

Albany Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Plan Update

Scope of Work

The City of Albany has many planning documents that aim to improve pedestrian safety and mobility through both policy recommendations and proposed projects. Examples include the City's Traffic Calming Program, San Pablo Streetscape Plan, Albany Bikeway Master Plan, the on-going Pedestrian Plan, and various improvement plans including the Pierce Street Bikeway project and Buchanan Street Bikeway connector project.

The City of Albany started developing its first Pedestrian Plan in September 2007 as a staff effort to put in perspective future capital improvement projects and programs that would help promote and advance pedestrian activity in the City. The main goal of the plan is to work in concert with other City programs and policies that aim at reducing the carbon footprint of residents, workers and visitors to Albany. One way to achieve this is to have in place a Safe Routes to School Program (SR2S) in the City. Another main component of the plan is the implementation of improved pedestrian accessibility to recreational and commercial areas within the City. The implementation of curb ramps where needed, and the elimination of barriers to the disabled are the main objectives of this component.

The goal of this scope of work, which builds on recent City efforts, is two-fold: to assess and amend the City's policies affecting pedestrian and bicycle circulation and to identify a set of improvement projects and education, enforcement, and encouragement programs to further enhance pedestrian and bicycle conditions in the City.

Citywide Pedestrian Plan

A Pedestrian Plan allows a City to take a step back and understand the needed investments towards a safer, more walkable City. It is also a chance to review efforts to date, move forward with strong ideas, and proposes changes to existing documents and practices.

Task One: Albany Pedestrian Assessment

Historical Context - Before starting the assessment of the City's current pedestrian orientation, we think will be important to document the City's strong and progressive history of pedestrianization. Under this task, we would review work completed in the last 20 years in order to understand relatively recent changes, and in nearly all cases enhancements, to pedestrian conditions in Albany. Key projects to be mapped and highlighted will include:

- ❖ the lower Solano Avenue streetscape improvements and subsequent gentrification of lower Solano
- ❖ emergence of pedestrian-oriented retail and high-density housing on San Pablo Avenue
- ❖ Marin Avenue road diet and bike lanes
- ❖ construction of the Bay Trail
- ❖ implementation of Rapid Bus on San Pablo Avenue
- ❖ relocation of the Middle School
- ❖ closure of several neighborhood schools and redesignation of Oceanview from the Middle School to an elementary school
- ❖ various traffic calming installations
- ❖ installation of new ballfields and a skate park on the border to West Berkeley
- ❖ redevelopment of the Asian Pacific Shopping Center
- ❖ redevelopment of the University of California Village

❖ redevelopment of the El Cerrito Plaza

Current Assessment - We will review the documents used on a regular basis in the City, including the General Plan, Zoning Code, and design guidelines that City staff consult on a regular basis (such as the San Pablo Avenue design guidelines). This will help the team gain an understanding of the relationship of various plans to one another and to implementation of changes described above and others that are programmed or planned. The result of the review will be a summary of goals and policies created to date. We expect to find that Albany is doing many things very well but that pedestrian conditions could be enhanced and that there is more the City could do to promote safe pedestrian travel. We will use the current assessment to formulate a menu of policy, program and practice changes that the City could implement. For each potential change to or implementation of a new program, we will identify costs and benefits, discuss viability and provide real-world examples of jurisdictions that have implemented the programs. As an example, the assessment is likely to find that the City's current pedestrian safety education is limited to a few events a year aimed at pedestrians only. The team will present a range of options for enhancing education programs with the high end of the range potentially including development of an in-school curriculum on safe pedestrian travel and development of a safety campaign similar to San Jose's Street Smarts using in-lawn signs, billboards and cable access television to promote safe driving as well as safe pedestrian travel.

The assessment of current conditions and menu of potential policy/program/practice changes will be presented at a public workshop and used to gather input on whether and which policies/programs/practices the City should amend. Given that some of the potential changes will have broader impacts on planning in the City, we suggest that the workshop be scheduled during a regular meeting of the Planning Commission with members of the Traffic and safety Commission also in attendance. The workshop content will also be posted to the Albany Pedestrian Master Plan Web site along with a comment form and/or survey so that people not able to attend can still provide input.

Recommendations – Based on the assessment and workshop, the team will develop a summary of proposed changes to policies, programs and practices. We would welcome the opportunity to develop these recommendations in a working meeting with City staff should planning and city manager's office staff have time and interest in participating. Once City staff has reviewed these recommendations, we will present them to the Planning Commission and Traffic Safety Commission.

Task Two: Understanding Pedestrian Needs

There are three primary corridors that bear close inspection when evaluating needs for pedestrians: San Pablo Avenue, Solano Avenue, and Marin Avenue/ Buchanan Street. Transit serves San Pablo and Solano Avenues, while Marin Avenue was the subject of a major road diet, which has drawn feedback from the community. On the other side of San Pablo, Marin becomes Buchanan Street. This area has been a major focus for citizen concern given its dual nature as a regional (Freeway) access road and local road serving schools, neighborhoods, and businesses. While there are other critical walkways, including the Ohlone Greenway and the Bay Trail, these three corridors represent the areas where land use and streetscape improvements could compliment and enhance pedestrian comfort, safety and activity levels. This plan offers an opportunity to dispel myths about pedestrian needs and uses of these corridors –information key to the community outreach process.

Marin Avenue - The community has responded to the road diet by suggesting further improvements (more signals to better meter traffic, medians to provide pedestrian refuges in the center of the street (but likely requiring turn restrictions), a HAWK signal at Curtiss Street, etc.) on one hand and questioning the wisdom and effects of the road diet on the other. The goal of the

Pedestrian Plan is to understand how well the street functions for all users (vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists) and to evaluate new treatments that could improve it further. This task entails an evaluation of collisions both before and after implementation. As a first step, we will compile the suggestions for future improvements and qualitative issues on a corridor map. A separate map will detail collisions before and after construction of the road diet. This will be a discussion tool to help reveal the true causes of pedestrian collisions and formulate effective countermeasures. For instance, the recent collisions on the corridor were caused by a driver under the influence and an older driver driving at dusk and looking into the sun. These suggest education and enforcement measures rather than engineering measures.

Buchanan Street – The City recently received a grant for the implementation of a new traffic signal at the Buchanan and Jackson Street Intersection at the Ocean View School. While this new signal will significantly improve pedestrian safety at this crossing, there is a need to examine the full corridor from the Freeway to San Pablo to determine how this key entrance to the City can better accommodate all modes of traffic. Traffic calming and streetscape improvements will be important here, as will pedestrian facilities to connect to the Target and Petco.

Solano Avenue - Solano Avenue plays a role as a key spine in the pedestrian network and is considered the heart of Albany by many. Not only does it offer shopping and recreational opportunities, it also has excellent transit service serving a rich range of destinations with frequent service. Transit usage in Albany is among the highest in the Bay Area and the quantity of transit service with the relatively high residential densities in the area suggest that transit usage could expand with the right incentives. Pedestrian linkages and improved waiting areas could prove a valuable incentive. The portion of Solano Avenue from San Pablo to Masonic already has extensive streetscapes and the goal of the plan would be to expand this theme. This would entail a field visit to observe pedestrian crossing behaviors and identify locations for future streetscape and pedestrian crossing improvements in the portion of Solano from Masonic to the eastern City limit at about Peralta Avenue). We would create a corridor map for Solano Avenue to show locations of sidewalk and intersection enhancements. The lower Solano improvements were installed as part of a sewer replacement project, and a similar sewer replacement is still in need for upper Solano. As a funding strategy, the Plan is an opportunity to collaborate with other City departments to see if there are opportunities to coordinate streetscape improvements with other capital projects.

San Pablo Avenue - Despite its high traffic, wide cross-section and historic auto-oriented retail uses, San Pablo Avenue has emerged as a pedestrian street within the last 10 years. There has been an emergence of quality restaurants and drinking establishments, as well as the addition of several new high-density housing projects. This street was the subject of a previous study, and most of the improvements recommended at that time are likely to be brought forward in the Pedestrian Plan, with changes to acknowledge new demand for pedestrian improvements as new businesses have opened along the corridor. The process for San Pablo Avenue is to compile a list of suggested improvements and to conduct a field visit to identify new opportunities, similar to Solano Avenue. It would also be useful to review the most recent five years of collision data to ensure that future plans include countermeasures that respond to issues along the corridor.

A key group of pedestrians who could benefit from safety and mobility improvements on both San Pablo and Solano Avenues are those who take transit to work. There is currently a dedicated funding source for Safe Routes to Transit improvements administered by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. We could develop fact sheets about projects for transit stops along each corridor and assist the City with grant applications.

Pedestrian Barriers - There are three critical barriers to pedestrian circulation that also warrant special attention: UPRR, I-80/580, and Albany Hill. The team will evaluate methods for improving pedestrian circulation across these barriers. In some cases, improvements are likely to be very expensive, such as if new bridges are required, but there are a growing number of jurisdictions who have been successful completing new non-motorized bridge projects. In

addition to the I-80 overcrossing at University Avenue in Berkeley, Emeryville is completing design of and has full funding for a new bridge over the UPRR tracks between the Bay Street development and Novartis and is pursuing funding for a new I-80 overcrossing at 65th Street. While it seems unlikely that Albany could secure funding for new crossings given current uses on the west side of I-80, it warrants analysis and identification of preferred alignments in the event that these uses change. In fact, having proposed new crossings in a City-adopted plan could allow the tool to leverage funds for the new crossing(s) from potential developers.

In the case of Albany Hill, there is little to be done about grades on the hill, but there are opportunities for formalize connections around the hill and to address vehicles blocking sidewalks.

Other Locations - In addition to corridor-specific reviews, we will conduct an evaluation of pedestrian collisions citywide to determine if other corridors or intersections need attention. We will also gather information on locations of additional pedestrian concerns through the workshop noted in Task 1 (outreach is also addressed in Task 3 below) and via the Web site. The preparation of the City's Traffic Management Report involved a very extensive public outreach process, so we will also review this report. At locations where concerns are noted, we will develop recommendations, or in the case of problems noted in prior report, summarize prior recommendations.

Task Three: Community Outreach

Some level of outreach has been discussed in Task 1 above, but additional outreach may be warranted if extensive changes to current conditions, policies, programs, and practices are recommended. As an example, many cities use parking collections as a basis for funding streetscape improvements. If such a recommendation were developed in Albany, a community that has historically rejected parking charges, outreach to businesses and residents would be necessary.

There are two options for this task: one is to conduct a conventional outreach program, whereby we would visit various neighborhoods and the Albany Chamber of Commerce in order to present the policies, programs, practices and projects identified to gather input on these and other projects. The conventional outreach program would involve at least one workshop and two additional meetings of the Planning Commission and Traffic and Safety Commission (combined meetings). One of these meetings is described in Task 1 and we recommend one final presentation to these groups to present recommended capital projects. At least one meeting with the City Council would be required. Up to three additional meetings with neighbors and the Albany Chamber of Commerce would also be expected.

A second option is to use the outreach to generate support for a local property tax to fund pedestrian improvements. If the improvements were school-focused and modest in scale, this concept could be successful in Albany and would provide a means to implement the Pedestrian Plan on a fast-track pace. This level of commitment to pedestrian enhancements would also enhance the City's chances to secure matching funds from various federal, state and local sources. Rather than assume that the outreach program would be aimed at securing voter approval for a parcel tax, we suggest that we retain this strategy in the Plan and assess during the course of the study whether a broader outreach program is appropriate. Regardless of whether the City decides to attempt a parcel tax, the other outreach elements described above would still be necessary.

Task Four: Develop the Pedestrian Plan

This task will synthesize community and staff input to date on the policies and project list. We will also create three new sections, described below, that will result in a comprehensive plan. We will submit draft versions of each section for one round of review by City staff before assembling the

final plan for an additional round of review before assisting the City with adoption. We anticipate attendance at two meetings with policymakers to be used at the City's discretion.

We have budgeted eight hours to incorporate comments as part of the adoption process. If the comments are more substantial, we will work with City staff to identify changes to the budget. The deliverables for this task are the draft and final Pedestrian Plan.

Safe Crossings

For this task, we will create base maps identifying issues with crosswalks along Marin and Solano Avenues. We will conduct up to three initial meetings with merchant and neighborhood organizations to get feedback on our initial maps and finalize the base maps. Next, we will create a set of recommendations for each corridor for feedback from the City. Once we have a draft set of recommendations, we will revisit each group from the first set of meetings and refine the recommendations. The recommendations may be traffic calming, traffic control, or crossing enhancements.

As part of this task, we will also include a tool that will enable the City to determine the best locations for uncontrolled marked crosswalks in the future. The tool will include an explanation of the City's policy on marked crosswalks, and an interactive tool that City engineers may use in the future to determine if the location is appropriate for a crosswalk and what type of treatment is most appropriate based on roadway characteristics such as posted speed, number of lanes, daily traffic, etc.

Funding and Implementation Plan

As part of this task, we will compile a list of projects identified as part of the Safe Routes to School, Safe Routes to Transit, and Safe Crossings components along with cost estimates and expected funding from outside sources. We can work with the City to brainstorm funding sources, such as a bond measure, that could be used to fund improvements. If the City is interested in this approach, we could present the plan in a working session with the Planning Commission, City Council, and any other policymakers to review projects, cost estimates, and funding sources. If not, the implementation component will be a more traditional Capital Improvement Program with a prioritized list of projects with cost estimates.

The prioritization could happen one of two ways: either all projects would be incorporated into a single list or, each set of improvements could be a separate list. It is highly likely that certain improvements will apply to multiple programs. For instance, a proposal for new curb extensions and flashing overhead beacons on Solano Avenue could be both a Safe Crossings improvement and a Safe Routes to Transit Improvement, as Solano Avenue is served by some of the City's most utilized bus lines. The prioritization methodology will be a combination of factors, including demand, community support, and feasibility. We will present a draft methodology to the City for feedback prior to creating the final list.

Design Guidelines

Where the City would like to deviate from established guidelines, such as AASHTO, MUTCD, and the Highway Design Manual, we can create a set of design guidelines including graphics, specifications, and direction for appropriate application. The City has design guidelines scattered in different documents. This task will involve summarizing, assessing and recommending changes or updates to the design guidelines.

Safe Routes to School

Very few locations in California have a Safe Routes to School plan; even fewer have model plans such as the one for Marin County. Marin County leads the nation in encouraging students to walk and bicycle to school, which results in improved safety, reduced congestion, and the formation of healthy habits. Marin's example illustrates the connection between good planning and results. Another unique aspect to Safe Routes to School funding is the dedicated funding streams at both the state and federal levels. Although competition for these sources is fierce around the state, agencies with adopted Safe Routes to School plans have a strong edge when applying for funding. This scope of work is intended to position the City of Albany to submit successful grants to fund education, outreach, and capital projects around schools. The plan proposed for Albany includes all the successful components of great plans.

The City has made significant efforts establishing education, enforcement, engineering, and encouragement plans for Safe Routes to School at all elementary schools in the City. This is an ongoing process in partnership with TransForm. This scope assumes expansion of that effort to the Middle and High School.

Data Collection

The first step is to gather information and create issue maps for each school (2). The City will provide collision records, existing traffic counts, and speeds for each school. Fehr & Peers will analyze collisions around each of the schools involving children during the school year in order to identify trends and begin to formulate countermeasures. We will examine various factors, including time of day, primary collision factor, California Vehicle Code violations, age and gender of involved parties, and party at fault. The deliverables for this task will be a series of base maps for each school and a memo describing collision trends.

School Outreach

Fehr & Peers will work with administrators at the middle and high school to gather information about existing issues and to request information. As an optional task, we can meet with existing parent groups to gather information about barriers (physical and psychological) to walking to school. We will also conduct walking audits during the "pick up" hour in the afternoon. For each school, we will request three key pieces of information:

- Home address (or street and cross-street for people not wanting to divulge mailing address)
- Routes currently used by students who walk or bike to school
- The number of students who currently walk or bike to school

Specifically, we will provide maps to teachers to gather information about the routes that students currently use, if possible. The deliverable for this task will be a data sheet for each school, identifying existing barriers to walking to school (as noted by administrators and during the walking audit), the number of students who currently walk or bike to school, the routes currently in use, and the potential number of students who could walk to school based on where they live.

Following the formulation of draft recommendations in the Plan (see below), we will conduct a second series of meetings with each school to get feedback and refine the work product.

Safe Routes to School Plan

The Safe Routes to School plan will have four major components. Because the focus of this Plan is the middle and high school, the strategies employed will be oriented toward pre-teens and teenagers.

Education

We will note all existing education efforts that the schools undertake and assist the City in identifying a comprehensive education campaign that would target motorists, as well as pedestrians. One example is the Street Smarts program, pioneered by the City of San Jose and available for purchase and customization by any jurisdiction. The Street Smarts program has proved popular in similarly-sized cities, such as Benicia, because it is cost effective and sends a positive message. The program consists of school banners, school posters, bumper stickers, lawn signs, and signs that fit on transit shelters and buses. The program can be piloted at schools and easily expanded to a Citywide program if it proves popular. One disadvantage of using the Street Smarts program is lack of ability to customize sign content. If in reviewing the Street Smarts program with stakeholders, this constraint is significant, Fehr & Peers and the City can consider development of a unique campaign for Albany.

The second component of the education campaign consists of recommendations that schools can implement themselves, including a suggested curriculum that teachers can implement in the classrooms. There are several successful examples of modules from cities such as Palo Alto that are applicable to any school in California. Fehr & Peers will gather several examples and provide them to the schools. We will also work with the City to identify means for incenting the schools to use the curriculums including giving higher prioritization for capital improvements to those schools that adopt the curriculum.

Enforcement

The third component of the education campaign includes recommendations that the school can implement alone and in partnership with Police and Fire departments. These recommendations may include programs similar to one in Fremont, where police officers conduct enforcement stings, particularly at the start of the school year, focused on drop-off activities. The purpose of the stings is two-fold: one, to issue "citations" to students who then attend a two-hour traffic school to learn about safe crossing and bicycling techniques. Second is to issue real citations to motorists. Another model program is operated by the City of Sunnyvale and is similar to that of Fremont, but also includes sharing police resources with adjacent jurisdictions so that the City has enough police presence to conduct a one-day, all-school sting. Other recommendations may pertain to crossing guard and junior crossing guard programs, including identification of funding sources and training.

Engineering

The Plan will include recommendations to counteract barriers identified during data collection and outreach. The toolbox of measures is likely to include signing and striping recommendations (high-visibility crosswalks, lane narrowing), traffic calming and hardscape recommendations such as curb extensions and medians, and traffic control measures such as pedestrian signals and flashing beacons. We will include concept plans and cost estimates for each school surveyed.

Encouragement

The final piece of the Plan will include suggested encouragement programs, such as in-school competitions for the "golden sneaker" award for students who walk most often to school, a mentoring program with elementary school students and middle or high school students, and participation in Walk to School Day. The Plan will include descriptions of these programs and resource guides. This task will include recommended walking route maps for each school based on the information gathered earlier. The maps will be

distributed to students and parents annually and would be available on the Albany Unified School District Web site.

Bicycle Master Plan Update

This scope of work would provide Albany with a simple, user-friendly document with heavy emphasis on updating the 11 required elements of Section 891.2 of the California Streets & Highways code. To this end, we have constructed a scope that systematically reviews each required element and the amount of effort required to update it. The scope assumes that the sole outreach will be to the Traffic and Safety Commission. In order to capture other stakeholders, the City may wish to extend a special invitation to the participants in the Albany Rollers and Strollers listserv.

Kick Off Meeting

As the first task, we will meet with City staff. This will be a working meeting to gather information about the updates for tasks 1-5. We will bring large scale maps that we will mark-up during the meeting, and we will also come prepared to review questions about whether or not the City's safety, education, and outreach programs have changed since the last update. The result of this meeting will be a data collection plan that will solidify our map updates and a list of follow-up questions and contacts to update the sections on programs.

Task 1 – Estimated Bicycle Commuters

We will revisit the numbers from the 2000 Census and create a map of the City displaying the percent of commuters throughout the City. This will serve as the estimated number of existing bicycle commuters in the plan area. Based on the percentage of the overall network that the City has implemented, we will estimate the increase in the number of bicycle commuters resulting from implementation of the plan.

Task 2 – Land Use Patterns Map

If the City has adopted a new General Plan zoning map, we will include it. Otherwise, the previous map should be sufficient to provide a map and description of existing and proposed land use and settlement patterns which shall include, but not be limited to, locations of residential neighborhoods, schools, shopping centers, public buildings, and major employment centers. We have allocated minimal resources to this effort.

Task 3 – Existing Bicycle Facilities

We will work with the City to update our existing GIS layer showing constructed bicycle facilities. As part of this task, we have allocated 30 hours to conduct a brief field survey of existing facilities. The purpose of this survey is to provide the City with information about maintenance. It may be that an initial part of the next phase of work for the City will be to re-stripe or upgrade existing bikeways. The deliverable from this portion of the task will be an updated map and description of existing bikeways.

Task 4 – Support Facilities and Intermodal Connections

With input from the Traffic and Safety Commission and City staff, we will update the map and description of existing and proposed end-of-trip bicycle parking facilities. These shall include, but not be limited to, parking at schools, shopping centers, public buildings, and major employment centers.

As part of this task, we will also update a separate map and description of existing and proposed facilities for changing and storing clothes and equipment. These shall include, but not be limited to, locker, restroom, and shower facilities near bicycle parking facilities.

Finally, we will update the map and description of existing and proposed bicycle transport and parking facilities for connections with and use of other transportation modes. We anticipate that these updates will be minor, and that most of what is in the prior plan is re-usable.

We have allocated 10 hours for field work, if necessary. Otherwise, these hours may be used under task 3.

Task 5 – Safety and Education

We will work with the City to get updates on this section. A description of bicycle safety and education programs conducted in the area included within the plan, efforts by the law enforcement agency having primary traffic law enforcement responsibility in the area to enforce provisions of the Vehicle Code pertaining to bicycle operation, and the resulting effect on accidents involving bicyclists.

Task 6 – Other Updates

We have allocated hours to review and update other portions of the plan at the direction of the City. We have allocated 16 professional hours to this task.

Task 7 – Traffic and Safety Commission Meeting

We will get a list of project requests from the City in order to update the proposed bikeway network, and we anticipate that at this point, we will finalize our base maps and meet with the Traffic and Safety Commission to review the proposed project list. Once we have received input, we will perform an assessment of the feasibility of various projects not already included in the proposed project list. We may also use this time to examine the feasibility of the next five projects on the City's list.

The result of this effort will be an updated list of projects which will be prioritized according to the criteria we formulated in the 2002 plan. If the City would like to update or simplify these criteria, we will do that before prioritizing the new project list. The final deliverable will be a map and description of proposed bikeways. We assume that much of the 2002 plan is re-usable, with edits and revisions as directed by the City.

Task 8 – Regional Coordination and Past Expenditures

We will review the MTC Regional Bike Plan and the Alameda County Bicycle Plan in order to ensure consistency. We will also work with the City to update the list of expenditures on bicycle facilities in the last five years. Finally, this section will include an updated Capital Improvement Program, with cost estimates and funding sources identified for each project.

Task 9 – Draft and Final Bicycle Plan

We will submit a draft bicycle plan to the City for review. We will meet with the City to discuss edits and revisions and submit the next version to the Traffic and Safety Commission for review and comment. At this point, the City will provide a second round of comments, and we will update the final version of the Plan for adoption.