	55%	23%	13%	8%	3%
Lack of reliable, efficient public transit	56%	15%	13%	8%	8%

The next question asked respondents to choose the reason for not walking (if they did not walk much) from a list of options. The results are the following:

I do not enjoy walking	3%
I prefer to ride a bicycle	23%
I prefer to drive a car	27%
I do not have time to walk	30%
I am physically unable to walk	17%
Total	100%

The next question asked what changed would encourage people to walk more. The results are shown in the following table:

What changes would encourage you to walk more?					
1=Much less likely, 3=No change, 5=Much more likely	1	2	3	4	5
Slower vehicle traffic	8%	5%	25%	25%	38%
More pedestrian paths	6%	9%	38%	16%	31%
Designed walking routes	6%	15%	33%	24%	21%
Maps/signs for walkers	16%	6%	31%	16%	31%
Destinations closer to home	13%	3%	43%	10%	30%
Improved street crossings	8%	6%	19%	36%	31%
Wider sidewalks	10%	10%	42%	16%	23%
More level sidewalks	6%	6%	32%	29%	26%
More attractive streets	17%	0%	40%	27%	17%
Better street lighting	9%	3%	21%	29%	38%
Better public transit	13%	17%	23%	23%	23%
Pay for parking	42%	6%	39%	6%	6%
Harder-to-find parking	37%	3%	33%	10%	17%
Improved security	13%	6%	22%	19%	41%

The following are comments stated when filling out the survey or the cards in the brochure. These comments have not been edited, just transcribed from the original source.

Survey Comments

Part I: Major concerns about walking in the neighborhood. (And some specific locations)

1. Speeding cars are very dangerous.
2. Crime- Albany Bowl. BART tracks
3. I almost always feel quite safe in Albany, even at night.
4. Cars not stopping for bicycles and pedestrians at crossing, forcing me to cross only at traffic light.
5. Crime is a big issue. Pierce St. has many new incidents this year (2008). It seems crime is escalating. Ranch 99 Market parking lot area is a major concern. I don't walk to BART or EC Plaza anymore after the assault on Moser.
6. At some crosswalks particularly at Brighton Ave. and San Pablo, drivers wanting to turn right on the red light – Look to the left for on coming vehicles, but do not look right for pedestrians before turning.
7. Washington and San Pablo Avenue-difficult intersection.
8. The crosswalk in front of the senior center is particularly dangerous to cross, both morning and afternoon. There is no sidewalk on the east side of Masonic.

9. BART line is very loud – train has to slow down and get a sound wall as they have in Berkeley.
10. No traffic enforcement! Pedestrians in crosswalks are moving targets for speeding vehicles! Buchanan + Jackson – red light runners.
11. Need a crosswalk between teen center and field and bike over pass at POLK.
12. Crossing at San Pablo and main entrance of the UC village, drivers turn right without looking and almost hit me often.
13. People' landscaping blocking sidewalk. Area around Posen/Ordway/ Peralta.
14. Cars not yielding to pedestrians, especially when walking to school.
15. Ohlone path to El Cerrito BART station.
16. Drivers speed across Santa Fe constantly and despite signals, they turn regardless of pedestrians in the crosswalk.
17. Cars avoid Marin by cutting through Solano at high-speed.
18. Crashes on Castro/ San Pablo. Cars break-ins – Madison and Jackson.
19. Albany generally is not kept up with interesting landscaping as in other cities.
20. Only one ramp on most corners along Solano. Harder to manage with stroller.
21. Residential and urban intersections.
22. Why is the green light so fast crossing Buchanan at Jackson to Ocean View School? Why are our sidewalks full of weeds?
23. In the street around the El Cerrito Plaza, especially around the middle school. We see cars running stop signs almost everyday, crossing Brighton going to and from the Plaza.
24. Any Marin crossing?
25. I feel unsafe walking alone at night. There are not emergency buttons.
26. 600 Block Carmel fronts play/picnic areas in Memorial Park and is major route for circling Albany High School. Worry about kids/parents crossing street in middle of the block at same time as autos speeding from one corner to next. Speeding humps/bumps may help.
27. I like walking on Solano with my daughters and look in the windows of the shops.
28. Except at San Pablo/Buchanan and San Pablo/Marin, there is no safe pedestrian area to the city hall. No crosswalk from Madison over to city hall. No continuity of the Marin sidewalk, from the fire station connects to the side of Buchanan. It's dangerous to walk from the "point" behind the fire station, across the left turn slot. In effect, no access from Albany Hill or UC village without going to San Pablo.
29. Cars not stopping for pedestrians at crossing: San Pablo and Marin.
30. Vehicles parked on sidewalks: everywhere.
31. Make street more attractive. Wider sidewalks.
32. Many sidewalks are in bad shape. Roots of trees cause sidewalk uplifts. Uneven surface and potholes throughout the city. Not enough streetlights. Also, it's unsafe to walk on San Pablo near Albany Bowl.
33. When my daughter was younger, for a period of about two years I used to stroll her each day for 30-90 minutes to get her to nap (between Solano, Brighton, Masonic and San Pablo) I was often very annoyed at all of the (many) cars that blocked the sidewalk. I often had to go around a car, and usually there was plenty of parking on the street.

Part II: Other reasons for not walking much.

1. Crime.
2. I walk to near places.
3. I walk when I can.
4. Walking takes more than 1 hour, so driving 10-15 minutes is much faster.
5. Commuting by foot/transit isn't practical due to lack of direct route and time.
6. Lazy.
7. Working in Fremont – Commute and work take most of the time.
8. Skate boards and bicycles.
9. Police should patrol more on residential neighborhood so that we can feel safe to walk.

Part III: Other comments:

1. A bus to the waterfront, at least once in a while.
2. The surrounding areas (Ranch 99 and the street behind Ranch 99) are not safe.
3. I moved two years ago, and was really delighted by the neighborhood. It's very nice that all these places are so close. I lived in SF before and pedestrian safety is not very important there. In Albany, I find drivers yielding to pedestrians and it is excellent. And the bus is very convenient.
4. We love living in Albany because we can walk to parks, shopping, library, etc. We chose to move here because of its walkability.
5. It's great to live here, as well as to be close enough to the BART station and the Plaza. I do drive to the Plaza to shop at the markets because I have too much to carry.
6. Stop signs on Solano near school, post office, YMCA, etc.
7. Albany already does a pretty good job at being pedestrian friendly, and it's the main reason we chose to live here!
8. Bart noise! Can BART slow down to 30-35 mph in the residential areas? Instead of 60 mph.
9. My neighbors and I have noticed much more dangerous driving since Trader Joes' open. Lots of cut-through traffic, speeding, and really rude, dangerous behavior toward pedestrians trying to cross at intersections and crosswalks in North Albany. I really worry about school children being hit.
10. I like homes and storefronts on the street. I would not like to see more parking lots I would have to walk through.
11. The city is already small and many streets are already narrow. Residents drive to work because there is no convenient public transit service. Also, people from other cities drive to the city for shopping and eating, making parking more difficult.
12. Cars don't stop for pedestrians.