La Mesa Freeway Crossing Plan

A Report to the City of La Mesa on
Improving Mobility Across Freeways

December 2008

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Local Government Commission
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Views and opinions expressed in this report to not necessarily represent the views of opinions of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) or the California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency.

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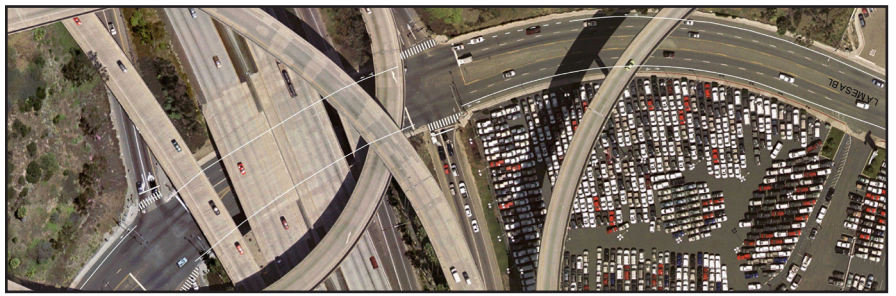


CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

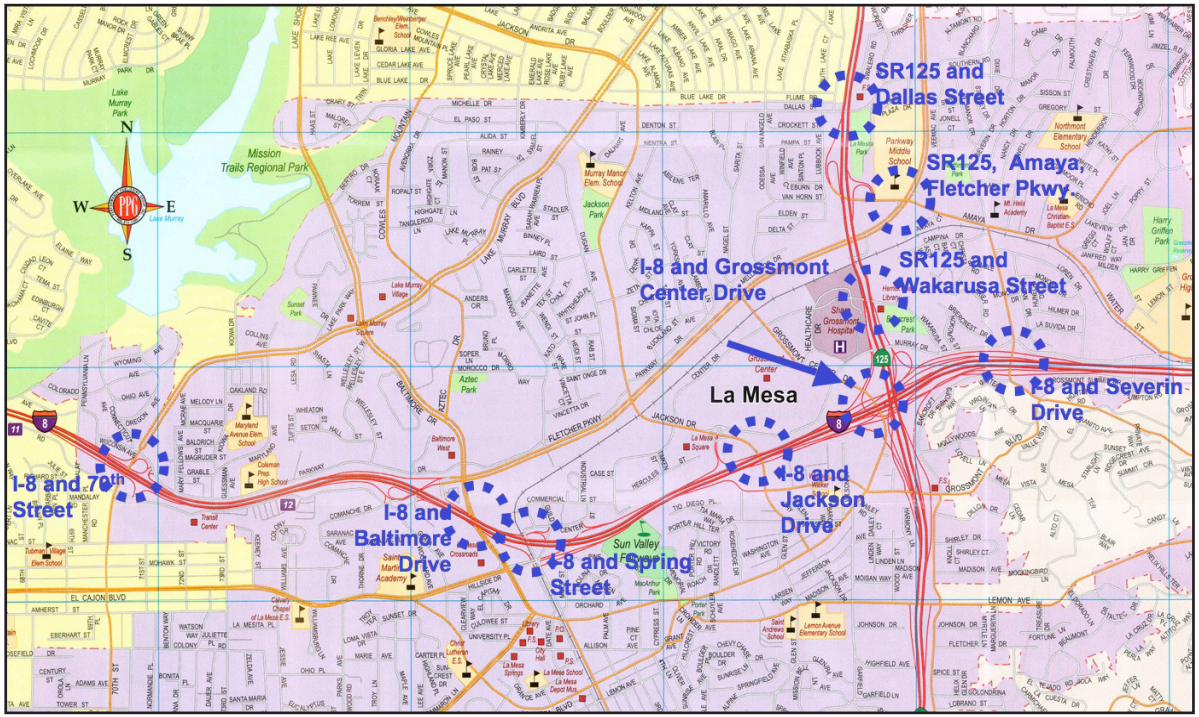
Background

The City of La Mesa is crisscrossed by three limited access freeways. Interstate 8 passes east/west through the middle, splitting the City in two; State Route 94 forms the southern border with Lemon Grove; and for the past 18 years, State Route 125 has been under several phases of construction in the eastern portion of the City. While these freeways provide excellent access to the region, they severely restrict travel between different parts of the City of La Mesa.

Most of the freeway overcrossings and undercrossings that were built several decades ago were designed with little thought to pedestrian and bicycle access. Modern sensibilities, current regulation, and Caltrans policy all dictate a more inclusive approach to transportation facilities. This project addresses that earlier oversight.

The project was initiated through a partnership between the City of La Mesa and the Local Government Commission (LGC). Additional design experts were brought to the team from Livable Streets, Inc., and Walkable Communities.

This project is aimed at improving bicycle,



pedestrian, and motor vehicle connections across the two major freeways — Interstate 8 and State Route 125 — that divide the City of La Mesa. This project engaged community leaders, businesses, and residents through an intensive design charrette process, to develop a vision and detailed recommendations for improving connections and linkages between neighborhoods and to transit centers at eight freeway crossings. At the request of City officials, the intersection of Amaya Drive and Fletcher Parkway was added during the charrette. The complete list is:

1. 70th Street/I-8
2. Baltimore Drive/I-8
3. Spring Street/I-8
4. Jackson Drive/I-8
5. Grossmont Center Drive/I-8
6. Dallas Street/Route 125
7. Amaya Drive/Fletcher Parkway
8. Wakarusa Street/Route 125
9. Severin Drive/I-8

This project is part of the City's efforts in recent years to aggressively pursue Smart Growth policies that support a mix of uses and greater reliance on transit, walking, and bicycling to access goods and services. In early 2005 the City was one of the first in the County to prepare a Walkability Plan that identifies ways to improve pedestrian access. Recently the City had embarked on a project to identify areas lacking sufficient sidewalks,

prioritize the missing segments, and proceed with a construction program to fill the gaps.

This project was funded by a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant. The grant program's goals are to:

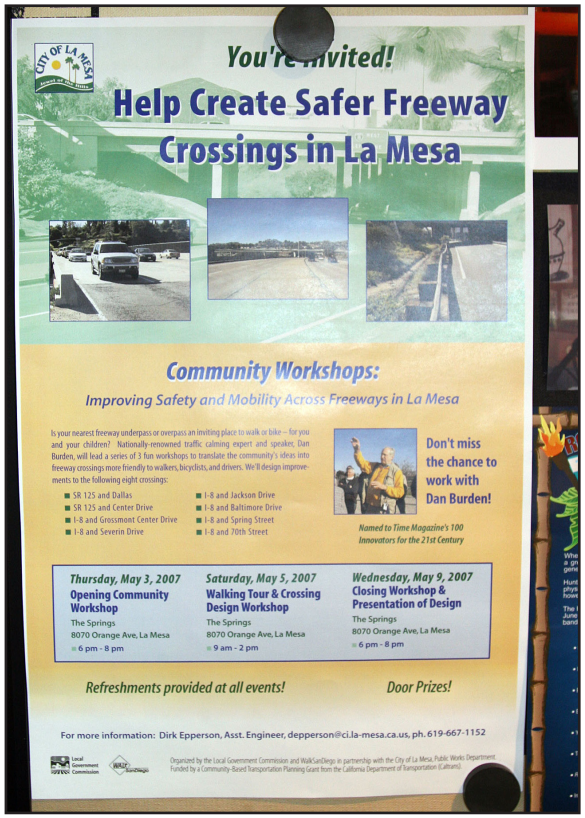
- Develop more efficient land use patterns
- Reduce dependency on single-occupant vehicle trips
- Foster designs that enable walking and bicycling for healthier communities
- Protect the environment
- Increase resource use efficiency
- Reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality

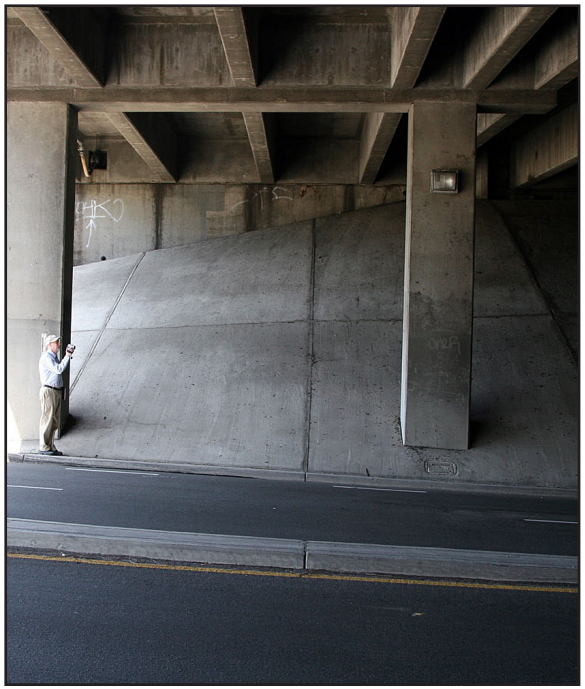
Goals related to infill, affordable housing, and jobs/housing links were often ignored by transportation activities in the past. This project and the implementation activities that will follow advance those goals.

Historical Context

The nearly century-old City of La Mesa is located in the eastern part of the San Diego metropolitan area, approximately 12 miles inland from the coast with roughly 56,000 residents. San Diego State University is immediately west of the City. The cities of Lemon Grove, El Cajon and San Diego are adjacent to the City. The unincorporated communities of Grossmont, Mount Helix and Casa De Oro are located east of the City. The City is 9 square miles in size and is mostly "built out" with little vacant land available for new development.

La Mesa is essentially built out and does not have any large parcels for new develop-

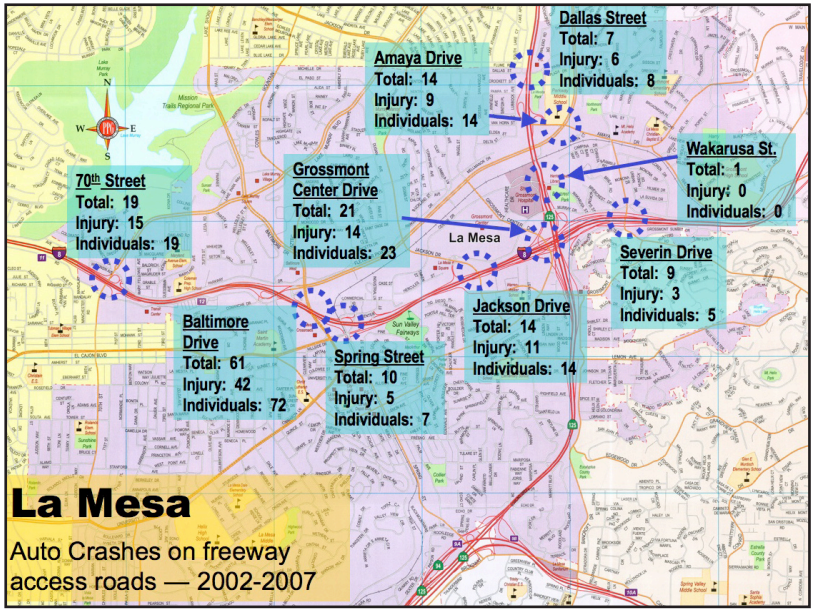




ment, yet population continues to grow at a steady pace. Between 1990 and 2000 the City's population grew by 3.4 percent. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) projects that the City will grow by 4.2 percent from 2000 to 2010. This population growth within a built-out City will require creative re-use of land and careful planning of higher density development, ideally along major transportation networks. The challenge will be to improve livability at the same time that the demand for new housing and services increases. To meet that challenge, the City is embarking on innovative land use and transportation policies.

In 2003 the City adopted a plan to encourage mixed use development along certain corridors. Over the past several years the City focused on rebuilding and enhancing some of its key arterial corridors. Streetscape improvements along El Cajon Boulevard were completed in 2002. The City recently completed the University Avenue Coordior Revitalization Plan that looked for ways to improve University Avenue.

In addition, the population of La Mesa is significantly older than in neighboring communities or the County as a whole. In 2000, La Mesa's median age was 37.3 years; roughly four years older than the County's median age. Specifically, 17.2 percent of La Mesa residents were over the age of 65 in 2000; while the proportion of 65+ residents in neighboring cities was substantially



lower (9 to 12 percent). Older residents are especially dependent on transit and walking for transportation. Along with children, they are often more vulnerable when walking or crossing a street.

Project Locations

While La Mesa is well-located in the region, it is a City that is fragmented by its transportation corridors. The I-8 freeway running east-west bisects the City into two parts. To the north and close to the freeway are larger commercial/retail/industrial nodes as well as a major regional hospital and medical center complex. South of I-8 are some of the City's oldest residential neighborhoods as well as the City's historic downtown. The freeway also cuts off the La Mesa Industrial district from the La Mesa Village transit center, which includes trolley access and stops for 3 bus routes. Within the industrial district, there are currently 120 businesses, which employ over 600 people. Industrial district employees who currently use transit cross the I-8 freeway by traveling along a dirt path, along a sloping embankment under an overpass and then alongside one of the access roads to the westbound onramp that has no sidewalk. If conditions for crossing were made safer, a larger number of employees in the industrial center might be encouraged to use transit.

The residential neighborhoods in central La Mesa south of Interstate 8 are some of the City's most densely developed. Residents of these neighborhoods lack safe pedestrian and

bicycle passage to the jobs and services on the north side of the freeway.

Grossmont High School is located north of I-8 and east of Route 125 in the northeastern quadrant of the City. Students from residential neighborhoods south of the freeway must cross the interstate on an overpass at Severin Drive that is hostile to pedestrians. The Severin Drive crossing is also the connection point for sub-regionally important bicycle facilities on Bancroft Drive and Severin Drive, but provides no designated lanes or signage for bikes.

State Route 125 which runs north-south in the eastern part of the City also cuts off neighborhoods to the east from the rest of La Mesa. An elementary school, a middle school, and several parks are located less than half-a-mile from SR 125.

The underpasses and overpasses that are located at intervals of 0.5 to 1.0 mile along the freeway tend to be dark, or poorly-lit places that most pedestrians and bicyclists avoid. These barriers inhibit economic development in La Mesa. They also reduce the number of sites available for infill residential or mixed-use development. And they impede travel by residents to the bus and rail transit centers within the City. If La Mesa is going to accommodate and improve the quality of life of its residents and workers in the years to come it is critical that it take steps to improve some of the areas close to these freeway crossings.

Key to that will be enhancing roadways and linkages so that residents feel safe walking, bicycling, and taking transit within the City and to outside destinations.

According to City of La Mesa Police Department data, several freeway on- and offramps are also the locations for a high incidence of collisions. From 1999 through 2004, the following locations ranked in the top 10 with over five collisions each:

- Alvarado Road from 70th Street to Route 8 eastbound ramp (6 collisions)
- 70th Street from Alvarado Road to Route 8 eastbound ramp (5 collisions)
- Baltimore Drive from El Cajon Blvd. to Route 8 eastbound ramp (5 collisions)

- Baltimore Drive from Fletcher Parkway/ Route 8 westbound onramp to route 8 westbound offramp (also 5 collisions)

While not all of these locations will be addressed by this project they do point to a systemic problem that pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists face near freeway crossings and on/off ramps: Motorists are typically traveling at higher speeds and are more likely to engage in behavior that results in dangerous conditions.

Chapter 3 of this report contains recommended designs to improve the connections across the Interstate 8 and State Route 125 freeways, and at the Amaya Drive/Fletcher Parkway intersection. The City of La Mesa will need to coordinate with Caltrans staff to construct the improvements in these designs. Implementation of the plan will help revitalize some of La Mesa's neighborhoods and will position the community to improve quality of life and better accommodate increased population in the decades to come. By revitalizing and improving the quality of life in La Mesa, this project helps meet some of the goals of regional smart growth planning which emphasize the need to provide housing in infill locations, avoid sprawling, low-density development on the perimeter of urban areas and improve conditions for walking and bicycling.

An additional benefit from the project was to engage residents of the City's different neighborhoods through the charrette process and events to map out strategies to improve these connections and to identify ways to revitalize adjoining neighborhoods. The process of engagement can help build trust among different stakeholders and create the sense of community that is key to implementing revitalization efforts.

Overview of this Report

This report consists of five chapters, with two appendices that provide additional information on streets and pedestrian/ bicycle facilities. The first two chapters have information on La Mesa, this project, its funding, the charrette events, and issues that this project addresses. Chapter 3 is the core of the street design component of this report, detailing the recommendations for each of the nine areas. Chapter 4 offers some short case studies of other grade-separated crossings that go over or under freeways in California, and one in Washington State that crosses a body of water. These examples demonstrate what can be accomplished in La Mesa with designs for safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle crossings that are also attractive. (Chapter 4 was provided to the City in advance of this full report.) Chapter 5 concludes the body of the report with a discussion of implementation and construction issues.

The first appendix is an overview of the "complete streets" concept, which is a phrase for streets that accomodate all users, not just those in private vehicles. Appendix Two has several components providing background information on streets, potential funding sources, design solutions that fit the street's context, vehicle crashes, benefits of trees and bike lanes, and notes from the charrette events.

The next chapter describes the process that led to the resident and project team recommendations to improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.

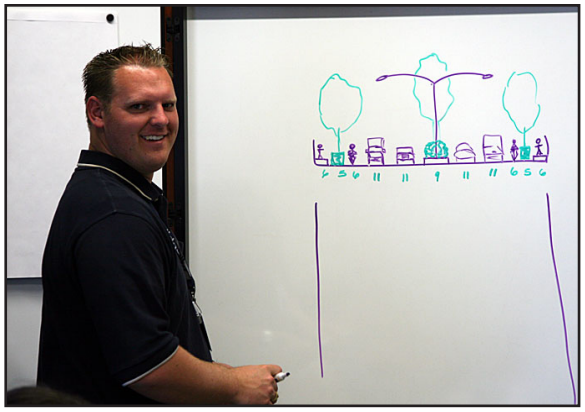
CHAPTER TWO: THE CHARRETTE PROCESS

Steps in a Charrette

Charrettes are an increasingly popular tool for neighborhood and street design programs. Charrettes are community-based design exercises that come out of a sincere intent to have the public involved in a meaningful way to craft their own future. This format allows residents, users of a street, or whatever population is targeted to be the primary force behind the designs. They are typically brought together for several sessions over a short period of time, before the charrette project team finalizes the designs and prepares a report like this one. In the case of this project in La Mesa, the first visiting team members arrived on Wednesday afternoon the week of the first focus group meetings and didn't depart until the closing session concluded late in the evening the following Wednesday.

Most participants in charrettes following this format strongly prefer it to the more conventional approach where a consultant team visits the community, meets with a few chosen officials or prominent citizens over a day or two, then departs to a distant place to write up a report which appears in the mail months later. The process used for this project in La Mesa gives the public more meaningful involvement and rewards the effort with a preview of the final designs at the end of the week.

A charrette like this is a multi-day event that takes months of planning and organizing to bring to life. Aside from obvious things like when and where to hold the events, unseen details are just as critical. The LGC



handled most of these tasks, but was assisted in publicity and outreach by WalkSanDiego, which has a strong interest in improving mobility for pedestrians in the community. Walk and Talk La Mesa also assisted with the project. Walk and Talk La Mesa is a weekly walking group that walks in various locations in La Mesa and in the process learns a little about the area they are strolling in. It is led by volunteers who organize walks every Tuesday at 9am. This group has been involved with the City's ongoing program to improve access and pedestrian facilities throughout the city.

Project Team

The project team included the following individuals:

City Staff:

- Greg Humora, Public Works Director
- Dirk Epperson, Assistant Engineer
- Patricia Rutledge, Program Coordinator

Local Government Commission:

- Paul Zykofsky, Director Transportation and Land Use Programs
- Anthony Leonard, Project Manager
- Steve Tracy, Senior Research Analyst

Consulting Designers:

- Dan Burden, Executive Director of Walkable Communities
- Michael M. Moule, P.E., P.T.O.E., President, Livable Streets, Inc.

WalkSanDiego:

- Kristin Mueller, Project Coordinator
- Noel Edwards, Volunteer

Outreach Efforts

Publicity is critical to getting enough people to the charrette events for the design exercise to be meaningful. With WalkSanDiego taking the lead, this task was shared among project team members, who also contacted community organizations and other public entities. Additional outreach assistance was provided by:

- Grossmont Union High School District
- La Mesa-Spring Valley School District
- La Mesa Wellness Task Force.

Focus Group Meetings

Focus group meetings are held with stakeholders who have an interest in the charrette project. These groups typically range from five to ten individuals, a size that allows for comfortable conversations about freeway crossings, or street and safety issues in general. Several of these meetings were held in La Mesa over a period of two days.

City Staff:
Representatives from the Public Works and Engineering Department, and the Community Development Department.

City Commissions:

- Commission on Aging
- Community Services Commission
- Human Relations Advisory Commission
- Planning Commission
- Traffic Commission
- Youth Advisory Commission

Community Organizations:

- City of La Mesa Community Services Department, Walk and Talk La Mesa, and La Mesa Wellness Task Force.
- Schools – La Mesa-Spring Valley School District, and Grossmont Union High School District.
- Transit/Emergency Response – City of La Mesa Police Department, San Diego Metropolitan Transit System.

Focus group notes are available in the appendix of this report.

Public Charrette Events

Opening Session:
On Thursday evening, May 3, 2007, the La Mesa "Improving Mobility Across Freeways" project opened with the first public event, held at The Springs apartment center meeting room. La Mesa Public Works Director Greg Humora introduced the project and offered background on the City's ongoing efforts to improve safety, sidewalks, and non-vehicular mobility in La Mesa.

Dan Burden then gave the crowd a presentation about design techniques that can convert dysfunctional, unsightly, and dangerous streets into complete streets that work for everyone, not just drivers. His presentation included examples from other cities where problem streets, intersections, and crossings were redesigned into functional, attractive, and safe public spaces.

Participants were then asked to take part in a simple exercise about priorities. They were asked to call out things they would like to give attention to, while LGC staff recorded their issues on large easel paper sheets which were then taped to the wall.

Next, each participant was given half a dozen colored adhesive dots to use as votes for the issues they feel are the most important. They were only allowed to place one dot per item,

no double votes. The results are shown in the photo below.

This information was carried forward into the subsequent tour on Saturday morning, and to the designs the project team developed over the course of the charrette.

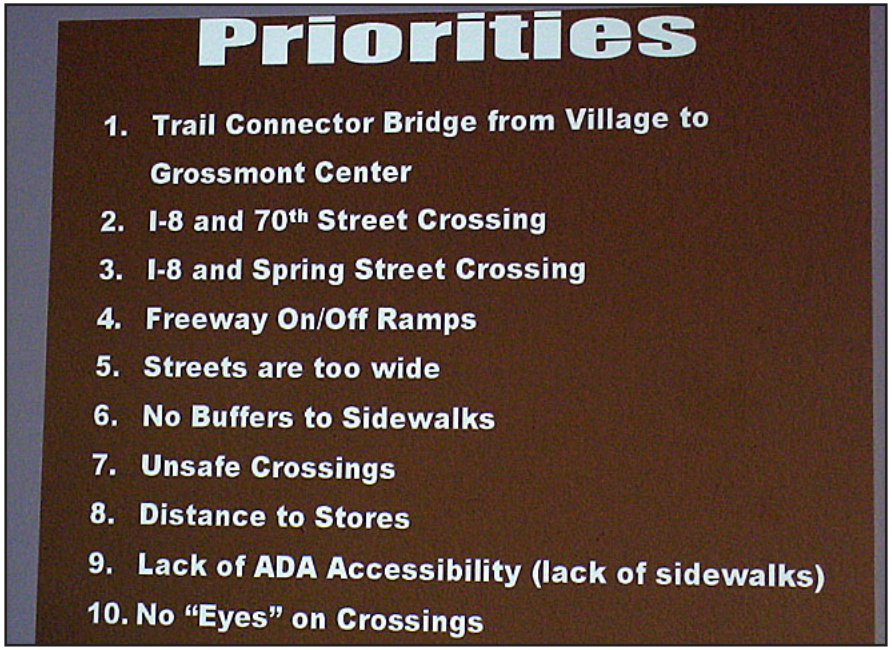
Saturday Workshop:
The Saturday session began with a refresher course on the tools available to address the priorities identified by participants on Thursday evening. These included traffic calming, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and access requirements and techniques.

Following this presentation Public Works staff led charrette participants on a walk and roll (wheelchair users were represented on this tour) through the Civic Center area to the Spring Street light rail station. From that location the group crossed to the sidewalk on the east side of Spring Street, then went north until the sidewalk ended at the I-80 onramps and the complex maze where Spring Street crosses the freeway.

This location revealed a number of challenges both for existing non-motorized users of Spring Street, and the design team. Animated, revealing, and educational discussions began at this point and were carried on as the group worked its way back to the community room for lunch.

Once refreshed, participants broke into two table groups and began the complex task of discussing each of the eight freeway crossings in the original project. These thoughts were then translated into design recommendations which they drew on large aerial photographs of each location.

During this design exercise, City staff and project team members circulated around the room observing, commenting if appropriate, and answering questions when asked. This format did not remove the expert designers



Opening workshop priorities.

A whee;chair user on the Saturday walking tour.

from the process, but kept them available while community members prepared the hands-on recommendations that follow.

Resident Design Table Recommendations

The following material is gleaned from the margin notes on the large-scale aerial photographs that the two design groups drew their recommendations on, and their presentations to the room that explained their design features and reasoning. Each crossing is discussed in order, west-to-east along Interstate 8, then north-to-south along State Route 125, before finishing with Severin Drive back on I-8. The designs are discussed in the same order in Chapter 3.

An interesting observation shows a valuable symbiosis between the two design tables. Table One best articulated the problems with the existing designs at the locations reviewed for this project, while comments from Table Two focused more on solutions to alleviate those problems.

1. 70th Street/I-8

Table One:

- Overall access to the trolley station is poor, and this project is intended to correct that.
- Poor access to trolley station from residential area northwest of crossing. Requires multiple crossings, and is missing sidewalks on the east side of the bridge.
- Poor access to trolley station from residential area on hill to the south of Alvarado Road. They must go out to 70th Street at the top of the hill, and walk along the fast, busy traffic to get to the access road to the trolley station.
- No pedestrian access on east side of bridge.
- It is hard for pedestrians and cars to get into the Trolley station parking lot.
- Fast traffic on 70th Street. Traffic is fast going down the hill on Lake Murray Boulevard, which backs up at the signals at the bottom.
- Poor traffic law compliance with vehicles leaving trolley station. There is a more or less continuous flow of traffic making a right out of the trolley station parking lot onto Alvarado Road and then making a right onto northbound 70th Street.
- Pedestrians leaving trolley walking to the north side of freeway must cross two sides of 70th Street/Alvarado Road intersection, which are very wide with no medians.
- Traffic backs up on westbound I-8 onramp loop at northeast side of crossing.
- Traffic on the westbound double-lane onramp to westbound I-8 northwest of crossing does not stop for pedestrians.
- Westbound I-8 offramp northeast of crossing is dangerous, with sudden stops.

70th Street interchange and nearby intersections.

Table Two:

- The bridge needs a walking "path" on the east side.
- If there is room, put a buffer between the vehicles and pedestrians on the bridge.
- Need an island for pedestrians at the south end of the bridge, at Alvarado Road. Possibly created by taking out a lane. This might require restriping for one through lane and one left turn lane.
- Want to have trolley station-bound pedestrians cross at the south side of Alvarado Road to avoid conflicts with the driveway into the parking lot. This crossing should have the zig-zag in the middle.
- Need to improve visibility of south side crosswalks, and improve timing of pedestrian signals, because this is a very busy intersection.
- Need a visible north/south crosswalk where 70th Street turns into Lake Murray Drive.
- There is a problem at the pedestrian crossing near the westbound I-8 onramp at the northeast side of the bridge, because it is a double right turn onto the ramp, and the existing crosswalk is around the corner. Need to move the crosswalk "out" so it isn't hidden around the onramp corner. This allows drivers and pedestrians to see each other.

Baltimore Drive crossing.

2. Baltimore Drive/I-8

Table One:

- The Baltimore Drive bridge has wide travel lanes, pollution, no buffer for pedestrians, fast traffic, and is unattractive.
- The bridge has a sidewalk on only one side (west).
- The shopping center at the southeast side of the crossing has wide, unregulated driveways with no deceleration lanes.
- North of the crossing, Parkway Drive interferes with traffic as it runs along Fletcher Parkway.
- There are vacant property development opportunities east of Baltimore Drive on both sides of the freeway.
- Traffic heading towards eastbound I-8 on the merging El Cajon Boulevard and Spring Street onramps backs up.

Table Two:

- The shopping center driveways on the southeast side of the crossing are bad.

3. Spring Street/I-8

Table One:

- The trolley line complicates access to this area of Spring Street but also brings a lot of people here.
- There is a dead-end sidewalk, so if you are walking from downtown La Mesa trying to get across the freeway, it ends right at the freeway with nothing for a pedestrian to use to continue their trip.
- There is no pedestrian walkway along this (Spring) street on either the northbound or southbound bridge to get to the commercial area to the north.

Table Two:

- We really wanted to beautify the west side to keep individuals on the west side bridge instead of taking the hazardous path on the east side bridge. While we recognize this (east) route will still be used, we want to make the west side bridge the preferred route.
- Extend crosswalk across Spring Street all the way to Nebo Drive, where improved sidewalks should extend all the way to the trolley stop at Allison Avenue. People getting off the trolley and walking north would first encounter the west side bridge, and use it to get to the commercial area.

4. Jackson Drive/I-8

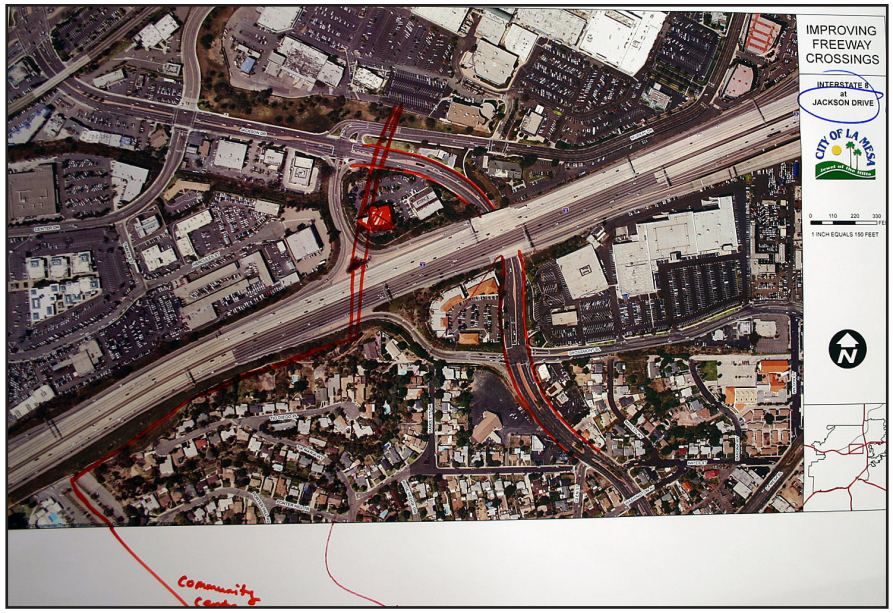
Table One:

- Sidewalks are dark, narrow, and too close to traffic.
- This crossing is unattractive.

Table Two:

- Add sidewalk at grade behind support piers on west side of tunnel.
- Landscape between support piers.
- Better lighting.
- Build pedestrian bridge to connect Grossmont Center with the MacArthur Park/La Mesa Pool complex and the town center.

Spring Street interchange.



Jackson Drive underpass.

5. Grossmont Center Drive/I-8

Table One:

- Need marked crosswalks on both sides of the undercrossing.
- Need light in the tunnel under the bridge, and wider sidewalks.
- Possibly curb extensions at the foot of the westbound I-8 offramp north of the tunnel.

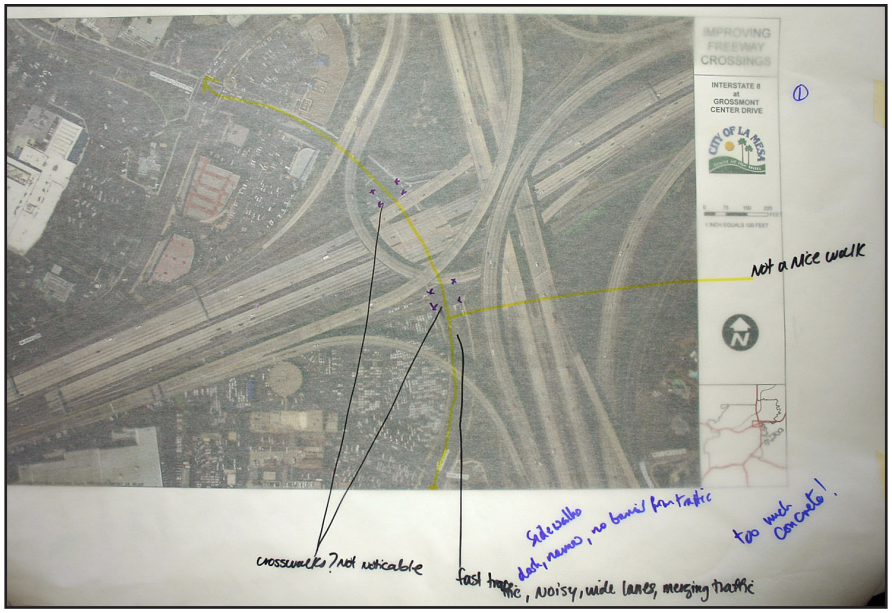
Table Two:

- Crosswalks at the base of on- and offramps are not noticeable.
- It is noisy, there is fast traffic, wide lanes, and merging traffic.
- Not a nice walk.
- Too much concrete.
- Sidewalks are dark, narrow, with no barrier from traffic.

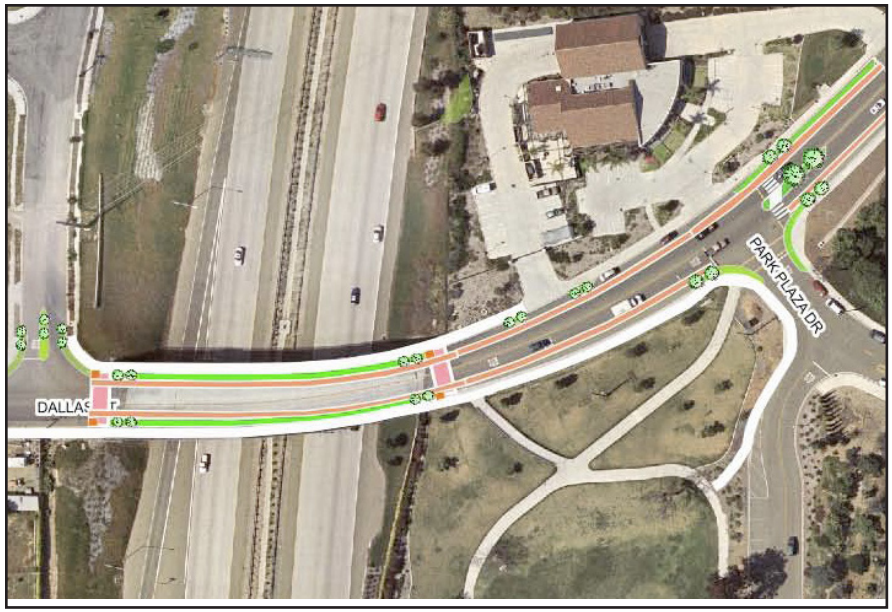
6. Dallas Street/Route 125

Table One:

- Travel lanes on the bridge are very wide, with no buffer between cars and sidewalk.
- The community west of the bridge isn't "pulled in" to La Mesita Park, and beautifying the bridge with planters would do that.
- The park has a YMCA and tennis court, community resources, but it is really dark at night, with no security or eyes on the park, and it sits below the street and feels unsafe at night. Ironic considering the fire station is across the street.
- The intersection in front of the fire station is very wide with wide lanes and long pedestrian crossings.
- Many drivers show poor compliance with the stop signs in front of the fire station.
- Farther east, near the intersection of Dallas Street and Fletcher Parkway, too many streets converge and it is hard to get in or out of the strip mall. The traffic doesn't flow well.



Grossmont Center Drive interchange.



Dallas Street crossing.

- The intersection of Dallas Street and Fletcher Parkway is very difficult for school children to cross because it is wide with lots of traffic. But there is no other way for kids living east of Fletcher Parkway to get to the school.
- There is no access from the Parkway Middle School property to Fletcher Parkway mid-block between Dallas Street and Amaya Drive.

Table Two:

- Dallas Street is much too wide for two lanes.
- Add curb extensions at the intersection in front of the fire station to create a funnel, and take out the stop signs on Dallas that drivers ignore anyway, especially those running the westbound stop as they pick up speed coming down the hill.
- Beautify the bridge, add some lighting per illustration on aerial photograph, and add trees and bushes.
- Feels desolate and unsafe, even for student leaving the middle school during the day.
- Bike lanes are not necessary in a residential area.

7. Amaya Drive/Fletcher Parkway

This intersection was not addressed by the Saturday workshop resident groups.

8. Wakarusa Street/Route 125

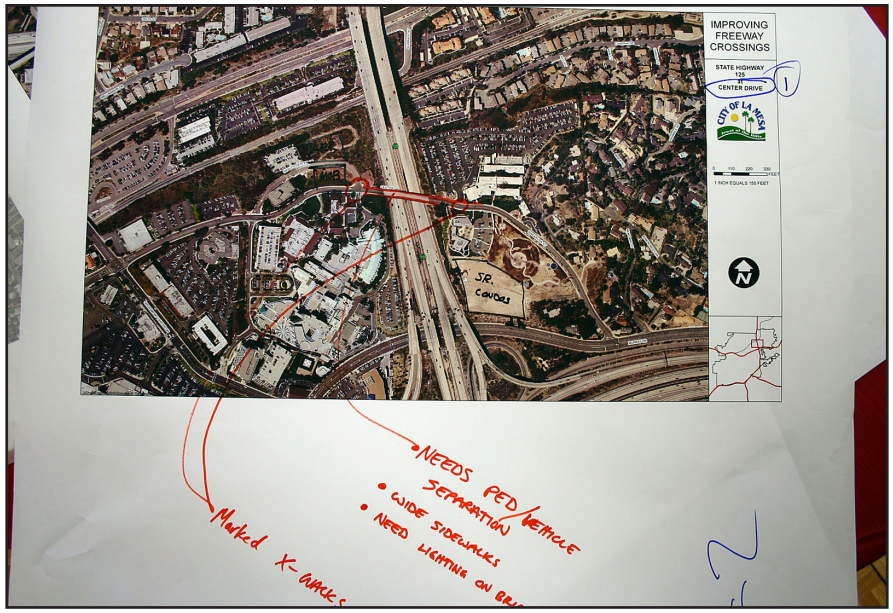
Table One:

- Overcrossing bridge needs better markings.
- Wide travel lanes need to be addressed.
- Crosswalks on either side of bridge need to be addressed.

Table Two:

- Pedestrian walkways on both sides need better lighting and wider sidewalks with a separation between pedestrians and traffic.
- Driveway to the employee parking lot northeast of the bridge needs crosswalks and changes to make it easier for

Amaya Drive and Fletcher Parkway intersection.



Wakarusa Street and Center Drive crossing.

pedestrians to get across. Cars make both left and right turns in to, and out of, this driveway.

- Intersection at Healthcare Drive and Center Drive needs crosswalk visibility.

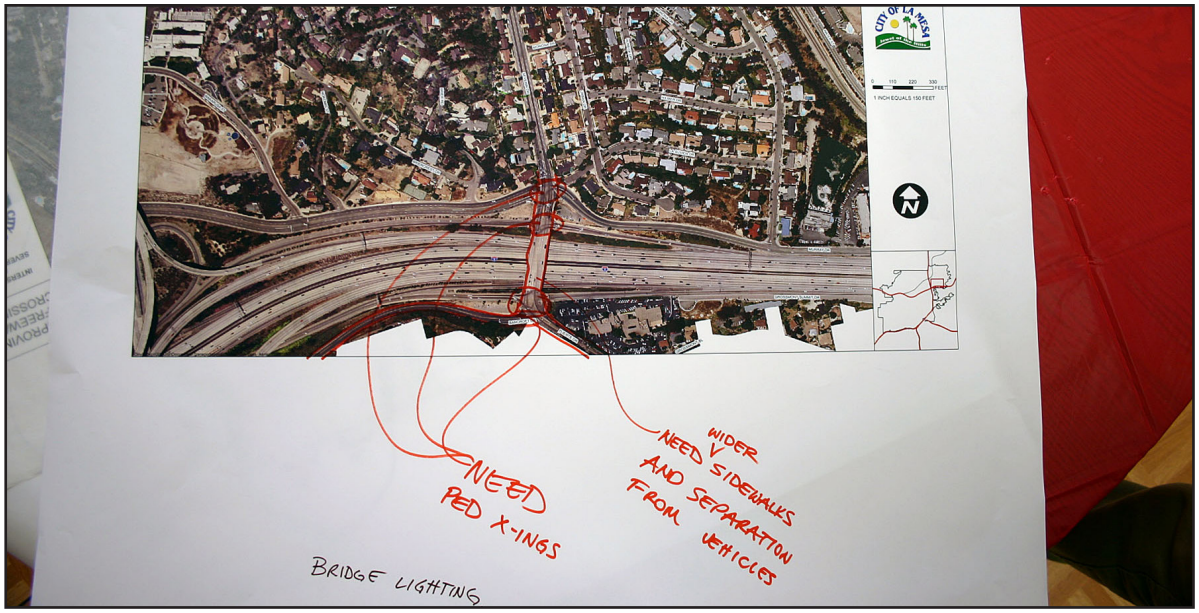
9. Severin Drive/I-8

Table One:

- North side of bridge has two intersections with signals close together.
- South side intersection is confusing, with limited visibility. Hard to know which light to follow, which lane to be in.
- There are no crosswalk markings on the south side.
- There are no crosswalk markings on the north side intersections. It is difficult to cross, and to decide how to do it.
- Can't cross Severin Drive south of the bridge. Requires long trek one way or the other to legal crossing. This increases pedestrian risk by forcing them to cross multiple intersections.

Table Two:

- Need pedestrian crossings at Fuerte Drive/ Bancroft Drive, The westbound I-8 on- and offramps on the north side of the bridge, and at Murray Drive.
- The bridge is wide enough for sidewalks.
- The bridge needs lighting, wider sidewalks, and a buffer from vehicles.



Severin Drive interchange and nearby intersections.

Closing Session

This session, also held at The Springs community room, was held Wednesday evening, May 9, 2007. Over two dozen residents and project team members were in attendance as Dan Burden began his presentation with a brief recap of the tools of good street design. This was followed by detailed images of the resident and project team recommendations for each of the nine locations: eight freeway crossings in the initial project plus the Amaya Drive/Fletcher Parkway intersection.

Upon reviewing the designs, participants asked questions and made suggestions for additional features at some locations. One example was a request for a new sidewalk on the west side of 70th Street as it climbs the hill south of I-8. This location does see pedestrian traffic, as evidenced by the footpath in the dirt alongside the existing roadway.

The designs resulting from this process appear in the next chapter of this report.

While freeways provide wonderful access to the region, travel across the freeways is difficult for everyone.

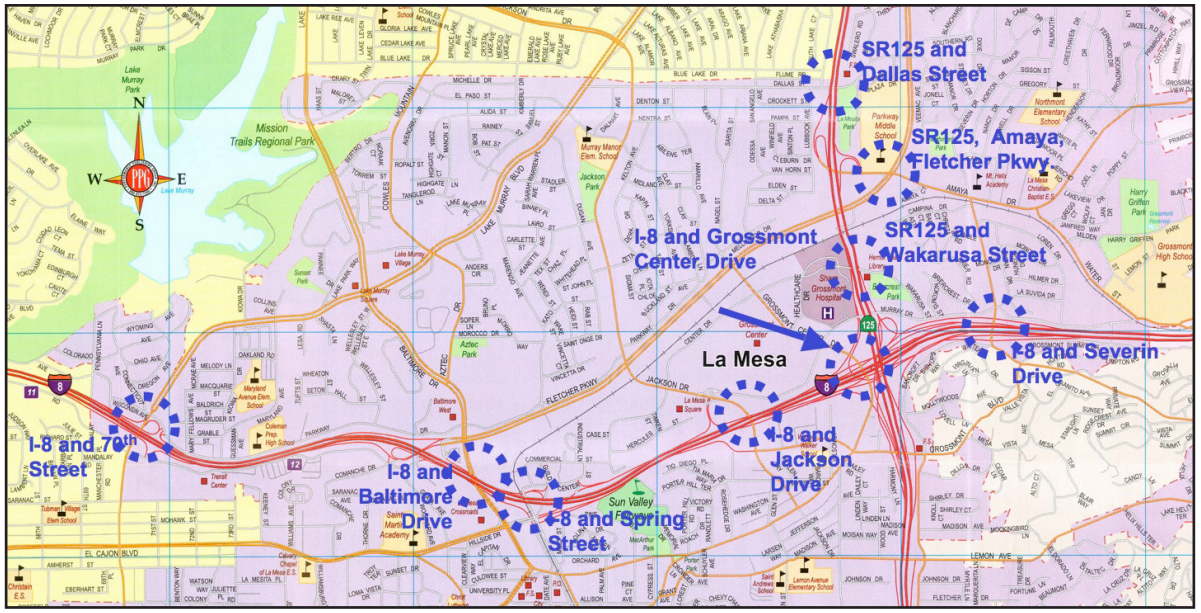


Figure 3-1: The eight freeway crossings and one surface street intersection in this project.

CHAPTER THREE: FREEWAY CROSSING DESIGNS

Overview

The design recommendations are the heart of this report. This section details the current status of each crossing and recommendations for improved designs. The crossings are discussed west to east along Interstate 8 from 70th Street to Grossmont Center Drive, then north to south along or near State Route 125 from Dallas Street to Wakarusa Street, finishing at Severin Drive and Interstate 8. See Figure 3-1 at left.

Critical issues raised during the charrette events are addressed by the designs. It is important to remember that these designs are not the product of the design team working in isolation, but are based on the resident design group recommendations. Factors leading to these designs include:

- Suggestions made by the residents at the Saturday design workshop.
- Effective solutions used in similar situations in other cities.
- Traffic volumes in the location of the crossings.
- Accident types and frequency.
- Simplicity and cost.

Personal security issues....

The discussion of each crossing begins with a short description of the current situation. This information will include:

- Section width – the measurement across the street at the bridge or undercrossing, curb to curb, occasionally with additional information.
- Average Daily Traffic (ADT) – recent 24 hour weekday vehicle counts in both directions on each crossing.
- Accident history – at or near the crossing facility, from January 1, 2002 to May 7, 2007, City of La Mesa and Caltrans data.
- Issues – comments made by residents in the charrette sessions.
- Resident recommendations – made by "hands-on" design table groups at the Saturday workshop.

In some cases, short-term solutions can be implemented with inexpensive paint treatments to improve crosswalks, add bicycle lanes, and narrow vehicle lanes. Additional design features such as curb extensions and median landscaping can be added as funding can be found. ADA ramps should be provided at every appropriate location as soon as possible. Possible funding sources for much of this work are discussed in Chapter 5 of this report.

...barriers....

...and safety hazards are numerous at freeway crossings.

Design Highlights

- Improving accident safety and personal security through good design and lighting.
- Narrowing vehicle lanes slightly to reduce vehicle speed and free up roadway space for buffers and bike lanes.
- Adding, widening, or improving sidewalks.
- Adding bicycle lanes wherever possible.
- Providing two ADA ramps at every corner of every intersection (except where crosswalks are blocked for safety reasons).
- Completing intersections near freeway crossing locations to provide a full complement of painted crosswalks, ADA ramps, pedestrian signals, etc.
- Reducing vehicle speeding through design techniques (which improve safety without requiring additional enforcement).
- Landscaping to improve the appearance of the bridges and undercrossings.

Pedestrians find ways to avoid danger.

The charrette design team looks for solutions...

...to improve pedestrian, bicycle, and handicapped access and safety.

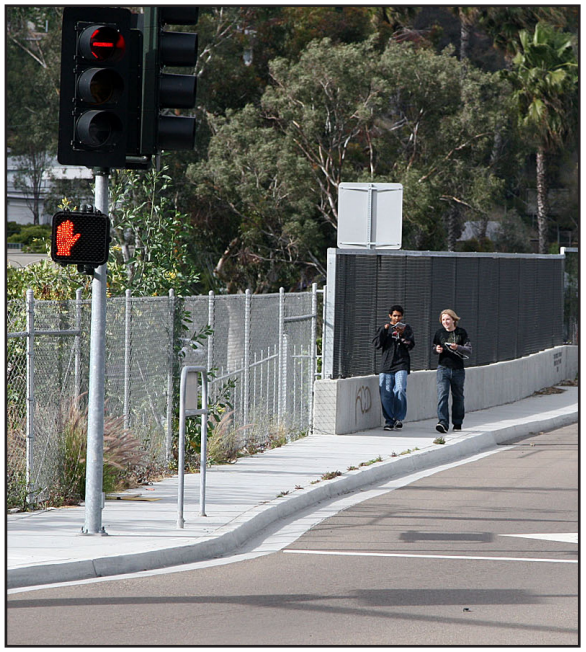
Figure 3-2: Overview of design recommendations for the area near the 70th Street freeway crossing.

Design Recommendations

1. 70th Street and Interstate 8

This crossing carries extremely high traffic volumes, the second highest of those studied in this project. It is made more difficult by very complicated and confined designs for the nearby intersections and freeway access roads. This requires vehicles traveling towards or away from Interstate 8 to make multiple turns in many cases. Immediately off the freeway, access roads create complicated intersections very close to the 70th Street intersections with the Alvarado Road and Parkway Drive "frontage roads" that parallel the freeway. (Figure 3-2 at left)

This freeway crossing was redesigned several years ago in anticipation of additional vehicle traffic in and out of the nearby 70th Street Transit Center. Still, it is not a contemporary design. For example, the only non-vehicular feature on the crossing itself is the single 5-foot wide sidewalk on the western edge of the bridge. This means a trolley passenger living north of the freeway and east of Lake Murray Drive would have to cross very wide intersections both north and south of the freeway to get to the only pedestrian crossing on the west wide of the bridge. The proposed design gives more route options, widens sidewalks, adds bike lanes, and greatly improves safety.



Some pedestrian facilities can be found...

...but they are often narrow and create an exposed feeling...

...or end suddenly forcing pedesrians to improvise.

Bike lanes are also inconsistent.

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – 67 feet.
- ADT – 32 thousand.
- Accidents – 19 total, including 15 injury accidents resulting in injuries to 19 individuals.
- Issues – High traffic volumes, speeding, signal timing for pedestrians, drivers don't yield to pedestrians, busy intersections and onramp/offramp complexes close to the bridge, the light rail station nearby, poor sight lines, missing sidewalks and bike lanes.
- Resident Recommendations – Focus on slowing vehicle traffic, adding or improving pedestrian links and safety, fix the westbound I-8 onramp crosswalk, improve pedestrian access to the trolley station, add and highlight crosswalks, and buffer pedestrians on the bridge.
- The bridge's current dimensions within the 67 foot ROW are (west to east): a single 5-foot sidewalk, two southbound 12-foot travel lanes, and three northbound travel lanes (two 12 feet wide, and one 14 feet wide). This asymmetrical design is to accommodate the high northbound traffic volumes heading towards the freeway in the morning rush hour.
- This configuration is depicted in Figure 3-3 below.

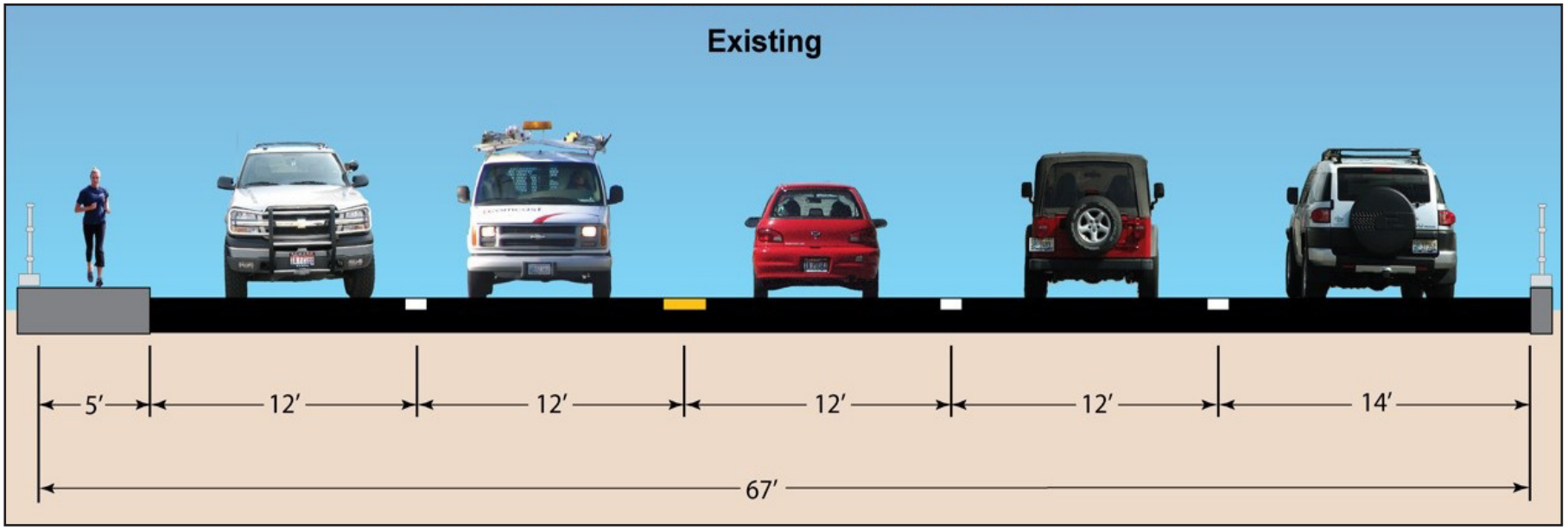


Figure 3-3: The existing configuration of the 70th Street bridge, showing three northbound lanes, no sidewalk on east side, and no bike lanes on either side.

Recommendations

At this complicated location, proposed changes are broken into three areas: the crossing bridge first, and the two intersections to the north and south.

A. Interstate 8 Overcrossing (Figure 3-4)

The recent reconstruction of the bridge that resulted in the odd five-lane design provides room for bike lanes by eliminating a single vehicle lane. The recommended design, from west to east in the existing 67-foot ROW includes:

- Retain the existing 5-foot sidewalk.
- Add a 6.5-foot southbound bicycle lane, colored red with bold white edge stripes.
- Reduce the southbound vehicle lanes from 12 feet to one 10-foot and one 11-foot lane.
- Add a raised curb in the bridge median, approximately one foot wide.
- Eliminate one northbound travel lane because the vehicle count does not justify three lanes.
- Reduce the width of the two remaining northbound lanes to one 11-foot and one 10-foot lane.
- Add a 6.5-foot southbound bicycle lane, colored red with bold white edge stripes.
- Add a 7-foot wide raised sidewalk on the eastern side of the bridge.

Pedestrians are obscured by the curve and poles.

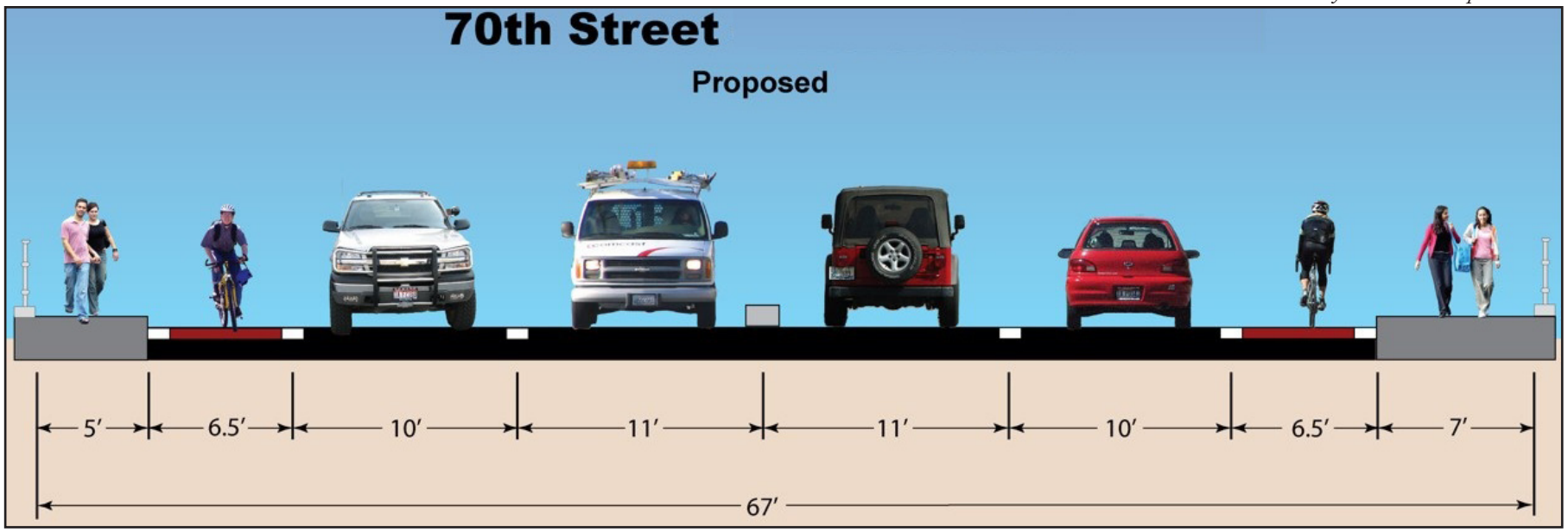


Figure 3-4: The recommended design for the 70th Street bridge, with two through lanes in each direction, an additional sidewalk on the east side, and bike lanes.

Bicyclists are forced to ride in traffic...

...which often is very complicated.

Very wide Lake Murray Boulevard with few crosswalks and no bike lanes.

B. North Side–Lake Murray Boulevard Intersection

This is the most complicated intersection studied for this project. It funnels traffic to and from three westbound I-8 onramp approaches (one with two lanes), and two westbound offramps. These freeway access roads make pedestrian travel difficult. This intersection is actually a five-point star, where Wisconsin Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Lake Murray Boulevard, Parkway Drive, and 70th Street all intersect. This confluence is tough for drivers, very difficult and dangerous for pedestrians, and offers nothing at all for bicyclists. The recommendations are discussed in clockwise order. See Figure 3-5, below.

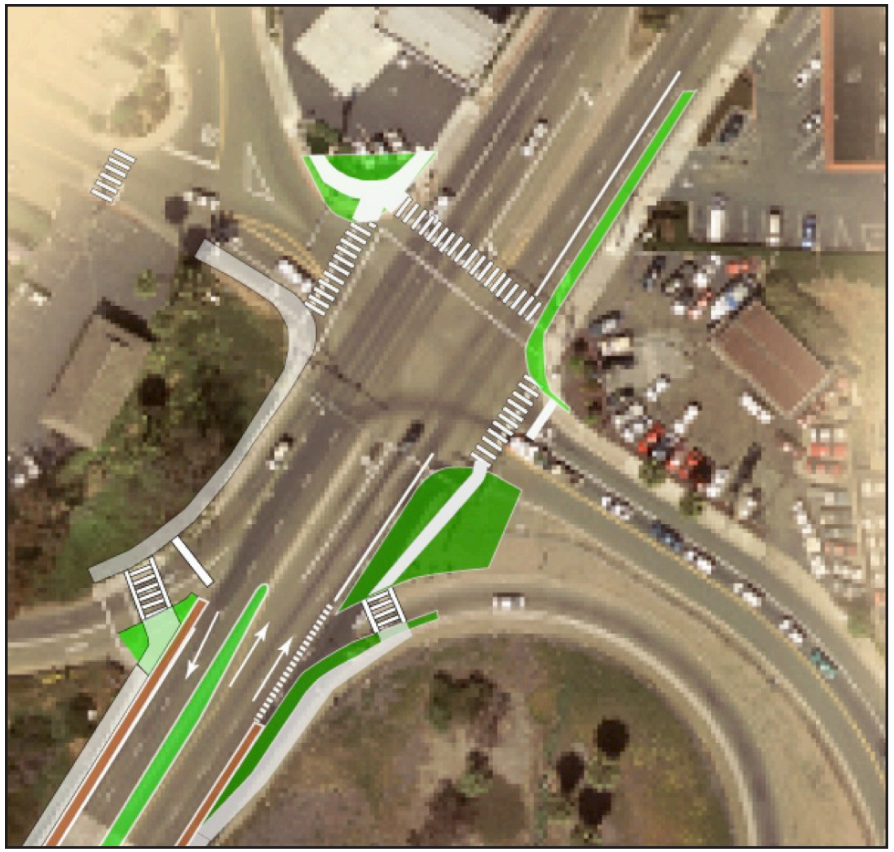


Figure 3-5: Recommended design for complex intersections north of the bridge.

Southbound Lake Murray Boulevard to westbound I-8 two-lane onramp.

This location has a very critical pedestrian safety problem that should be addressed immediately. It is caused by the width of the two-lane onramp road, the tendency of drivers to begin speeding up as they enter the freeway, the downslope of the onramp approach, and the fact that the crosswalk is located too far around the corner for safety. A pedestrian (especially a short child) waiting to cross this onramp road in an easterly direction is hidden from a driver's view by the slope and the landscaping. The recommendations are:

- Extend the point of the raised sidewalk northward to match the painted traffic splitter at that location.
- Move the crosswalk north ten to twenty feet, and install bold striping.
- Add a bold "stop bar" ten feet north of the crosswalk.
- Extend the new southbound bike lane across the onramp and northward on Lake Murray Boulevard.

Westbound I-8 onramp with dangerous crosswalk.

Many young people must cross here with two lanes of accelerating vehicles.

Pedestrians are partially obscured behind landscaping, poles, and cars.

Wisconsin Avenue/Connecticut Avenue/Lake Murray Drive Intersection.

This intersection is wider than it needs to be considering that the two western approaches are narrow residential streets. The recommendations are:

- Install raised islands and curb extensions where Connecticut Avenue intersects Wisconsin Avenue to improve pedestrian safety and slow vehicles speeding onto Connecticut Avenue.
- Extend the curbs at both the north and south sides of the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and Lake Murray Boulevard to narrow vehicle space and shorten the crosswalk distance.
- Add high visibility striping to crosswalk.

Lake Murray Boulevard and Parkway Drive Intersection.

This intersection also has excess lane width, which can be reduced to slow vehicles, provide bike lanes, and shorten crosswalk distances. The recommendations are:

- Extend the curbing on the north and south sides of Parkway Drive as shown in Figure 3-6.
- Reduce the width of the northbound curb lane on Lake Murray Drive by extending the curb and adding a bike lane.
- Move crosswalk across Lake Murray Boulevard north ten feet and boldly stripe it.
- Add a high visibility striped crosswalk across Parkway Drive, add a stop bar.

Northbound 70th Street to Westbound I-8 Onramp area.

A sidewalk needs to be added in the area of the onramp to continue the sidewalk added on the east side of the freeway crossing bridge. (Shown in green on Figure 3-6, below.) To achieve this:

- Extend curbing on both sides of the onramp and around the Parkway Drive corner.
- Add a high visibility striped crosswalk across the onramp.
- Add a sidewalk from the onramp entrance to the Parkway Drive corner.
- Extend bike lane striping across the onramp entrance and north across the Parkway Drive intersection.

Complex intersection where five streets meet is a hazard to pedestrians.

Figure 3-6: Resident design table solutions for this location.

C. South Side–Alvarado Road Intersection

The design of this intersection is more straightforward than that north of the crossing, but it is complicated by two factors. Less than 100 yards east of 70th Street, a three-lane offramp and a two-lane onramp connect Alvarado Road with eastbound I-8. A San Diego trolley station is located just two hundred yards farther to the east on Alvarado Road. A redesign of the intersection coincided with the bridge redesign a few years ago. This attempt to accommodate freeway and trolley-oriented traffic led to an Alvarado Road section on the east side of 70th Street that is seven vehicle lanes wide. Improvements necessary to make this area more friendly for all users are detailed below, again clockwise from the southwest corner of the intersection.

West of Alvarado Road/70th Street.

- Add a boldly striped crosswalk with a stop bar across Alvarado Road.
- Add a raised median in Alvarado Road west of 70th Street.
- See the left edge of Figure 3-7, below.

Note lack of sidewalks on 70th Street...

...and barriers to pedestrian travel.

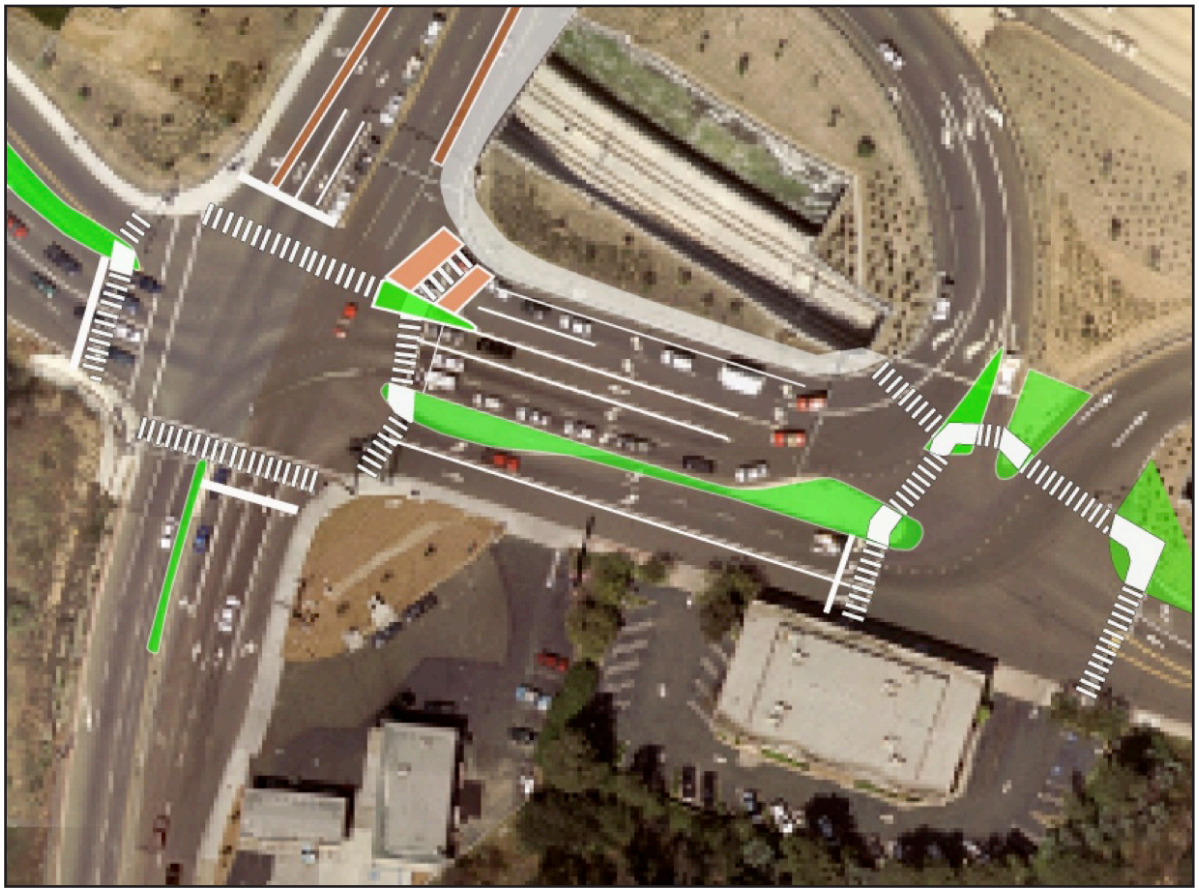


Figure 3-7: Design recommendations for area south of the 70th Street bridge.

North Side of Intersection on 70th Street.

- Add a boldly striped crosswalk with a stop bar across 70th Street.
- Continue the red-colored bikes lanes with bold white edge stripes from the freeway crossing bridge to the intersection.

East Side of Alvarado Road, Figure 3-7.

- Add a raised triangular island at the northwest corner of the intersection to separate right turning and through traffic.
- Add a boldly striped crosswalk with stop bars across Alvarado Road, raised where it crosses the double right turn lanes.
- Add bike lane striping on both sides of Alvarado Road.

East of Alvarado Road, at I-8 On- and Offramps.

- Add a new raised triangular island as shown in Figure 3-7.
- Extend curbing on both sides of the onramps.
- Add boldly striped crosswalks across both freeway access roads and Alvarado Road.

South Side of Intersection on 70th Street.

- Add bold striping to the crosswalk.
- Add a stop bar.
- Widen the raised median.
- Add sidewalks on both sides of 70th Street to the top of the hill.
- Continue the new bike lanes southward on 70th Street. There is more than sufficient room with only two vehicle lanes in 32 feet on each side of the median.

This redesign will address all of the issues raised by the resident design groups. The vehicle lanes have been narrowed, to reduce vehicle speeds. The additional sidewalk on the east side of the bridge and adding crosswalks at nearby intersections will improve pedestrian links. These features and the new location for the westbound I-8 onramp crosswalk will improve pedestrian safety. Finally, the new bike lanes will better connect the community.

Pedstrians have only one route across the freeway at 70th Street...

...but it ends as 70th Street continues up the hill to the south.

2. Baltimore Drive and Interstate 8

Like 70th Street, this is a bridge that is missing the full complement of modern features, but presents a much less complicated challenge. There is no freeway access, there is no adjacent trolley station, and the nearby intersections have conventional designs. This makes the issues more straightforward, and the design simpler.

This simplicity carries other challenges, though, because the lack of intersections, freeway access roads, and driveways gives this stretch of Baltimore Drive a wide open feel. This barren appearance invites speeding.

Problem driveway for shopping center near Baltimore crossing.

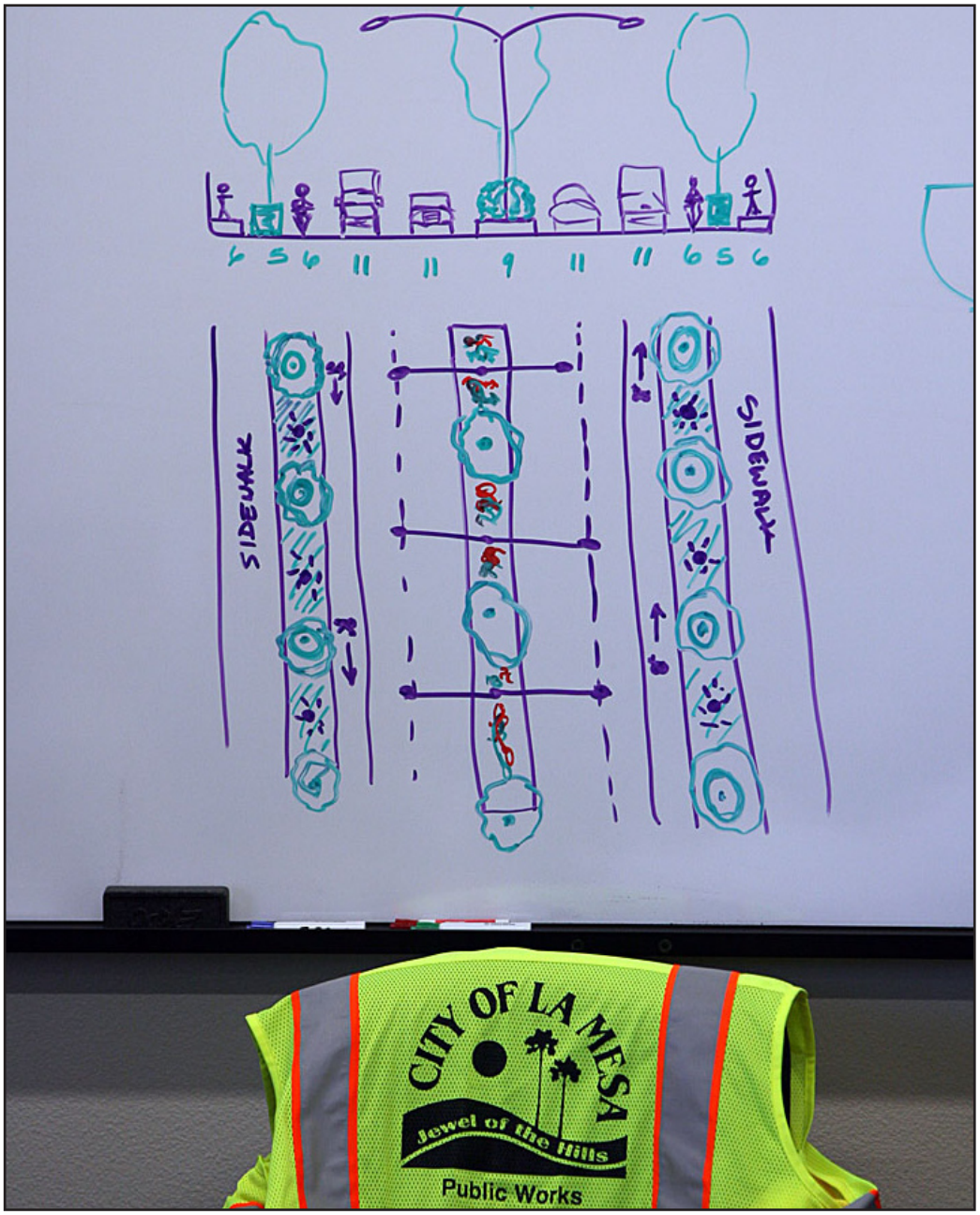


Figure 3-8: Baltimore Drive redesign.

Baltimore Drive is very wide, with minimal pedestrian access.

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – 87 feet.
- ADT – 28 thousand.
- Accidents – 61 total accidents, with 42 accidents injuring 72 individuals.
- Issues – Vehicle speed, missing sidewalk, unattractive, no landscaping, problem shopping center driveway.
- Resident Recommendations – Slow vehicles, widen median, add eastern sidewalk, fix shopping center driveways, and landscape.

The bridge's current dimensions within the 87 foot right-of-way, from west to east, are: 5-foot raised sidewalk, 6-foot bike lane, two 14-foot southbound travel lanes, 14-foot median with turn pockets, two 14-foot northbound travel lanes, and a 6-foot bike lane.

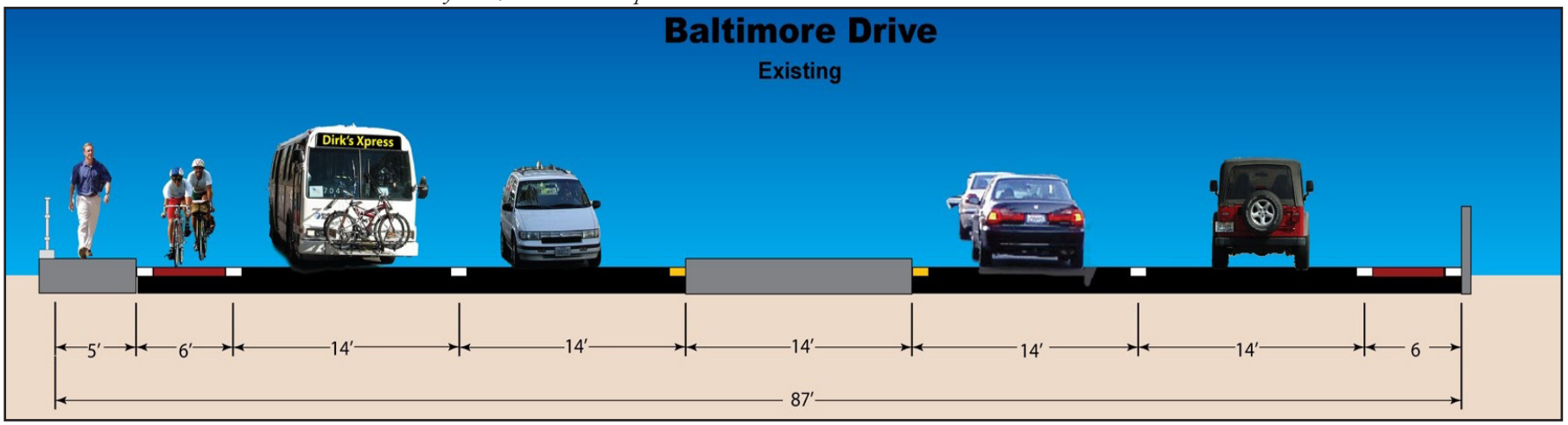


Figure 3-9: Existing configuration of Baltimore Drive (with coloring added to bike lanes).

Recommendations

The design team and Public Works staff recommendation is to trade some of the excess width currently taken up by the wide travel lanes and 14-foot median for an additional sidewalk and landscaping strips. The bike lanes would remain next to the vehicle travel lanes, but be colored and highlighted with bold white edge stripes. See Figure 3-10.

Additionally, the driveway into the shopping center south of the underpass should be redesigned to narrow the entryways. This will reduce entering and exiting vehicle speeds, and shorten the crossing distance to improve pedestrian safety.

Pedestrians have only one sidewalk across I-8...

...but sometimes walk in the east side bike lane.

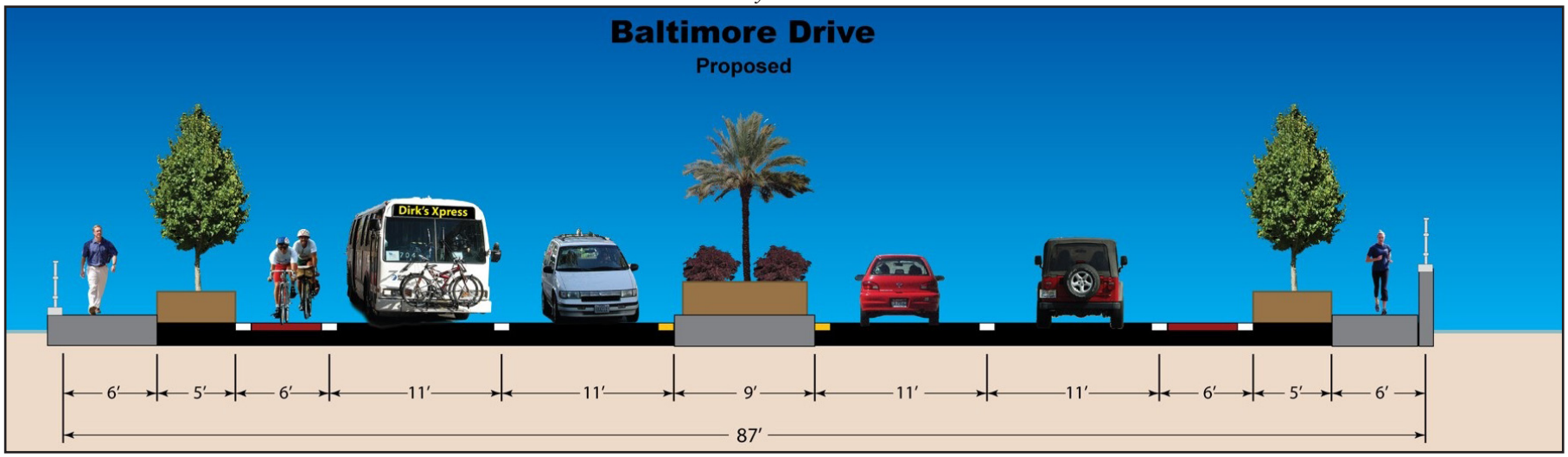


Figure 3-10: Proposed design for Baltimore Drive crossing.

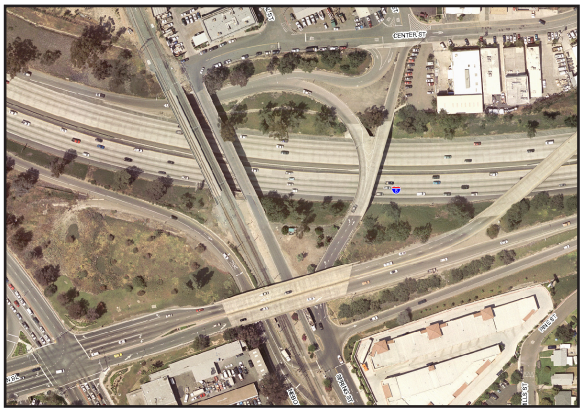
3. Spring Street and Interstate 8

This is a problem area. It is complicated by the nearby trolley station, the draw of the light industrial employment center just north of I-8, the one-way pair of roads that make up Spring Street at this location, narrow bridges, freeway on and off ramps, and the serious lack of adequate pedestrian facilities.

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – West side (southbound) bridge, 25 feet including wide curbs tops; east side (northbound) bridge, generally 32 feet including curb tops.
- ADT – 19 thousand on Spring Street north of University Avenue, and roughly 7 thousand across each freeway bridge.
- Accidents – 10 total accidents, including 5 injury accidents, resulting in injuries to 7 individuals.
- Issues – There are no sidewalks across the freeway, but obviously there are many pedestrians, the single sidewalk approaching the freeway from the south abruptly ends, and trolley tracks complicate pedestrian movements.
- Resident Recommendations – Make the

The Spring Street interchange is a complicated site.



Interstate 8, surface streets, and light rail all meet...

...but little consideration is given to bicyclists...

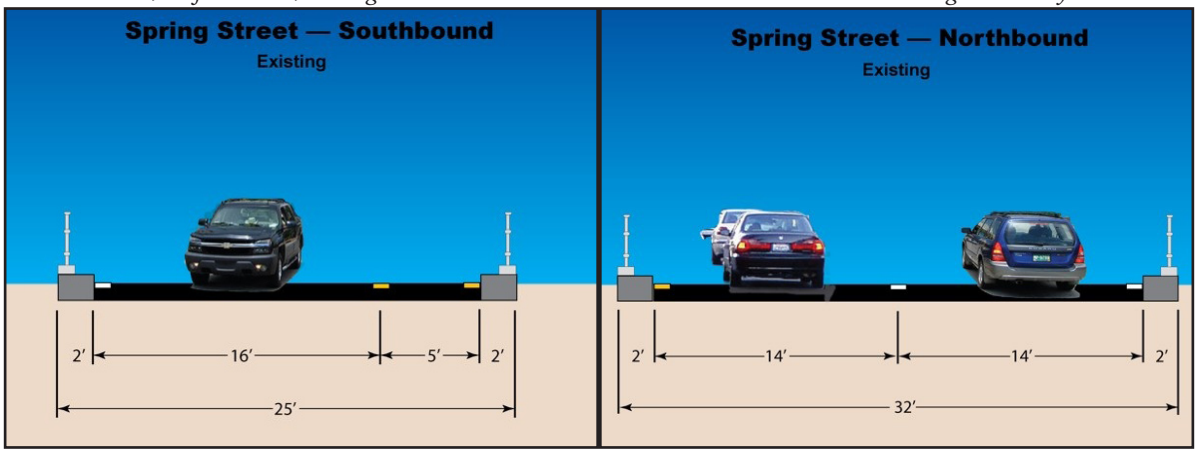


Figure 3-11: Spring Street southbound and northbound bridges existing conditions.

western bridge the best pedestrian route. Put full sidewalks on Nebo Drive from the freeway and the trolley station.

A quick look at the area where northbound Spring Street goes under the El Cajon Boulevard bridge shows no provision for pedestrian travel. It becomes clear that pedestrians are walking at the edge of Spring Street where there are no sidewalks, crossing the eastbound I-8 onramps without crosswalks, jumping over the guard rail, proceeding on the path on the dirt bank and through the bushes, and crossing the freeway along what is essentially a curb top on the bridge with only a low guardrail preventing falls to the freeway below. This heavily traveled route is dangerous and must be remedied.

...or pedestrians...

...who must improvise creative...

...illegal...

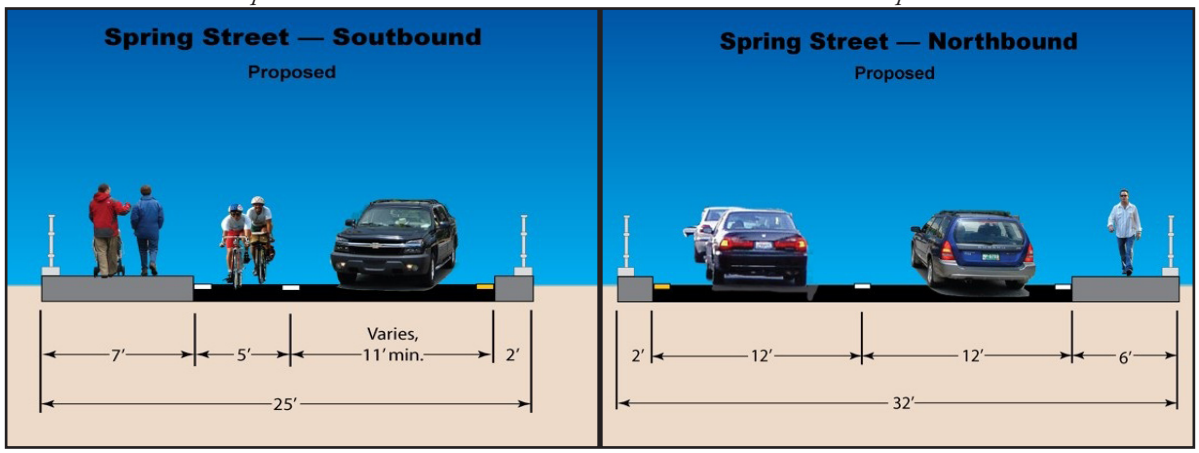


Figure 3-12: Spring Street bridges with new bicycle and pedestrian features.

...and difficult routes.

Unfortunately, there is no feasible way to provide pedestrian facilities on both sides of the northbound Spring Street roadway. A similar situation exists on the western (southbound) bridge. However, that bridge is wide enough for pedestrians to feel a bit safer walking on the narrow raised curbing by the guardrails. That route, though, strands pedestrians at the foot of Nebo Drive with no sidewalks and no marked crosswalk to get to the sidewalk on the east side of Spring Street. But even that single existing sidewalk isn't on the same side of Spring Street as the trolley station.

Recommendations

This tricky situation led to discussions with residents, City staff, and the design team. After considering various alternatives, none ideal, the following solution was chosen:

- Add a sidewalk on the east side of the eastern (northbound) bridge. Where the roadway curves to the right as it goes under the El Cajon Boulevard bridge, the sidewalk will be built behind the current guardrail location by excavating the embankment behind the bridge support pillars. This will follow the "goat path" currently used by pedestrians and avoid the danger of a narrow sidewalk on the inside of a blind curve. Once beyond the underpass, this sidewalk will continue in excess width on the freeway bridge.
- Add a sidewalk on the west side of the western (southbound) bridge.
- Add a southbound bike lane on the western (southbound) bridge.
- Assume northbound bicyclists will use the new sidewalk on the eastern bridge.
- Extend the existing sidewalk on the east side of Spring Street that currently ends before the eastbound I-8 onramps.
- Repair and extend sidewalks on Nebo Drive between the trolley station and the freeway to encourage pedestrians to use the western bridge for access to the industrial district.
- Add sidewalks, landscaping, islands, curb extensions, and boldly striped crosswalks with stop bars in the area where the I-8 on- and offramps converge with Spring Street as it splits to cross the freeway. See Figures 3-11 and 3-12.

This approach will highlight the western bridge pedestrian route that is preferred from a safety standpoint. However, it also true that basic human behavior compels some people to walk the shortest possible route, even if it is difficult and dangerous. Therefore, the eastern bridge must be designed with a sidewalk for pedestrians but shared with cyclists who will have no other safe and legal northbound access across the freeway.

Conditions will improve with the northbound...


...and southbound bridges redesigned...


...so pedestrians aren't seen in situations like this.

4. Jackson Drive and Interstate 8

This undercrossing provides the most direct pedestrian and bicycle route between the Grossmont Center retail area and the Civic Center, residential, and La Mesa Village areas south of the freeway. Sadly, it is burdened with narrow vehicle lanes curving through a dark tunnel that is missing most standard bicycle and pedestrian features.

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – 54 feet at street grade, with a 4-foot raised sidewalk on the eastern side. Four 11-foot vehicle lanes, a 2-foot wide raised median, a 4-foot bike lane on the east side (half in gutter), and a narrow bike lane on the west side.
- ADT – 18 thousand.
- Accidents – 14 total accidents, including 11 injury accidents, resulting in injuries to 14 individuals.
- Issues – One sidewalk is missing, the other is narrow, dark, and on the outside of a curve close to speeding traffic, the bike lanes are far too narrow, and it is unattractive with no landscaping.
- Resident Recommendations – Add sidewalks, widen bike lanes, landscape, slow vehicles.

A simple walk home from work...

The Jackson Drive undercrossing with narrow and exposed bike lanes and only one sidewalk.

...can become an unpleasant experience.

Narrow bike lanes on the inside of the dark curve are especially dangerous.

People on foot have a very uncomfortable and dangerous experience in the Jackson Drive undercrossing. On the east side, the narrow 4-foot sidewalk is on the outside of the curve carrying four lanes of fast vehicle traffic. On the west side, the situation is worse. A pedestrian headed south away from the Grossmont Center area sees the new sidewalk disappear as the tunnel approaches. The parking lane then serves as a poor substitute, until it also disappears. Then pedestrians are forced to walk in the bike lane, until it narrows in turn to less than two feet wide. The trip through the tunnel is best finished by balancing on the narrow curb top.

While there is a narrow 4-foot wide bike lane on the east side, it is also on the outside of a curve, pinned in between speeding traffic and the raised curb. Southbound bicyclists have it worse, seeing the bicycle lane narrow down until it becomes little more that the sloped gutter.

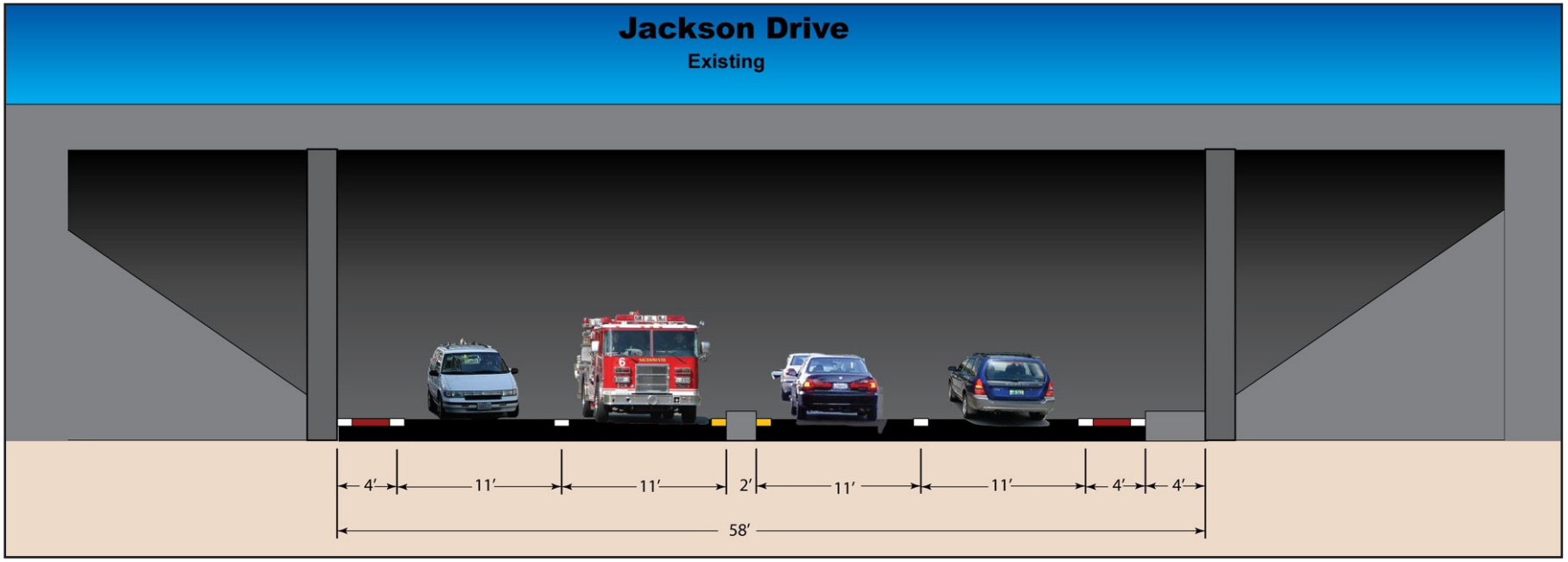


Figure 3-13: The existing configuration of the Jackson Drive underpass. Note: Bike lanes are not colored now and the western bike lane narrows to less than 2 feet.

Recommendations

Currently there is room within the existing tunnel configuration to provide all the necessary components of a good street. As shown in Figure 3-14, this would consist of:

- Wide sidewalks built behind the freeway support pillars, which would provide added security for pedestrians.
- Colored 6-foot bike lanes with bold edge stripes on both sides of the roadway.
- A 2-foot wide raised median, which might need relocating from its current position.
- Landscaping between the freeway pillars and in the median at the tunnel entrances.
- Effective security lighting that would illuminate the tunnel even in the daytime.

This solution is possible because the freeway is supported by piers with a concrete slope behind them, rather than a solid vertical wall. While some construction is necessary to dig out space for the sidewalk behind the piers, the existing freeway support piers can remain in place, greatly reducing costs.

Moving the existing sidewalk behind the piers and using the entire roadway section between the piers allows bike lanes to be provided on both sides of the roadway that meet minimum width standards.

New sidewalks will be created behind the pillars.

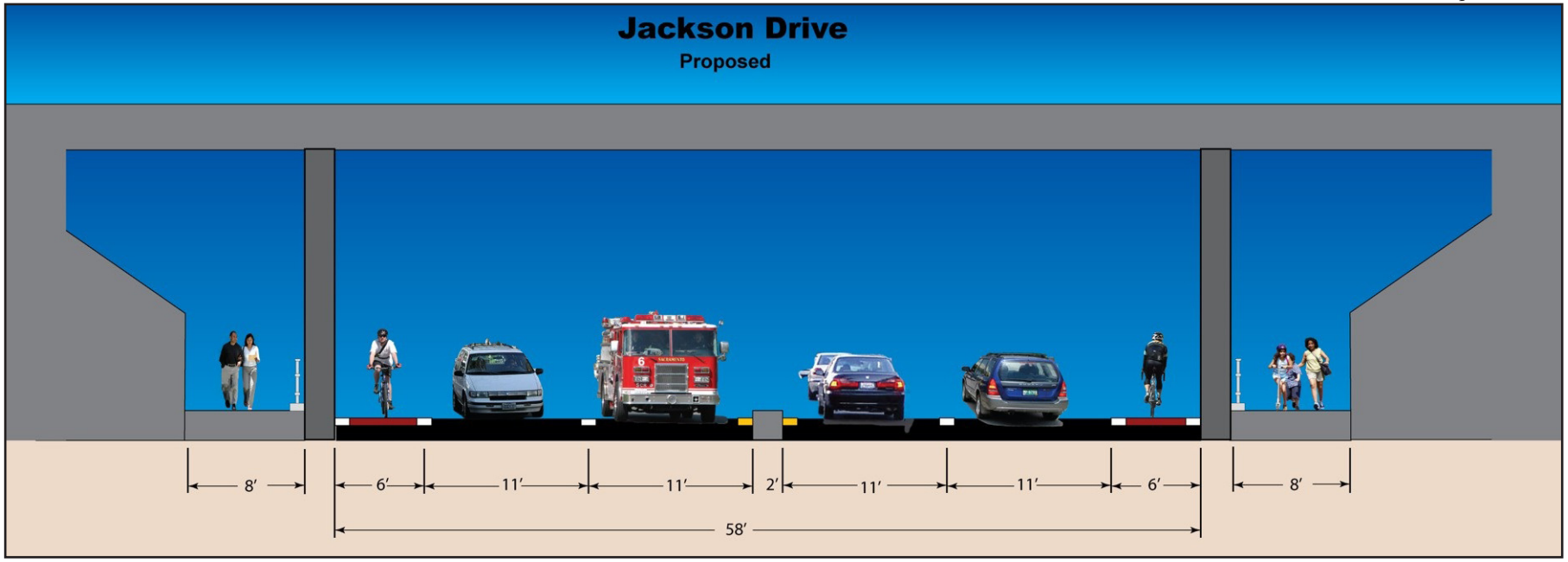


Figure 3-14: Recommended design for Jackson Drive with wider, colored bike lanes and new sidewalks buffered by existing pillars.

5. Grossmont Center Drive and Interstate 8

While the Grossmont Center crossing has a cleaner and more open feel than the other underpasses in this project, it still needs improvement to fully welcome pedestrians, bicyclists, and wheelchair users. The freeway transition roads that are lofted high into the sky give a modern aspect to this crossing, but it falls short when the lack of contemporary features for those not in automobiles is considered.

The open nature of this facility has two sides. On one hand, this underpass is not as dark as some others in this study. On the other, this wide open feel invites motorists to speed, creating hazards for all users of the roadway.

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – 90 feet in center of underpass.
- ADT – 22 to 34 thousand ADT.
- Accidents – 21 total accidents, including 14 injury accidents, resulting in injuries to 23 individuals.
- Issues – Vehicle speed, concrete, no bike lanes.
- Resident Recommendations – Better sidewalks, barrier from traffic, landscaping, lighting, better crosswalks.

Heavy traffic volumes on all the roadway links at this location limit how much the lane configuration can be altered. Additionally, while the highest traffic volumes seen at any of this project's locations are at Grossmont Center Drive, the accident count is fairly low. This is no doubt due to the limited distractions on this

portion of Grossmont Center Drive (this term is used for the connecting portion of La Mesa Boulevard as well). There are no driveways in the immediate area of the freeways, and the intersections are all signalized and clearly marked. Drivers either come off the freeway, turn onto an onramp, or travel straight around the gentle arc of the roadway.

Recommendations

The challenge, then, is not to address any glaring deficiencies or safety issues (with the exception of adding bicycle lanes), but to improve the overall ambience and comfort of this location, with the following improvements (See Figure 3-15):

- Stripe in bold, colored bicycle lanes the entire length of Grossmont Center Drive.
- Add high visibility crosswalks parallel to Grossmont Center Drive.
- Consider at least two marked crosswalks across Grossmont Center Drive between Murray Boulevard and Grossmont Boulevard (there are none at this time).
- Consider widening the sidewalks through the tunnel.
- Consider installing either a railing or a planter-style barrier between pedestrians and vehicle traffic.
- Install periodic islands of landscaping in the median to green up the street.
- Improve lighting in the underpass.

With 90 feet of asphalt between the curbs in the underpass, there is room to improve sidewalks, install landscaping, and add bike lanes without changing the existing vehicle lane count and configuration. The highest lane count in this area, including turn lanes, is five, which will fit in 60 feet of width even with 12-foot lanes. That leaves 30 feet for new bike lanes, landscaping, and the possibility of wider sidewalks and barriers.

Although sidewalks are present on both sides...

...there is little encouragement for walking.

Figure 3-15: Highlighted pedestrian features.

As the oil and rubber stains in the street show in the image at the left, Dallas Street is wider than necessary. Safety will improve and drivers will slow down if they are given only the area in the street they really need.

6. Dallas Street and State Route 125

This is a location where a two-lane residential district collector street crosses Route 125, with no freeway access. The excessive 40-foot width of the street encourages speeding, and the intersection of Dallas Street and Plaza Park Drive could be improved for better safety. Both goals are important in this location with heavy bicycle and pedestrian traffic oriented to the Parkway Middle School and adjacent La Mesita Park.

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – 56 feet, two 8-foot sidewalks, and two 20-foot vehicle lanes.
- ADT – 8 thousand.
- Accidents – 7 total accidents, including 6

The bridge is so wide parking was a problem.

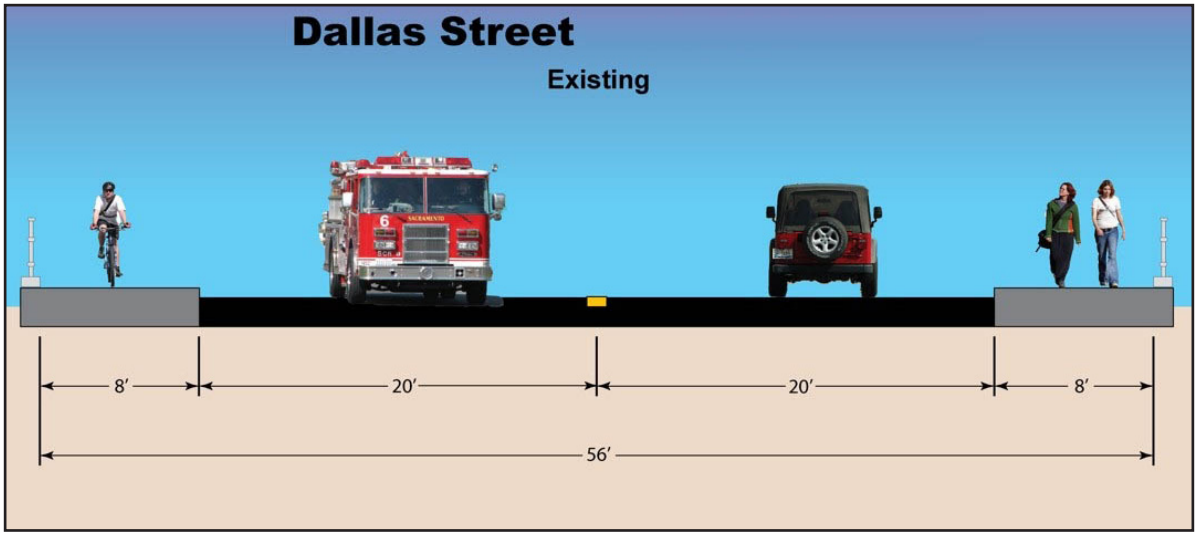


Figure 3-16: The existing design of the Dallas Street bridge, looking west.

injury accidents, resulting in injuries to 8 individuals.

- Issues – Vehicle lanes are too wide and close to the sidewalk, no landscaping to complement La Mesita Park, long pedestrian crossings at intersection by fire station, poor driver compliance with stop signs, and bridge feels desolate and unsafe.
- Resident Recommendations – Extend curbs at intersection by fire station to choke down traffic flow, remove stop signs on Dallas Street that are ignored anyway, add trees and bushes to bridge, and add lighting.

Recommendations

This is a straightforward design fix for a few hundred feet of Dallas Street (Figure 3-17).

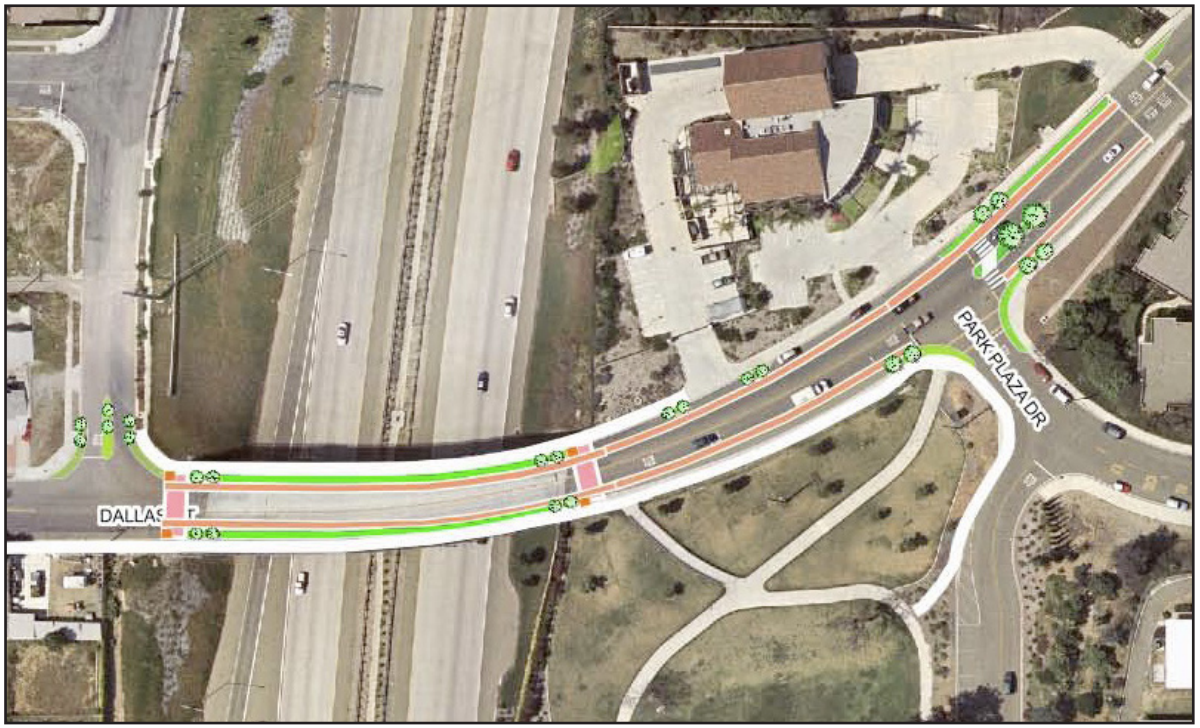


Figure 3-17: Reconfiguration of Dallas Street from East Lake Drive to Park Plaza Drive.

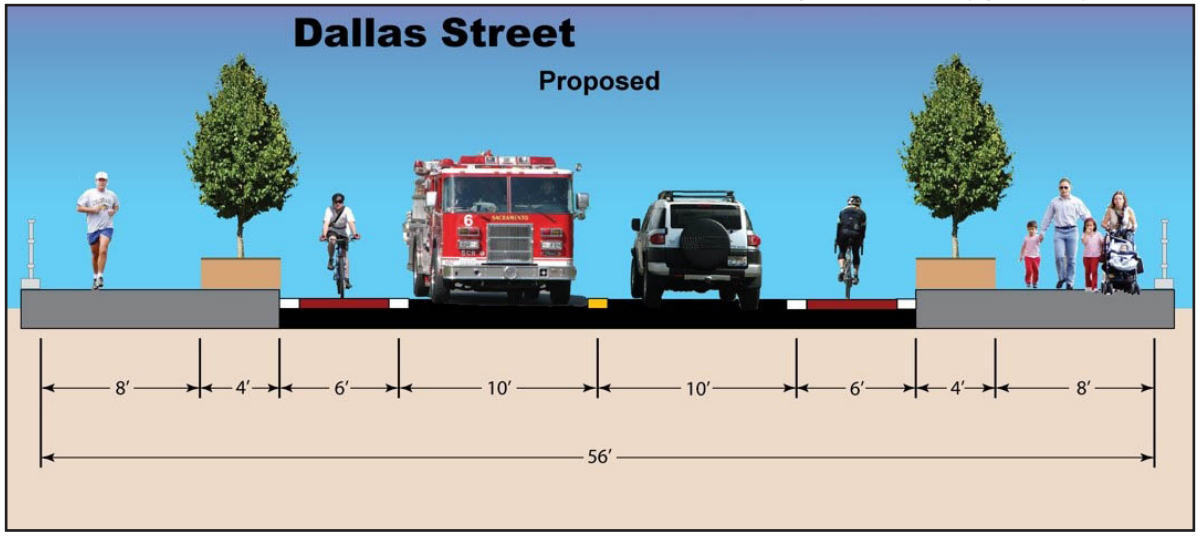


Figure 3-18: The recommended design for Dallas Street, also looking west, with new planters and bike lanes.

Planters and bike lanes will fill this empty roadway.

Even large vehicles have twice the room they need.

Dallas Street Bridge over Route 125

The 40-foot width between the existing sidewalks provides ample room to redesign Dallas Street to meet the residents' concerns as follows (see Figure 3-18, previous page):

- Add 4-foot raised planters for trees and bushes next to the existing sidewalks on both sides of the street.
- Add street lighting aligned with the trees in the new planter boxes.
- Add 6-foot colored bike lanes with bold edge stripes on both sides of the street.
- Retain two traffic lanes, narrowed to 11 feet in width.

Park Plaza Drive Intersection at Fire Station

This location is a hazard for pedestrians, including students from nearby Parkway Middle School, with its excessive width and poor driver behavior. Solutions include:

- Narrow vehicle space at the intersection with curb extensions on the northwest, southwest, and southeast sides of the intersection as shown on Figure 3-18.
- Add a bold crosswalk across Dallas Street on the west side of the Park Plaza Drive intersection.
- Add a landscaped pedestrian island in the middle of Park Plaza Drive.

This design will buffer pedestrians, slow vehicle speeds, beautify the bridge and intersection areas, add security lighting, and formalize space for bicyclists as appropriate on a street carrying eight thousand vehicles a day.

With frequent use by young people going to school or to Plaza Park...

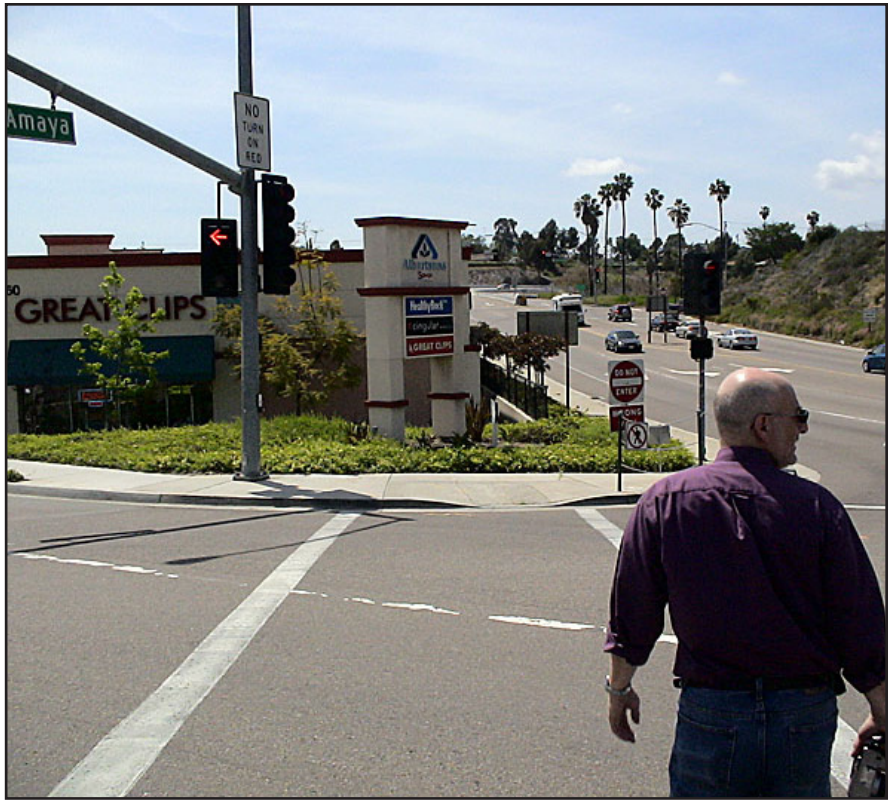
...this intersection needs curb extensions and highly visible crosswalks.

7. Amaya Drive and Fletcher Parkway

While the Local Government Commission design team was in La Mesa, a request was made to include this intersection in the project, although it was not part of the original proposal. Residents were concerned that this high traffic volume intersection was hazardous to pedestrians for a number of valid reasons. These include:

- High vehicle volumes.
- High vehicle speeds, especially on Fletcher Parkway.
- Impatient drivers entering or exiting the Route 125 freeway via the access roads that are the western link of this intersection.
- The low crest in Amaya Drive where it meets the eastern edge of Fletcher Parkway, which impairs driver visibility.
- Extremely wide crosswalks.
- Continued use of crosswalks that had recently been "buffed" out.
- High numbers of young students from nearby Parkway Middle School.

This last hazard is compounded by this intersection's location between the middle school and the small commercial center southwest of the intersection. Closing crosswalks can not overcome young students' natural attraction to fast food restaurants and small stores, or the basic human nature to prefer the shortest possible travel distances. The recently closed crosswalks at the north



Pedestrians at the Amaya Drive and Fletcher Parkway intersection...

...encounter fast traffic, poor sight lines, and very long crossing distances.

Figure 3-19: Walking distances to and from school.

and west sides of the intersection connected to the northwest corner where stairs brought students to the back corner of the Parkway Middle School athletic fields. Security problems at this location prompted school officials to close off access to the stairs, and City officials to remove crosswalk markings and redirect pedestrians to the east and south crosswalks.

To connect the central quad area of the school and the nearest corner by the commercial center previously was a walk of approximately 1,300 feet (see Figure 3-19, left). With the stairs and crosswalks closed, pedestrians must walk north from the school, east along Dallas Drive, cross Fletcher Parkway to the (only) sidewalk on the eastern side, proceed south, cross Amaya Drive, and cross Fletcher Parkway again. This is a distance of more than 4,000 feet, over ½ mile longer then the now forbidden route. This extra distance represents a time additional of about ten minutes, not counting delays at the three signalized crosswalks. The 4,000 feet can be reduced somewhat by avoiding the two crossings of Fletcher Parkway and walking in the bike path next to southbound traffic on that expressway, but this greatly increases the risk of the trip.

Once the design team was made aware of this situation, they responded with site visits and design recommendations.

Previous short route used these stairs...

...but access is blocked and crosswalks are removed.

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – Crosswalk distances between 100 and 140 feet.
- ADT – 21,500 on Amaya Drive alone.
- Accidents – 14 total accidents, including 9 injury accidents resulting in injuries to 14 individuals.
- Issues – Vehicle speed, poor sight lines, closed crosswalks, young pedestrians.
- Resident recommendations – Slow vehicles, improve pedestrian safety.

The goals of this design exercise were to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety, even if the stairway access to the rear of Parkway Middle School remains closed. This can be accomplished by installing the following features, as shown in Figure 3-20:

- Replacing crosswalks recently removed.
- Using high-emphasis crosswalks.
- Removing non-essential vehicle lanes.
- Timing signals to give pedestrians a head start of a few seconds before vehicle traffic is cleared to move.
- Adding count-down traffic signals.
- Using median noses as mid-block refuges for pedestrians.
- Compressing the intersection with curb extensions to shorten crossing distances.

Security improvements at the middle school athletic fields may allow the stairway access to be restored, which will make this redesign more essential as shorter trips increase student traffic across this intersection.

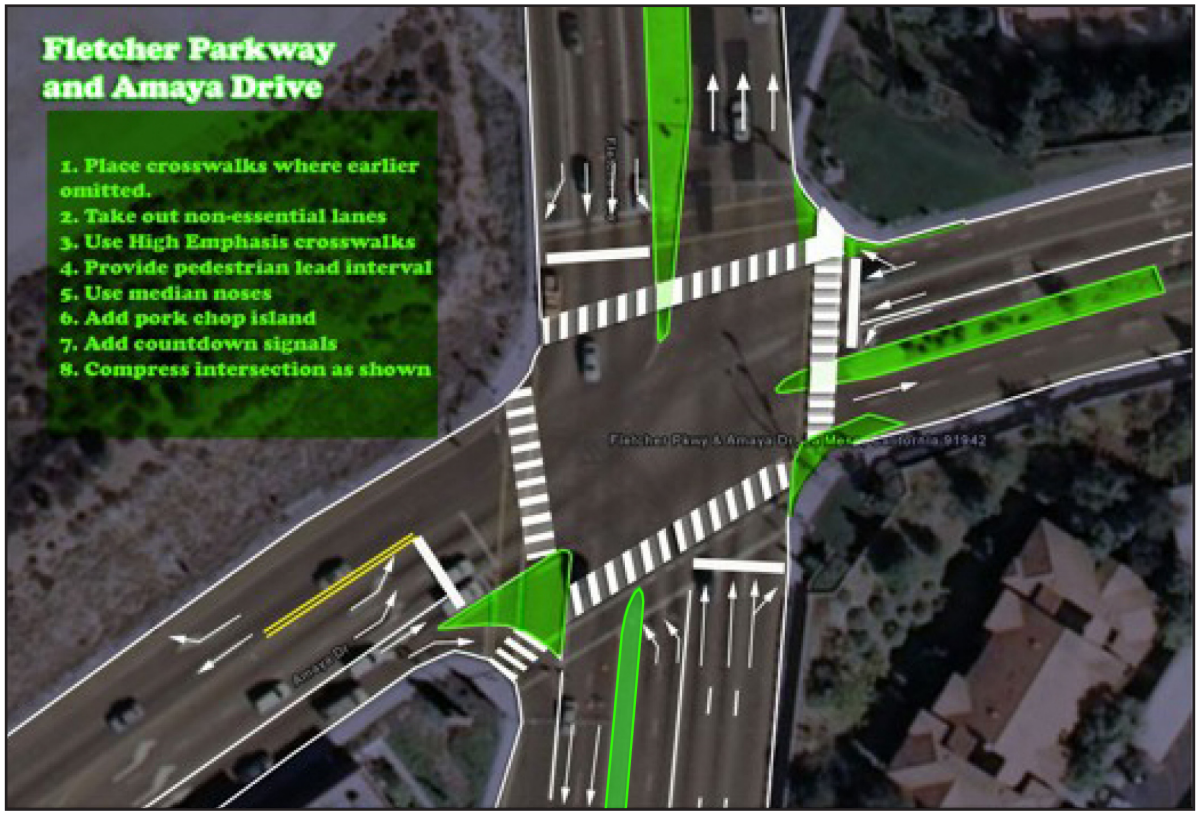


Figure 3-20: Recommended design for improved access and safety at Amaya Drive and Fletcher Parkway.

Design team explores forbidden route.

Wakarusa Street has considerable pedestrian traffic and vehicle conflicts, but little to assist street crossings.

8. Wakarusa Street and State Route 125

This overcrossing is very similar to Dallas Street, in that it is a two-lane bridge with sidewalks and no freeway access. (See Figure 3-21) It does serve a different district, though, with primarily government, medical, open space, and commercial uses nearby. There the very large Sharp Grossmont Hospital medical complex is southwest of the bridge, with a smaller medical annex and a large parking lot to the northeast. Southeast of the bridge is a library, Briercrest Park, and a Senior Condominium complex currently under construction.

The park and library complex is also near the bridge.

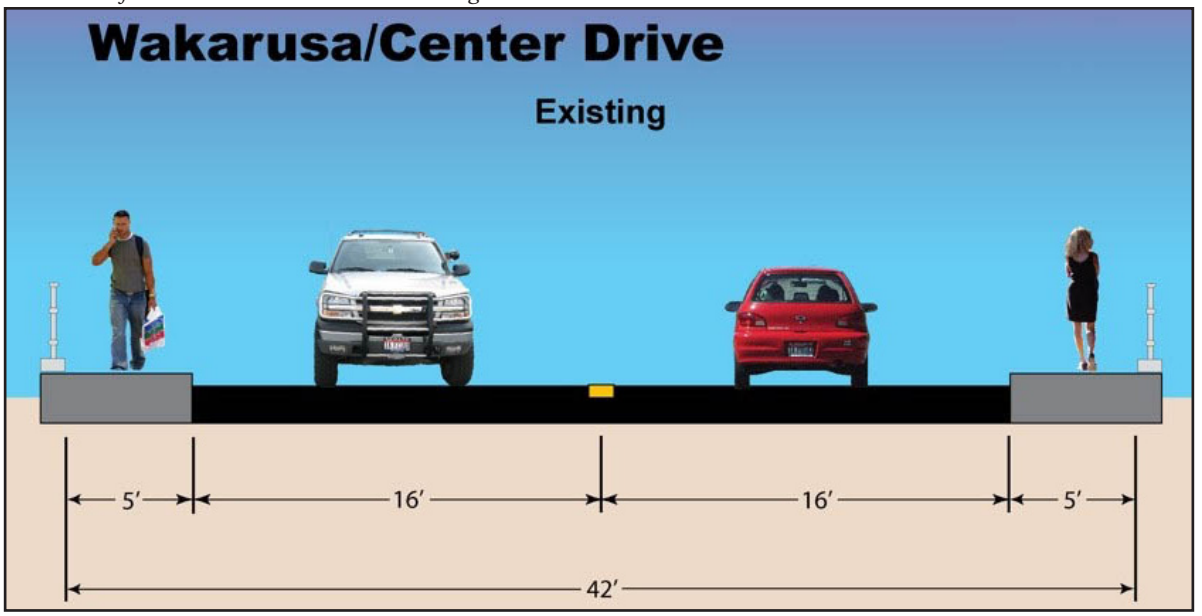


Figure 3-21: Existing conditions on the Wakarusa Drive/Center Drive bridge, looking west.

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – 42 feet, with 6-foot sidewalks on both sides, and two 15-foot vehicle lanes.
- ADT – Above 4 thousand.
- Accidents – Only 1 accident in over 6 years of data.
- Issues – Need for wider sidewalks, too wide travel lanes, and better crosswalks on either side of the bridge.
- Resident Recommendations – Widen sidewalks, improve existing crosswalks, improve pedestrian crossings at northeast parking lot driveway, and narrow vehicle lanes.

Recommendations

Like the Dallas Street bridge, this redesign is fairly straightforward (see Figure 3-22):

- Add 5-foot wide raised landscaping planters next to the existing sidewalks on both sides of the street.
- Add a boldly striped crosswalk west of the northeast parking lot driveway.
- Add boldly striped crosswalks at all four crossings on the Center Drive and East Grant Street intersection.

These simple additions will make this crossing and nearby vehicle/pedestrian conflict areas more attractive, and feel safer for pedestrians, at minimal expense.

Park and library visitors, and hospital staff...

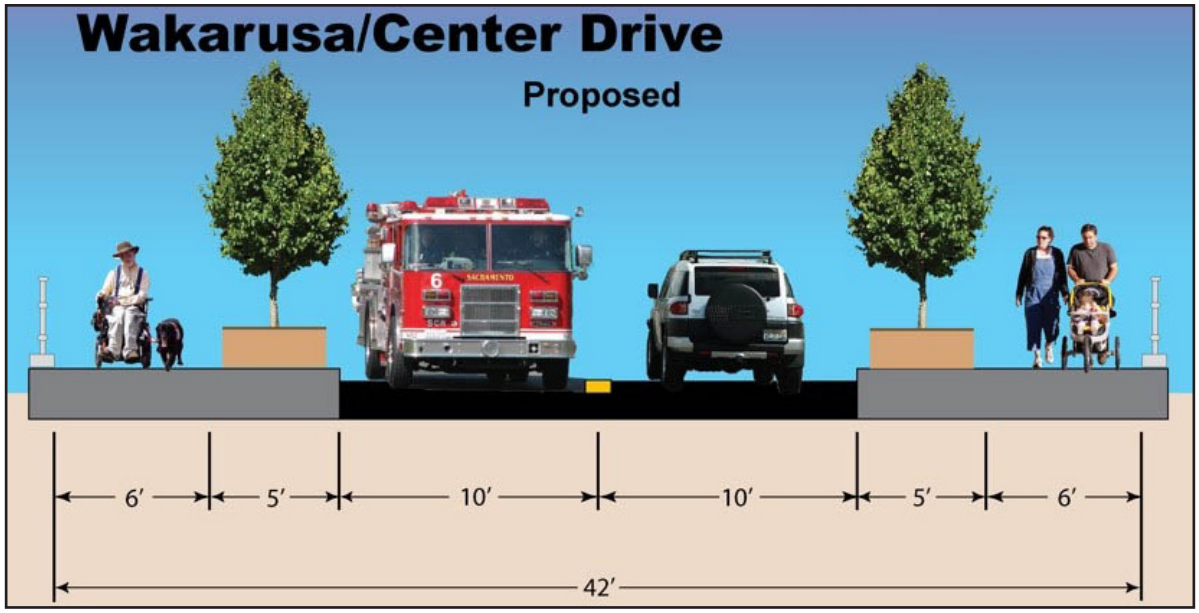


Figure 3-22, with landscaping planters to narrow roadway and buffer pedestrians.

...and patients all use this bridge.

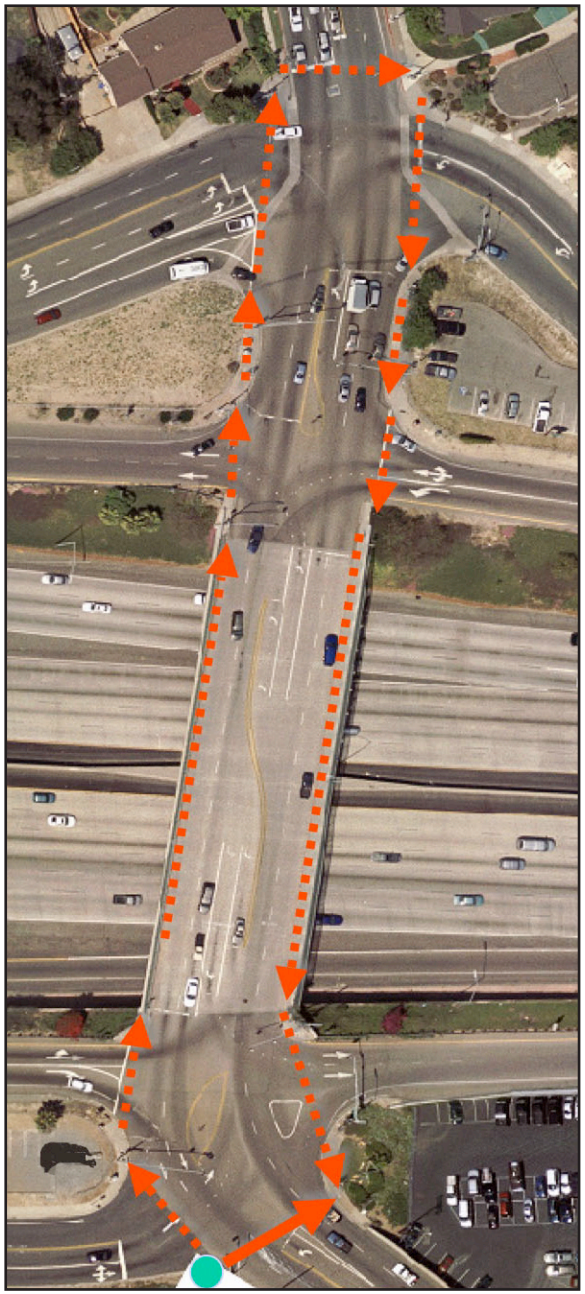


Figure 3-23: Legal (dashed) and illegal routes.

9. Severin Drive and Interstate 8

This chapter on intersection and freeway crossing designs in the City of La Mesa ends at another location equally as complex as the first setting at 70th Street. The Severin Drive bridge is bracketed by two intersections on each side. At each end of the bridge the innermost intersections are created by the two-lane on- and offramps from eastbound or westbound Interstate 8. The southernmost intersection is the terminus of Severin Drive where it meets Fuerte Drive and Bancroft Drive in a three-way intersection. The northernmost intersection is the extremely wide Murray Drive and Severin Drive intersection.

Though the bridge has sidewalks on both sides, pedestrians are prohibited from using nearly half of the "crosswalks" at this location. To walk from the corner near the park-and-ride lot southwest of the bridge to the opposite corner across Severin Drive near the Brigantine parking lot (a distance just over 100 feet) takes a hike of 1,500 feet which extends to the north side of Murray Drive and includes seven of the eight legal crossings in this area. See Figure 3-23, left.

Pedestrians at the Severin Drive location...

...encounter frequent and frustrating...

Existing Conditions

- Section Width – 84 feet. From west to east, the features are: a 5-foot sidewalk, a 16-foot travel lane, an 11-foot travel lane, two left turn lanes in 20-feet of width, an 11-foot travel lane, a 16-foot travel lane, and a 5-foot sidewalk.
- ADT – Varies. 15 thousand across the bridge.
- Accidents – 9 total accidents, including 3 injury accidents, resulting in injuries to 5 individuals.
- Issues – Intersections are close together and confusing, poor visibility, poor lighting, confusing light and lane relationships, missing crosswalk markings, and pedestrians forced to cross multiple dangerous intersections.
- Resident Recommendations – Add crosswalks, improve

...legal and physical barriers to their progress.

Figure 3-24: Recommendations for the Severin Drive crossing and vicinity.

Severin Drive north of the freeway crossing has bike lanes, but is very wide.

sidewalks, and buffer pedestrians from vehicles.

Recommendations

Many of the issues residents raise about this location relate to traffic and pedestrian controls, not just street design. The physical relationship of the traffic signals and corresponding lanes is not part of this project, but should be addressed by the City of La Mesa and Caltrans.

The primary focus of these recommendations is to reduce vehicle lane count and width, add pedestrian and bicycle features, and beautify the area. With the exception of the median on the bridge and curb extensions at nine corners, this can be done with paint and

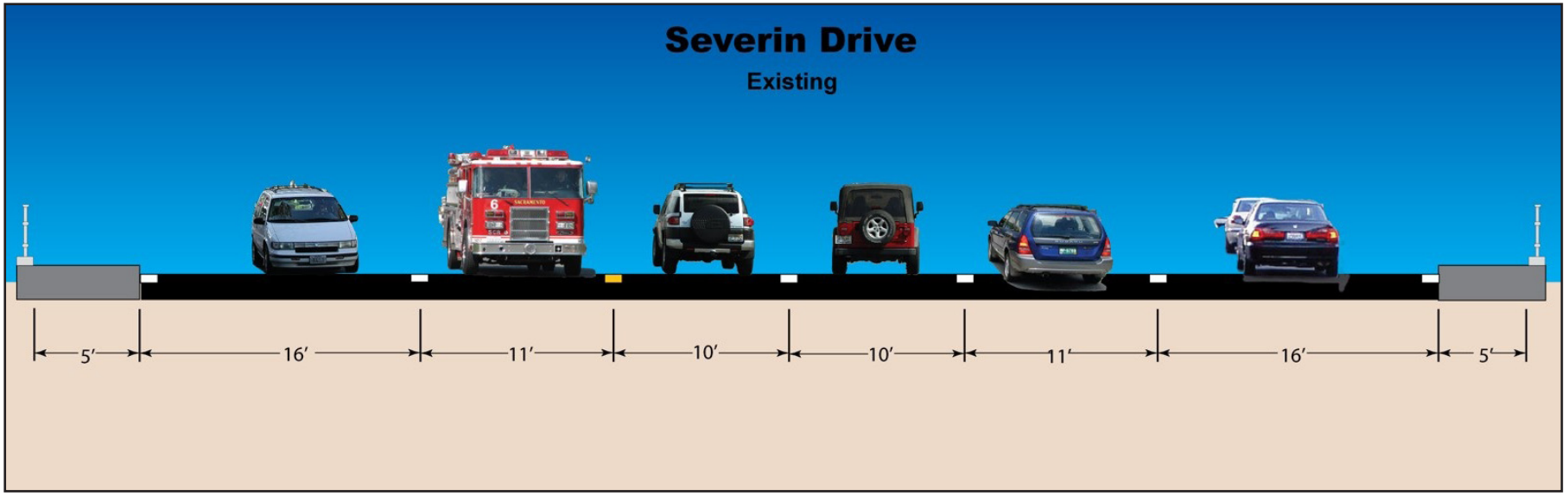


Figure 3-25: Existing lane configuration of the Severin Drive freeway crossing bridge, looking south from bridge center.

signage. Details include, bridge first (Figure 3-27) then the intersections north to south:

A. Severin Drive Interstate 8 Bridge

- Retain existing 5-foot wide sidewalks.
- Add 5-foot wide red colored bike lanes with bold white edge striping.
- Reduce through lanes to 11 feet in width.
- Remove one left turn lane from south-bound Severin Drive to eastbound I-8.
- Install a raised, landscaped median 10 feet wide on the southern portion of the bridge in the space formerly occupied by the second left turn lane.
- Retain double left turn lanes from north-bound Severin Drive to westbound I-8.

Figure 3-26: Suggestion for Severin Drive with colored bike lanes, and landscaping to narrow driver's space.

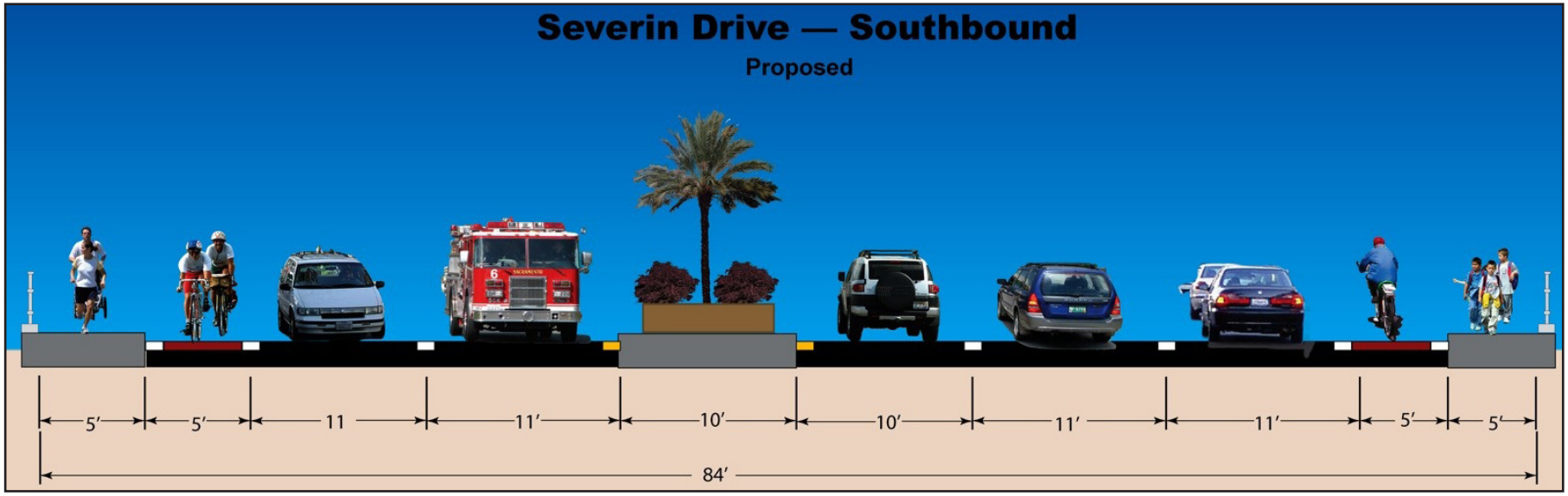


Figure 3-27: Proposed lane configuration, looking south from bridge center, with bike lanes, a median, and fewer turn lanes.

Figure 3-28: Recommendations for vehicle and pedestrian access improvements north of freeway crossing.

B. Severin Drive/Murray Drive Intersection

- Add 20-foot radius curb extensions at the northwest and northeast corners as shown on Figure 3-28, next page.
- Add a 30-foot radius curb extension at the southeast corner.
- Add a triangular traffic island at the southwest corner to reduce crossing distances and improve pedestrian safety.
- Add bold crosswalks and stop bars at the west, north, and east crossings.
- Add bike lane striping through the intersection connecting with the bike lanes on Severin Drive to the north. See Figure 3-26, and note some cities color bike lanes only in intersections.

C. Severin Drive/Westbound I-8 Ramps

- Add a 25-foot radius curb extension on the northwest corner.

Recommendations will improve safety...

- Add a 30-foot curb extension on the northeast corner.
- Add boldly striped crosswalks with stop bars across the on and off ramp roads.
- Add colored bike lanes with bold edge stripes to connect bike lanes on the bridge with Severin Drive to the north.

D. Severin/Fuerte/Bancroft Drives Three-point Intersection

- Add 25- and 30-foot radius curb extensions at the western corner as shown in Figure 3-29.
- Add a large 30-foot radius curb extension on the eastern corner.
- Add 20-foot radius curbing at the southern corner.
- Add boldly striped crosswalks with stop bars across both on- and offramp roads, Fuerte Drive, and Bancroft Drive where they meet Severin Drive.

...and access for all users.

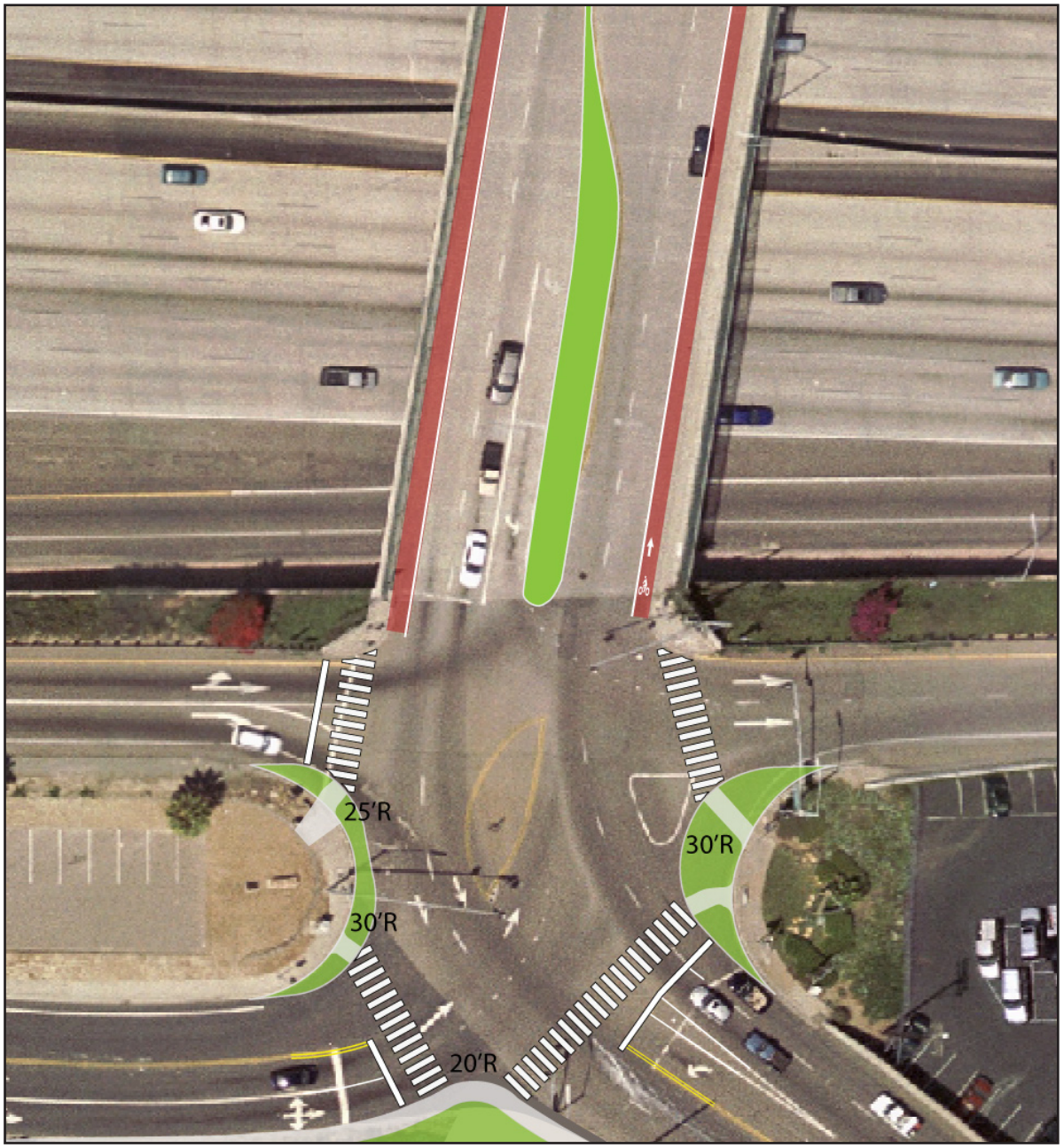


Figure 3-29: Recommendations for vehicle and pedestrian access improvements south of freeway crossing.

These design improvements will better organize vehicle traffic flow at this complicated location, and improve bicycle connections and safety. Pedestrians will have access to most destinations without lengthy legal, or short but illegal crossings. Safety will be improved for all, and the bridge area will be more attractive.

Summary of Design Recommendations

At most of the intersections and freeway crossings evaluated for this project, similar logic applies. The priorities are to improve life for people at the project locations who are outside vehicles. This requires some expenditure of funds, and some tolerance on the part of drivers, but good behavior from pedestrians and bicyclists as well.

The tools employed are quite simple:

- Help drivers travel at appropriate speeds and locations on the roadway.
- Give all users of the street clear signals about "their" terrain, where they should be, and what is expected of them.
- Add missing facilities for any users, with ADA compliance a priority.
- Beautify the streetscape.

The intersections and freeway crossings addressed in this study are relics of an era when little attention was devoted to people not in motor vehicles. That age has passed.

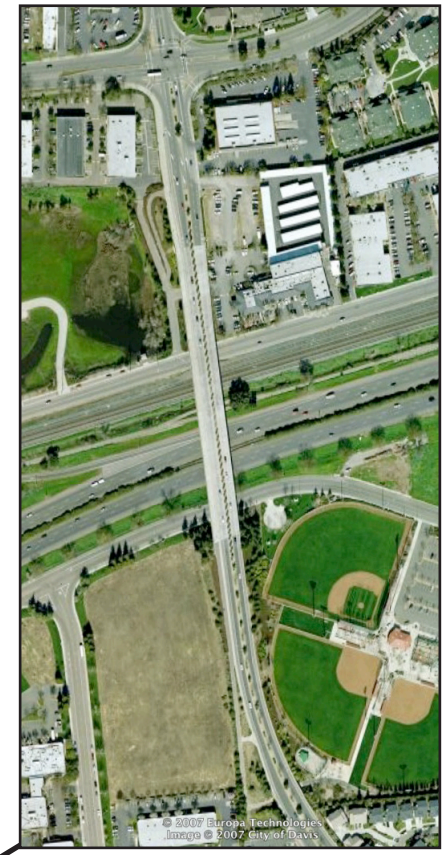
The City of La Mesa and Caltrans both have capable staff committed to this effort. As they work together to implement the vision in this report, some details not clearly stated here will need to be resolved. Residents should take comfort that the people moving forward with this effort will tackle this project with energy. Remembering the concepts above will aid that process.

CHAPTER FOUR: CROSSING EXAMPLES

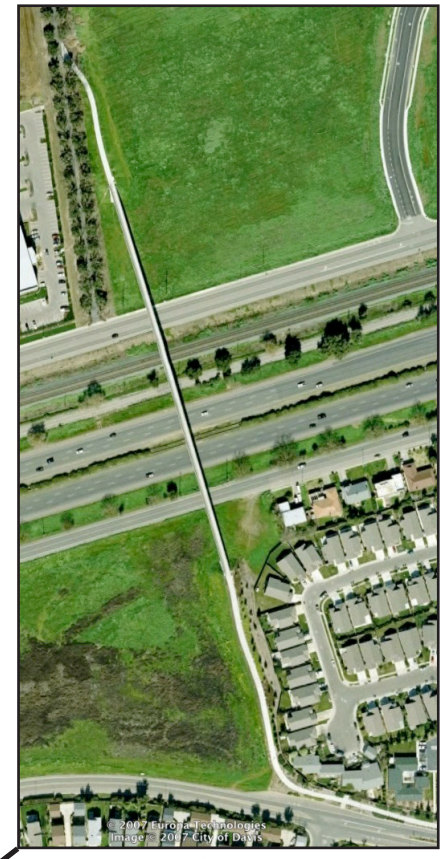
Background

This chapter provides examples of overcrossings or undercrossings with attractive and well designed pedestrian and bicycle features. The first three examples are crossings with vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian access. They are followed by four brief descriptions of pedestrian/bicycle bridges that may provide design guidance to a possible future crossing in La Mesa. This is a proposal not directly related to this charrette project that would span Interstate 8, a nearby arterial, and adjacent propeties to connect the Grossmont Center shopping mall with the village center area south of Interstate 8.

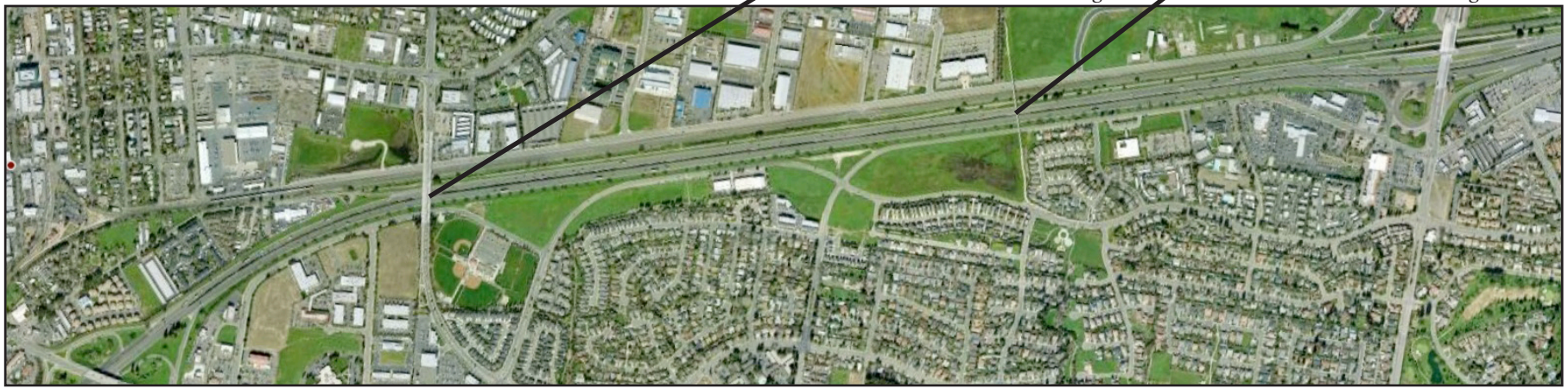
The art of designing bridges and undercrossings to allow passage from one side of a freeway to another has made advances in the last few decades. The most significant changes have been in providing safe and convenient crossings for people who are not in vehicles. The following are three good examples of crossings that provide the same level of service to pedestrians and bicyclists that traditionally was reserved for vehicle drivers. Two of these examples are in California, and the third is a bridge in Olympia, Washington.



Pole Line Road Overcrossing



Dave Pelz Overcrossing



Davis, CA Interstate 80 Corridor

Pole Line Road Overcrossing looking south (above) and north (below).

Davis, CA: Pole Line Road/Interstate 80 Overcrossing.

This is a new, from-scratch, facility that was designed to be a four-lane component of a restriping of Pole Line Road north of Interstate 80 to four lanes. This bridge connects the developed areas of Davis north of the freeway with the developing neighborhoods south of the freeway. It lies in the three-mile gap between the Richards Boulevard overcrossing to the west, and the Mace Boulevard overcrossing to the east. Each of those facilities has freeway access, but the Pole Line Road overcrossing does not. In addition to crossing over I-80, the Pole Line Road bridge also spans Second Street, the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, and the old US 40 bike path, all on the north side of, and parallel to, I-80. The railroad tracks are on a raised berm at this location, and rail cars can be much higher than long-haul trucks, so the bridge is significantly higher than would be necessary to span the freeway alone.

There was a boisterous neighborhood outcry over the proposed restriping of Pole Line Road from two lanes to four lanes in the 1990s. The outcome left the street a two-lane facility, with left turn pockets. Additionally, the neighborhood won long-sought median islands and landscaping along a roughly one-mile stretch, through primarily residential development.

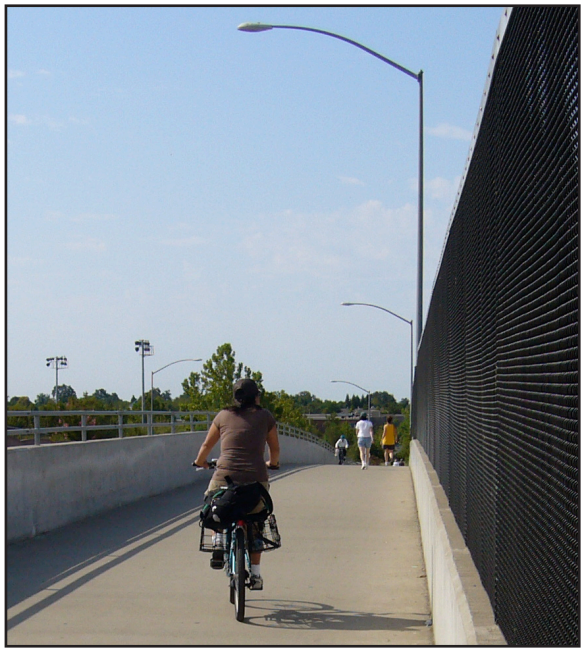
The design for the pending bridge was adjusted to match, with wide bike lanes and additional sidewalk area, instead of four through lanes for vehicles. As the photos show, there is still a significant asphalt width. Vehicle lanes on the bridge are 14 feet wide, bordered on the right side by 8 foot bike lanes. City engineers quietly acknowledge that they retain the future ability to restripe the bridge for four 11-foot travel lanes, moving all bicycle traffic onto the raised cement area to the west.

The City recently raised the speed limit on the bridge to 35 miles per hour, in response to residents exceeding the old speed limit in large numbers. Sadly, as this report was being written, a fatal accident occurred as an SUV at the foot of the south downslope of the bridge hit a vehicle exiting a shopping center in the driver's door.

Still, this is an attractive improvement to the original design, and functions well for all users. The 14-foot wide pedestrian area is buffered from vehicles by the at-grade bike lane, a seldom-used five-foot wide sidewalk, and a low wall topped by a short metal fence. This portion of the bridge is heavily used by cyclists, strolling residents, children, dog-walkers heading for the dog park on the northwest side of the bridge, and joggers. There is no pedestrian accommodation on the eastern side of the bridge.

The bridge cross section is as follows, west to east: 11-foot mixed bike and pedestrian way, short wall, 5-foot sidewalk, curb, 8-foot bike lane, 14-foot travel lane, 11-foot landscaped buffer, 14-foot travel lane, 8-foot bike lane, curb. The total width is 75 feet, the height is about 40 feet, and the facility is roughly 2,000 feet long. It was constructed in the 1990s.

Positive aspects of the design: wide, mixed, non-vehicular space; connections with other bicycle and walking paths; attractive; fills previous gap in freeway crossings. The design would benefit from: a sidewalk on the eastern side, narrower vehicle travel lanes, reduced vehicle speeds.



Pedestrians and bikes mix on west side...

...because no raised sidewalk is provided on east side to preserve width for 4 vehicle lane option in future.

Dave Pelz Overcrossing, looking north (above).

Dave Pelz Overcrossing, looking east, with bicycle path installed on old U.S. Route 40 pavement.

Davis, CA: Dave Pelz Overcrossing

This bridge also crosses Interstate 80 in Davis, California. It fills the gap between the Mace Boulevard overcrossing to the east, and the new Pole Line Road overcrossing to the west (see bottom image on page 1).

This bridge eliminated the need for bicyclists and pedestrians to traverse long distances to the two road bridges in order to cross the freeway that bisects the City of Davis. It is named after a long-serving, bicycle-riding Public Works Director who was instrumental in the development of bicycle lanes in Davis in the early 1970s. The City powers made a rare break with tradition in naming the structure for a resident who is still alive (and still pedaling).

The entire structure is 12 feet wide, and approximately 1,700 feet long, including the bermed north and south portions leading up to the pylon bridge. Like the Pole Line Road overcrossing discussed earlier, this structure spans a frontage road, the Union Pacific Railroad Tracks, a bike lane in the Caltrans right-of-way, and I-80. Again, the raised railroad berm requires a very high bridge structure that rises 35 feet above the freeway. It may provide some guidance to the possible future planning for a similar bike and pedestrian bridge in the City of La Mesa.

Dave Pelz Overcrossing from south of Interstate 80.

2nd Street, Union Pacific Railroad tracks, Old Route U.S. 40 Bike Path, and Interstate 80, from left.

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Davis, CA 95616
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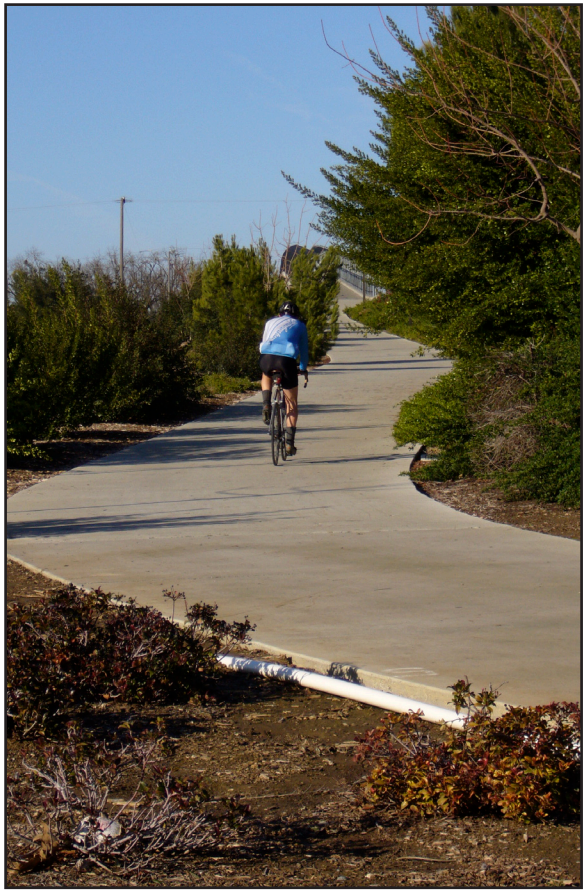
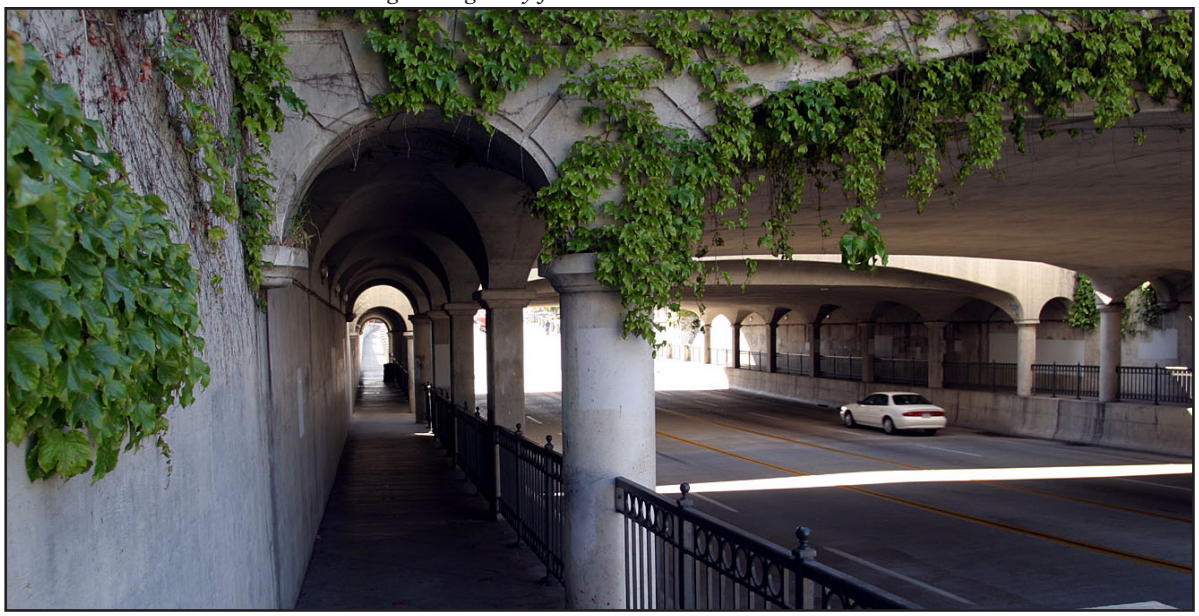


South side approach to bridge.

State Street undercrossing looking away from beach area towards downtown Santa Barbara.



Raised sidewalk reduces drop and climb for pedestrians, and is much safer from automobile intrusion.

Santa Barbara, CA: State Street/US Highway 101 Undercrossing

This undercrossing connects the vibrant traditional downtown of Santa Barbara with an historic focal point, the Stearns Wharf pier extending directly from the end of State Street into the Pacific Ocean. For decades through-travelers and Santa Barbara residents suffered the impacts of at-grade signalized intersections where Highway 101 cut between the downtown and the beach area. The underpass restores the traditional connection between the town and the beach.

This connection has become more important in recent years as the traditional downtown of Santa Barbara, along State Street, has undergone a stunning revival. This was accomplished in part by a thorough reworking of the street by reducing vehicle lanes and widening sidewalks. It is a thriving economic center, with locals and tourists thronging to restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues. This district is now safely linked to the beachfront and wharf area that has long been one of Santa Barbara's main attractions.

One of this bridge's greatest assets is the elevated pedestrian walkways. This design raises pedestrians and other users of the sidewalk above the level of vehicle traffic. Since pedestrians are much shorter than tall trucks, they are spared the requirement to walk so far uphill to regain the street level.

This design feature also provides additional security to pedestrians, since the elevation protects them from any errant vehicles that might cross a traditional curb. This is important, given that the roadway is 65 feet wide, with four through lanes and an at-grade median that becomes left turn pockets beyond the undercrossing slopes.

Positive aspects of the design: The raised pedestrian walkways on both sides, attractive landscaping, and the elimination of traffic signal delays on the through highway.

The design would benefit from: 1) restriping to add a landscaped median and 2) a two-lane with turn pocket design to slow traffic and reduce noise.

State Street, extending from Stearns Wharf past the beach, railroad, and US Highway 101 to downtown.

CONTACT

City of Santa Barbara
Transportation Planning Division
630 Garden Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
805-564-5385

The 4th Avenue Bridge over Budd Inlet in Olympia...

Olympia, WA: 4th Avenue Bridge over Budd Inlet

This structure is one of a pair of bridges that span the headwaters of Puget Sound in Olympia, Washington. Planning for the design of the 4th/5th Avenue Corridor Project began in 1999, when the Corridor Vision Advisory Committee met to determine what criteria should be addressed in the redesign of the area, as well as the process for choosing an artist to work with the design team in realizing those criteria.

Twenty-one applications were received, and once the jury process was complete, the opportunity was awarded to T. Ellen Sollod of Seattle. Her strong background in public art and urban design is enhanced by her experience working on design teams. The project was originally set for a much longer time line, but when the 2001 Nisqually earthquake made the bridge unusable, the plan was stepped up.

The magnitude 6.8 earthquake that struck Olympia in 2001 heavily damaged the already aging 4th Avenue Bridge. An emergency declaration allowed the reconstruction of the 4th Avenue Bridge to be expedited by more than two years. Congressman Brian Baird also helped secure more than $18 million in federal grants to reduce the burden on local officials and bring relief to downtown businesses and commuters.

The project was commissioned through the City's Public Art Program, to create a visually dynamic environment that engaged pedestrians and reflected community values. Ms. Sollod's close observation of the contrast between the natural environment of Budd Inlet and structured elements of the bridge and Capitol campus led to the design concept "From the Laws of Man to the Laws of Nature."

These themes contrast and balance one another through the bridge overlook mosaics, storm water rivulet and the roundabouts. Formal, geometric patterns reflect the "Laws of Man" while organic, irregular shapes characterize the "Laws of Nature." For example, the rivulet which carries storm water from the bridge begins in the east with flat,

...provides for all users and promotes the enjoyment of scenic views.

Photos © Steve Vento

tailored paving stones. As the rivulet moves west across the bridge, the stones become progressively more rounded and natural. This transition illustrates the presence of both the wild and the structured facets of our physical space. The lower roundabout with its terrazzo wall and fiber optic lighting directs your view to the Capitol beyond, while the Harrison Street roundabout's dry stack stone wall orients the viewer to Budd Inlet and Mt. Rainier.

The bridge incorporates three 11-foot travel lanes (one east bound and two west bound), 8-foot and 12-foot wide sidewalks on the south and north sides, and 5-foot wide bicycle lanes. Travel lanes are asymmetrical because the bridge works in tandem with the adjacent 5th Avenue Bridge. Though building the new bridge took center stage, the project included the following improvements in the bridge corridor:

- Two landscaped roundabouts instead of signalized intersections
- Colored and textured pavement on 4th and 5th Avenues
- Landscaped medians
- Utility undergrounding on 4th Avenue, between Water and Sherman Streets
- Lighted in-pavement crosswalks
- Relocating and enlarging the Park of the Seven Oars
- Public art was incorporated into a variety of locations throughout the corridor, often upgrading functional elements.

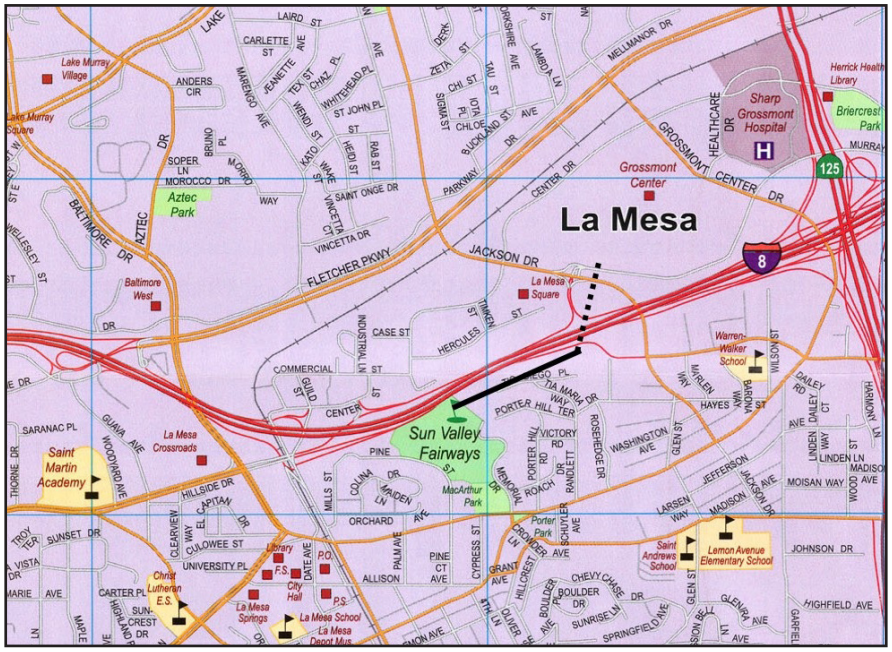
The Olympia Gateway Corridor Project was completed approximately $1 million under budget and 2-1/2 months ahead of schedule.

CONTACT

Sophie Stimson, Planner
City of Olympia
Public Works Department
Mail address: P.O. Box 1967Street address:
924 7th Ave, SE, Suite A
Olympia, WA 98507
360-753-8497

The 4th Avenue Bridge is still designd to carry significant traffic volumes.

The bridge has viewing platforms, artistic touches in the sidewalks, and attractive lights and poles.



Proposed route for new pedestrian and bicycle crossing of I-8.

Additional Examples

Recent discussions about improving connections across freeways in La Mesa have included the concept of a pedestrian and bicycle bridge across Interstate 8 that would span the low valley the freeway runs through. This bridge would connect the Grossmont Center shopping center with the La Mesa Village, Civic Center, MacArthur Park, and residential areas south of the freeway.

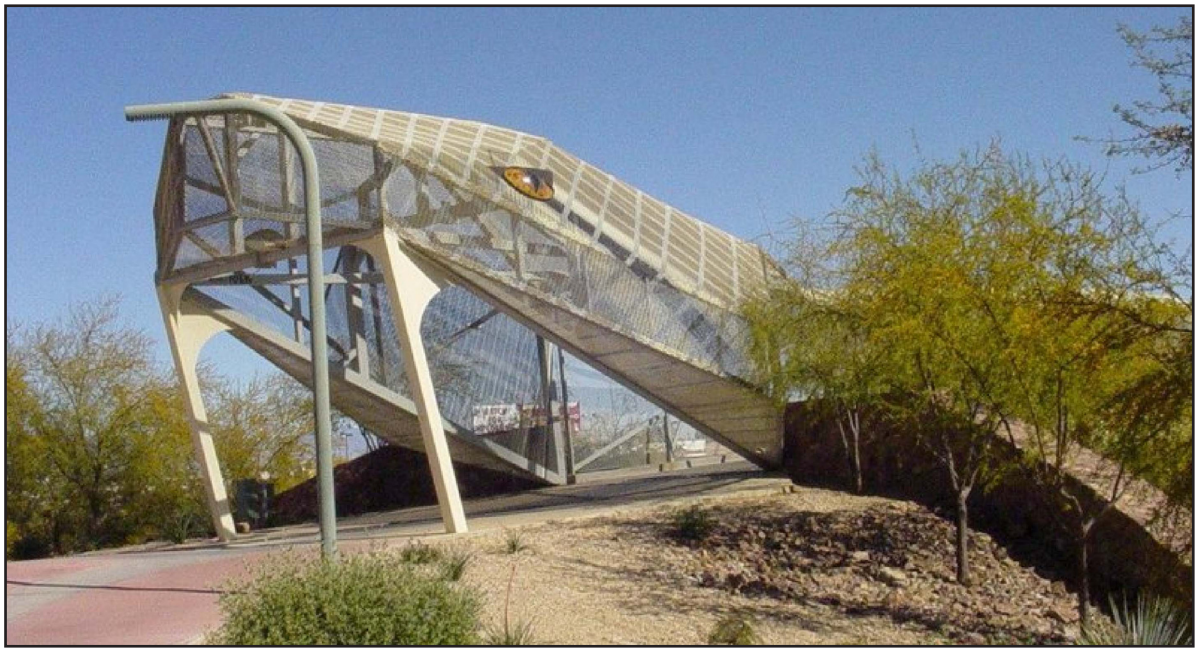
To minimize elevation loss and gain (more difficult for pedstrians and bicyclists than for automobiles), the bridge could be built at roughly the level of the Grossmont Center parking lot up the embankment above Jackson Drive, as shown on the map at left.

Once south of the freeway, the route would continue parallel to I-8 on a bench along the embankment visible above the green signs in the photo below. Three additional example bridges are briefly described on the following pages.

City staff points to alignment from parking lot edge (above, left) across low valley with commercial uses to bench on south side of freeway (above, right).

Tucson, AZ: Rattlesnake Bridge

This award-winning pedestrian and bicycle bridge spans busy Broadway near downtown Tucson, connecting walking and biking trails on either side. Designed by Simon Donovan, this structure is a perrenial favorite of residents and visitors alike.

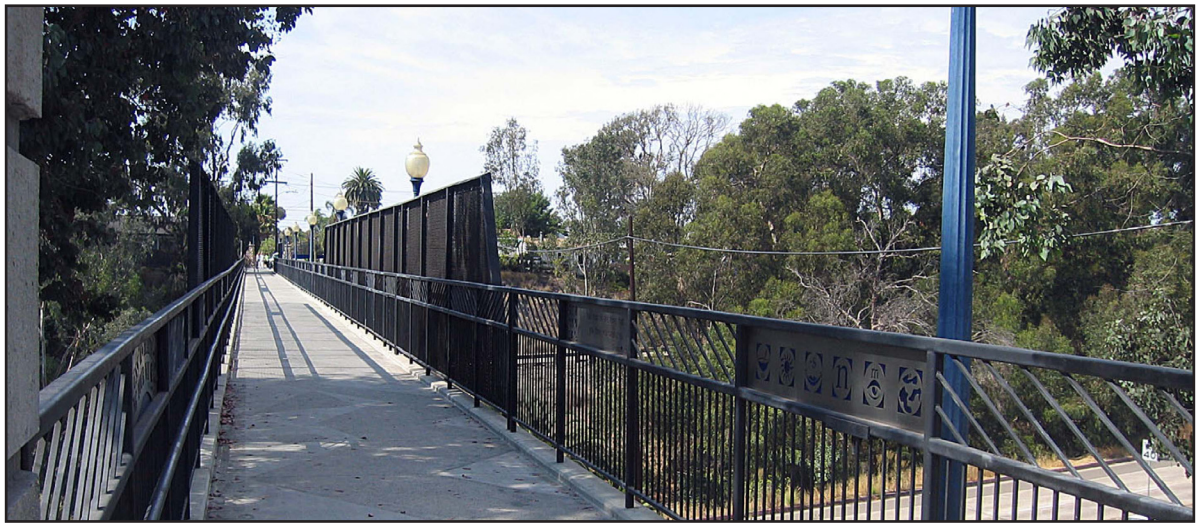


The Rattlesnake Bridge, view from below, and head and tail features.

Multiple views of Redding's Sundial Bridge.

Redding, CA: Sundial Bridge

Another tourist attraction with quirky styling, that spans the Sacramento River in Northern California's Central Valley.

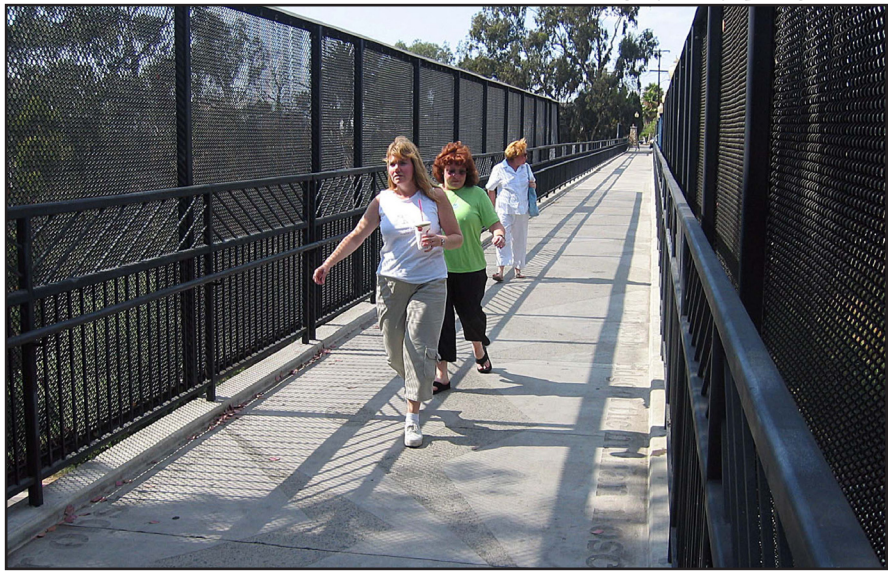


Hillcrest, CA (San Diego): Pedestrian Bridge

This bridge connects residential and commercial areas across a canyon expressway in the north-central San Diego urban area not far from the San Diego Zoo.

It is lined with happy and inspirational sayings, some sponsored by area businesses.

Hillcrest bridge offers safe passage as well as inspiration to pedestrians, night and day.



CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLEMENTATION

Structuring the Program

This report outlines an ambitious program for a makeover of all the freeway crossings addressed in the workshops, as well as the Fletcher Parkway/Amaya Drive intersection. Because the task ahead is large, and funding is always difficult, the City of La Mesa and Caltrans must begin by prioritizing improvements. This will take a cooperative approach that we initiated when the City applied for funds for this design exercise, which Caltrans granted.

With the completion of this report, the two entities must continue to work together. They need to prioritize improvements, fund and schedule them, and contract for construction at these complex locations with minimal disruption of traffic. Factors to consider during this process, in a suggested order of priority, are:

- *Safety*, especially for children, elderly, and disabled users of the streets. Those locations which are near schools and see considerable foot and bicycle travel by young students should get the first look.
- *High-cost projects* which should be identified early so that they may be inserted into the time-consuming funding process.
- *Potential for outside funding* that can ease the local burden and accelerate the timing of these important improvements.
- *Staightforward and quick fixes* that can be done at low cost without the delays involved with more costly projects that must be included in the RTP or RTIP prior to construction. This can include projects that will initially require only the simple application of paint markings, with the possibility of more involved improvements such as curbs and landscaping at a later time.
- *Priorities at each crossing* for the multiple pieces of improvements that make up the full recommendation for each location.
- *Hidden demand* for potential users of these crossings who avoid them now because of their perceived hazard. This may affect crossings with high levels of accidents. Or those near schools, senior housing, community facilities, transit stops, and shopping centers.
- *Non-vehicular* users, who do not add to congestion, consume resources, pollute, or contribute to global warming because they walk or bike.

Obviously, those areas where the most benefit can be achieved quickly at the lowest cost should be a priority. In areas where the existing hazard to street users is high, especially those not in cars, interim measures should be developed. For example, highly visible crosswalks could be painted immediately where they are shown on the designs in this report, even if portions of those crosswalks will eventually be covered by additions like curb extensions of center islands.

Funding the Program

A number of funding sources could help implement report recommendations. They offer alternatives for street design, community facilities, and other infrastructure. Sources of funding include:

- State and federal transportation funds
- City road maintenance and construction funds
- Development fees
- Special districts
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency
- Proposition 12 Tree Planting Grant Program
- Volunteer initiatives and private donations

Each of these funding sources is subject to changes in state and federal law, budget levels, and target project priorities. A summary of the situation for each as it existed at the time of this writing is below.

State and Federal Transportation Funds

Major state and federal transportation funding resources are outlined below. For more information on these funding programs, visit the Caltrans Division of Local Assistance website:

www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms

Hazard Elimination Safety Program (HES)

The Hazard Elimination Safety Program is a federal safety program that provides funds for safety improvements on all public roads and highways. These funds serve to eliminate or reduce the number and severity of traffic accidents at locations selected for improvement. Some of the street design

elements recommended may be eligible for funding if the site selected is considered a high hazard location. Caltrans solicits applications for projects. Any local agency may apply for these safety funds.

La Mesa and Caltrans should immediately explore the process to tap these funds, because five of the freeway crossings included in this charrette go over or under the federally-designated Interstate 8 freeway, and address clear hazards to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

During their time in La Mesa, the project team observed many situations where children walking or biking to or from school were in hazardous situations while using some of the freeway crossings examined in this study. Caltrans administers state and federally funded programs to improve walking and bicycling conditions in and around schools. Projects for federal funding must fall under infrastructure (capital) or non-infrastructure (education and encouragement) categories. A standardized statewide SRTS training program with promotional materials and school resources will be developed to help communities implement programs.

The program seeks to fund projects that incorporate engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement and evaluation components. It should be noted that engineering is listed first, because that effort creates the durable features of a street that support the other efforts. For more information go to: www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/saferoutes/saferoutes.htm

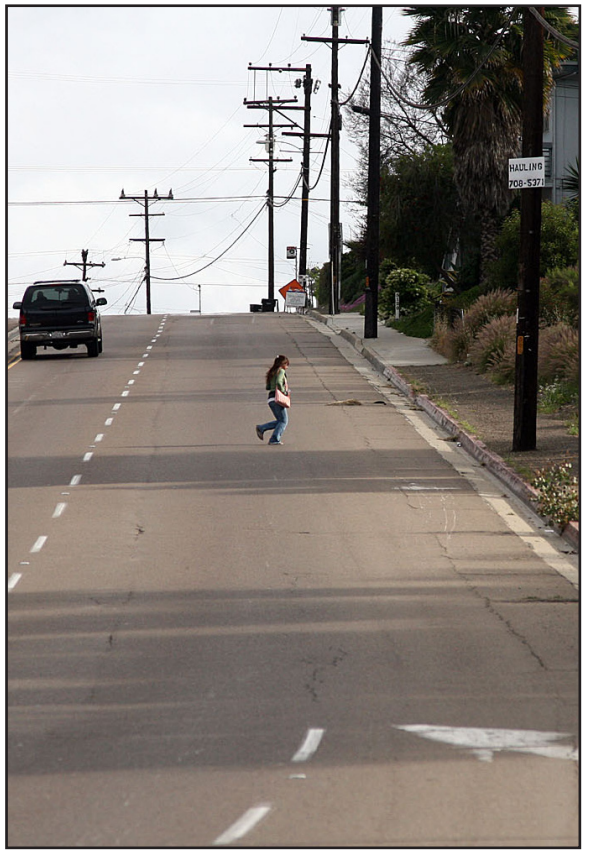
Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)

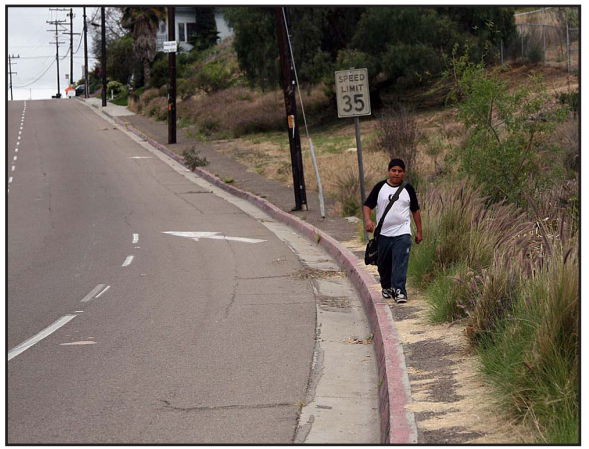
RTIP funds can be used for a wide variety of projects, including road rehabilitation, road capacity, intersections, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transit, passenger rail and other projects that enhance the region's transportation infrastructure. This is a broad program ideal for building the improvements at the freeway crossing locations in this report.

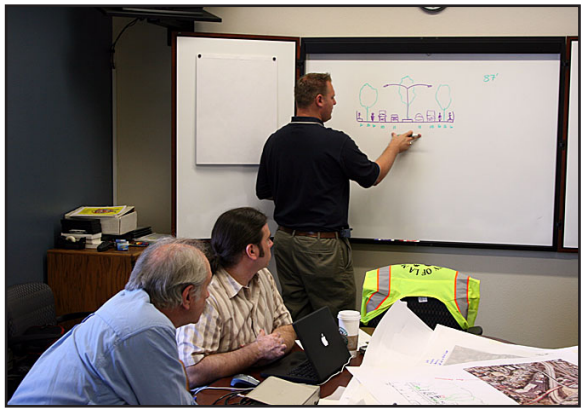
SANDAG, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Regional Transportation Planning Agency, is required by state and federal laws to develop and adopt a Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). The RTIP usually covers five fiscal years and incrementally develops the Regional Transportation Plan, the long-range transportation plan for the San Diego region. For more information go to: www.sandag.org

Transportation Enhancement Activities

Federal Transportation Enhancement funds are for construction projects that are "over and above" normal types of transportation projects. These projects may include street







trees and landscaping along roadways, pedestrian and bicycle access improvements and other scenic beautification. These are apportioned throughout the country.

Bicycle Transportation Account (BTA)

This state fund, administered by the Caltrans Bicycle Facilities Unit, can be used to aid cyclists, including median crossings, bicycle/pedestrian signals and bike lanes. La Mesa has a decent network of bike lanes that is missing links at some of the crossing locations in this report. Annual BTA funding is in the range of $5 million a year.

To be eligible for BTA funds, a city or county must prepare and adopt a Bicycle Transportation Plan. Adoption of a plan establishes eligibility for five consecutive funding cycles.

Transportation Development Act (TDA)

TDA provides for two sources of funding: Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA). The TDA funds a wide variety of transportation programs, including planning and program activities, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, community transit services, public transportation, and bus and rail projects.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

Under the State Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDGB) Program, cities and counties may seek funding for a broad range of activities ranging from establishment and operation of revolving loan funds and construction of infrastructure improvements to construction of new housing and community facilities.

Applicants may also seek funding for planning studies and writing grant applications relating to these activities. Funding programs under the CDBG Economic Development Allocation include the Economic Enterprise Fund for small business loans, Over-the-Counter Grants for public infrastructure associated with private-sector job creation, and Planning and Technical Assistance Grants. Applications under the Economic Development Allocation will require a job creation/retention component.
Potential projects include street and traffic improvements, water system expansion and improvements, and sewer system expansion and improvements.

For more information go to:
www.hcd.ca.gov/fa

California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency (BTHA)

The Business Transportation and Housing Agency (which includes Caltrans) administers a revolving fund program for local governments to finance infrastructure improvements, including city streets. This is a loan program for which the City can apply and receive funding from $250,000 to $10 million with terms of up to 30 years for a broad range of projects.

For more information go to: www.ibank.ca.gov

Proposition 12 Tree Planting Grant Program

This California Department of Urban Forestry program provides over $1 million per year in grants to cities, counties, districts, and nonprofit organizations for planting and three years maintenance of trees in urban public settings. These funds could be used to augment landscaping for the projects in this report.

The maximum award is $25,000 for a "small population community" and $50,000 for "regular Proposition 12 applicants." For more information go to: www.ufei.org/files/grantinfo/ Prop12Planting-Grants.html

For other possible funding sources for downtown trees: www.californiareleaf.org/grants_guide.html

California State Parks Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program provides funds annually for recreational trails and trails-related projects. The program provides funding for acquisition of easements and fee simple title to property for recreational trails, development of trailside and trailhead facilities, and construction of trails.

The maximum amount of RTP funds allowed for each project is 88% of the total project cost. The applicant is responsible for obtaining a match amount that is at least 12% of the total project cost. The grant cycle ends in early October of each year.

The pedestrian and bicycle bridge proposal detailed in Chapter 4 of this report seems to advance many of the goals of the California Recreational Trails Plan, even though it is in an urban setting. For more information see: www.parks.ca.gov/

Local Funding Opportunities

City Road Maintenance and Construction Funds

La Mesa can add striping, traffic calming, sidewalks, curbs and similar elements to other projects that already involve digging up or rebuilding street sections in the downtown area. For example, storm drain and sewer improvements, utility undergrounding

projects, and routine street resurfacing are all possibilities.

The greater the extent of the reconstruction, the greater the opportunity for adding elements such as bulbouts and medians at a fraction of the cost of a stand-alone project. Also, communities avoid the disruption, noise and expense of repeatedly digging up a street and detouring traffic.

Such combination projects will require coordination between departments and capital improvement projects whose schedules and budgets are often distinct.

Many cities have incorporated traffic calming into street reconstruction projects. In Venice, FL, for example, officials added $80,000 to a previously planned Main Street resurfacing project that provided for intersection bulb-outs, mid-block bulbouts, median crossings, and crosswalks of colorful paver stones.

Seattle has added planted medians to several streets at reduced cost as part of sewer upgrade projects. County transportation sales tax measures can provide substantial funding for city street maintenance and rehabilitation.

Development fees

Some cities require developers to install or help pay for infrastructure improvements (streets, sidewalks, trails, landscaping, etc.) through individual development agreements. On a larger scale, La Mesa could explore using development fees with a capital improvements program to help fund recommendations. To avoid a legal challenge of the City's right to levy these fees, care must be taken to apply this strategy only where there is a clear link establishing that travel generated by the private project will use the facility to be funded with the fees.

Special districts

A special district such as a Business Improvement District (BID) can provide up-front and on-going funding for projects benefiting specific commercial areas. Business-Based Improvement Districts are best suited for marketing, special events, and smaller expenditures like signage. Property-Based BIDs typically generate more revenues and are better suited for more expensive projects like landscaping. Landscaping and lighting districts are also sometimes established for streetscape improvements and maintenance.

Other types of facilities and infrastructure districts are sometimes created for parks, drainage and sewage. Special districts generally assess a charge levied upon parcels of real property within the district's boundaries to pay for "local improvements." So unlike redevelopment, to fund such a district it is necessary to charge an assessment or fee to property owners and/or merchants.

Volunteer initiatives and private donations

In addition to funding sources, programs can be created for volunteer initiatives such as "Adopt-a" programs where individuals or groups engage in beautification projects such as tree plantings. A program can also fund some projects, such as public art, by enlisting private donors to sponsor downtown enhancement activities. These programs can be administered by the City or by other community organizations.

The Next Steps For La Mesa

Work on the recommended changes can begin immediately and proceed in phases. They will move forward on several fronts:

- Embarking on a project to evaluate possible funding sources and apply for grants through those programs.
- Adding high visibility crosswalks at priority locations as soon as possible. Initially, these improvements will require only paint.
- Planning for more comprehensive construction of the designs detailed in Chapter 3 of this report. This will be a joint Caltrans and City of La Mesa project.
- Initiating a public process to design and implement the pedestrian and bicycle crossing of Interstate 8 mentioned in Chapter 4 of this report.
- Developing a public education program for residents, especially school-age children, to inform them about these efforts in general, and how they should safely travel along and across streets and freeways in La Mesa.

Implementing the designs in this report will help make trips by foot and bicycle across the major freeways in La Mesa safer. Desired and direct routes will be highlighted, and vehicle traffic will be better organized to improve safety for drivers as well.

APPENDIX: FOCUS GROUP MEETING NOTES

City Staff
May 3, 2007
9:00am – 10:00am

Attendees:

- Greg Humora, Public Works Director
- Dirk Epperson, Assistant Engineer
- Patricia Rutledge, Community Development

Notes:

City just finished up 7 workshops, looking at 7 maintenance zones, for infrastructure. Workshops: To define where sidewalks should go, prepare a draft map, ¼ mile zones from bus stops, trolleys, shopping, entertainment, schools, etc. Some of the areas don't want sidewalks. We designated several neighborhoods that wouldn't get sidewalks. We are doing public input from residents. We took this to the City Council.

Second goal: Develop new street design for streets with ADTs under 600. Design proposal is 28 feet with parking on both sides. Have some streets in City that already are 30 feet, with parking. Folks in town don't have experience with yield streets.

Third goal: Pedestrian benefit zone in lieu fee. Right now state of CA requires homeowners to put in curbs, gutters, and sidewalk. Many areas in La Mesa don't have sidewalks or curbs. Now, if someone wants to do a $30k improvement, they have to put in sidewalk. Alternative is putting a lien on the property. We found a city that has a pedestrian benefit zone in lieu fee and drafted a concept. It had to meet Nolan and Dollan for nexus and proportionality. Proportionality was what's a fair amount, about $30/feet. Cheaper than if homeowner did it. The Nexus is zones, and the money stays in your zone. Residents will benefit from improvements. When we get $50k, we will put in sidewalk for a block or two of streets. Will focus on highest priority areas.

That's what's being presented to public. So far everyone is very receptive. Have gotten input from about 60 people. Got 25 people at one meeting because one of residents thought the City would take their front lawn. Have many streets in older areas that don't have 40 feet of right of way. But with new standards we don't have to take any property. 3-6 months public input period. Want to get PowerPt up on web site. Took it to Council in July. Web page is being upgraded. We have been working on it for 3 years.

Fliers for this event were at all the workshops and invited folks to attend. Have had comments about crossing freeways at meetings.

Pedestrian bridge across Jackson. Grossmont Center, on north side with trolley, will probably be redone when current lease comes up in 2010. Could be a gateway to the City. Same grade on south side and at freeway.

Smart Growth Grants. Got two $2 million dollar incentive grants from SANDAG, TransNet, $17 million. One for civic center, wrapped with sidewalks, street trees, lighting, wider sidewalks, and enhanced crosswalks. Midblock crossing in front of library. Diagonal parking on Alison. Adding landscaping. Narrowing Alison and Date intersection. Continues to get across intersection of Spring Street to east end where there's parking lot. Building library between City Hall, fire station, and police station. Timeframe: Start phase 1 in 4 months. Phase 2 a few months later. Phase 3 14 months.

Second grant. Building 527 apartments at Grossmont Apartments on top of trolley parking. Next to hospital, etc. SG money to enhance trolley station for peds. Elevator, staircase, bridge across the tracks. Timing: Apartments under construction, 2 years. Fairfield residential. 60 units/acre. 1.75 spaces/unit.

La Measa Commission Members
May 3, 2007
10:30am – 11:30am

Attendees:

- Ginger Radenheimer, Human Relations Commission
- Tomas Carlos, Traffic Commission
- Ellen Arcadi, Commission on Aging
- Earlene Lourenco, Commission on Aging
- Mike Caprio, Traffic Commission
- Ron Ashman, Planning Commission

Notes:

I will walk to shopping Center at the Grossmont Center. There is a lot of concrete. It's a mass of cars and concrete. Not friendly to pedestrians. So I stay away from the area. It has a negative energy. Same thing at Spring Street and 94th.

I-8 and 70th Street is a real concern. The problem when going west on Alvarado is the 3 lanes and stop light. Right lane is supposed to be right only to go east on I-8 but there is a lot of confusion there because of the two left lanes. Some cars don't understand and make the right turn and have convergence. It's near the new trolley station. Wasn't a problem before the station was built there.

I live in Zone 1 and do a lot of walking in that area. Only the people who have to, walk across the freeway. I used to push my stroller across I-8 at Baltimore. A lot of crossings are very intimidating. There is high speed traffic very close to where you're walking. Not a lot of people are doing this by choice. Same thing for bicyclists. Would be nice to find alternate ways to get across. Transit agency had originally proposed pedestrian bridge in Mission Valley East plans, but took it out because some residents objected to it.

La Mesa is an infill community. Need to look at other ways to get to parks through trails. The park off of Baltimore is disconnected from the area west.

There is an opportunity at Baltimore, El Cajon and I-8. MTDB left lot on both sides of freeway. And private car dealer on east. Opportunity to connect downtown to commercial corridor.

For my job I drive to a lot of the schools. There are problems with Grossomont Center Drive. When SR-125 was put in, on the way down the hill past the donut shop there was a right turn only. When SR-125 was put in at the foot of Spring Street they took out the right turn only. Cars back up and block the right turn. There's enough space there for a right turn lane. There is a sidewalk but it's not used much. Not clear why the right turn lane was taken out.

Another problem with that intersection is cars coming off the freeway are usually going left or right onto Spring. When waiting to make right turn there are cars that come off the freeway and decide to continue through at a high speed. Coming from El Cajon on SR-125, if you get off and want to turn left, there is a big backup on Spring. It's a relatively new intersection. Where 125 and 94 merge, it has made a mess for drivers because coming on 94 you get off at Spring Street, and there are cars getting on 94 having to merge with cars coming off.

El Cajon and Baltimore get backed up on turn lanes. Turning pocket is not long enough.

With seniors the problems are more about the hills. Folks are not crossing the freeway. There is a bridge crossing 94 at Mariposa and Alpine that connects Lemon Grove. There has been discussion about taking it down.

At Alvarado and 70th there is a right-turn only sign at I-8. Need to add "Right turn only to 8 East" From Alvarado going west at 70th the sign needs to be fixed. It's a bad and confusing intersection.

A new project at Grossmont Center is set up for pedestrians. Right now getting from the trolley to Center is not easy. Have to go up steps now.

The Commission on Aging is looking at golf carts. Considering golf carts being used on local streets. They can be used on streets with speeds under 25mph. Hills are a problem for seniors. Since dial a ride program ended a few years ago there are people that are isolated.

There are problems with skateboarders coming down the hills. Y has a skateboard park.

I do a lot of walking downtown and have trouble with crossings. Sometimes problems are due to high speeds. Especially when you go across I-8, there needs to be a barrier.

In the area by La Mesa Blvd, Glenn and Jackson, we have an ice cream store, coffee shop, etc., but seniors don't walk there because of La Mesa Blvd. There is a median on La Mesa Blvd. Is it being taken out. There are no trees. No connection to nature. Need to deal with the conditions on La Mesa Blvd.

Date Street has an education center on the corner. La Mesa Village plaza is on a curve. Seniors walking dogs in that area and crossing to Starbucks have had to run to get out of the way of cars. No crosswalk. Look at a midblock crossing, and ways to slow speeds. North of Orange also has a lot of traffic.

There are landscaping issues. Problems with landscaping obscuring views. On Baltimore at El Cajon, when going into the shopping center you can't see traffic coming off the freeway. Plants in the median are a problem.

Add greenery to crossings.

Lemon Avenue school. Kids walk to school and walk up and down the street. But safety is an issue at Chevy Chase where you can't see cars.

I normally take La Mesa Blvd to Helix High School. I see kids going on skateboards

Community Organizations
May 3, 2007
3:00-4:00pm

Attendees:

- Yvonne Garrett, La Mesa Wellness Task Force
- Bruce Locckwood, Walk N' Talk La Mesa
- Carol Lockwood, La Mesa Wellness Task Force
- Paula Jameson, La Mesa-Spring Valley School District
- Gary Baldwin, Walk N' Talk La Mesa

Notes:

We need a way to get from Grossmont Center to the community center with a possible bridge.

Trolley is also a major barrier in the City. Trolleys run every 15 minutes, so they can get delayed several minutes at Spring Street. There is 8 hours of stopped traffic every day in La Mesa.

Spring Street has no sidewalk.

University Avenue is in the process of a redesign stage.

Most children are driven to schools. Parkway Middle School has SR-125 in back and is on Fletcher Parkway. The Dallas Street crossing is ok. Fletcher Parkway is a problem. Need to put the crossing in a newer area.

Rolando also is wedged between two major intersections.

Ways to make underpasses is a shorter term fix. From Spring to Center

Adopting a block program could be coordinated with the SRTS program.

We don't have trails and paths. Need an incremental process. Focus on points of attraction and build out from those points. There is a lot of history in La Mesa. The remains of it are in older areas that may not be properly maintained. Could build walking paths from trolley and follow trails that take people to places. The Historical Society has identified points of interest in the city. Until we activate the community we're not going to create a conversation and will have to wait to get money.

We need a town trail that takes people to points of interest.

Expand the La Mesa Walking art trail to include these points of interest.

Wakarusa was built to serve the reservoir. The Indian word means "reeds and water."

Add pigmented asphalt for roadways over freeways. Bike lanes.

If focus on Spring Street, focus on the road that is used to travel from the industrial area to downtown and restrict pedestrian movement on the bridge that takes traffic north.

Motorized wheelchairs. Problem with them in the street.

Curb ramps. Offer incentive for someone to develop wheelchair that can get over curbs.

Schools
May 4, 2007
10:30am – 11:30am

Attendees:

- Dick Hoy, Grossmont Union High School District
- Guido Magliato, Rolando Elementary

Notes:

My concern is with kids who go to Grossmont HS and take the trolley. The distance is fairly long. There have been attacks. So now we have a bus that runs from the trolley. Problems with attacks, etc. on Water Street. On one side we have the trolley, but on the other side we have the backs of homes. Take a look at Water Street. Trolley is being used to avoid freeway crossings.

Children coming from north to Grossmont might be walking across SR-125.

The wide crossing at Baltimore and Fletcher Pkwy could be a problem.

Would like to identify how many children are walking from where. Talk to school superintendent to get a count.

El Cajon and University are two major challenges. Gayle and Lowell are also problems. Grossmont is very busy and it's hard to see pedestrians.

We just put in new sidewalks from 70th to 71st on Colony. Finished the 71st portion that comes to the corner.

To reach Grossmont High School from the south, you have to cross I-8 on Severin, but I don't see children walking because it's not a direct route.

Check catchment areas for schools. These should be on web sites.

Rolando have safety patrols at 70th Street, but we have problems getting parent volunteers.

Emergency Responders and Transit Agencies
May 4, 2007
1:30-2:30pm

Attendees:

- Devin Braun, Metropolitan Transit System
- Dan Willis, La Mesa Police

Notes:

Overcrossings - For safety issues, on overpasses we would like to see raised sidewalks and clearly marked bike lanes. Vehicles are not used to seeing them. Also could install a fence or barrier.

Undercrossings - Lighting is a problem. Try to provide better lighting.

Interpret crash data. Meet with Lieutenant Madero. 667-1400, Mon-Thurs

We need to make sure that folks walking on overpasses don't throw stuff over onto freeways.

There has been criminal activity – muggings, purse snatching, attacking other teenagers, etc. – at trolley station.

At Grossmont High School there has been attacks on female students.

Transit – At 70th Street there was a pedestrian overcrossing. The Station is tucked away, and hard to get to. Crossings and stoplights are difficult. There are bus routes with 30 minute headways.

Need a sidewalk on the west side of Spring. We usually like to get 10 feet of sidewalk.

We are always in support of better access to all stations. Route 7 has the biggest bus service. The terminal is at Alison at Palm. Runs to downtown San Diego. It runs every 24 minutes, 12 in peak time to Kroc Center.

Spring Street is a problem with speeders. As they come in to town from south they build up speed.

Trolley owns the tracks. Freight lines from the border operate at night.

La Mesa Blvd train station – lots of people are crossing at Alison.