

FootNotes

A Regional Coalition Promoting Walkable Communities

'Safe Routes to School' bill

Congress takes up pedestrian issue

A groundbreaking Safe Routes to School bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman James L. Oberstar (D-MN) June 18. The bill is modeled on California's successful Safe Routes to School program, administered by Caltrans.

"The Pedestrian and Cyclist Equity Act of 2003 (PACE) encourages children and adults to reacquaint themselves with the joys of human-powered transportation," Oberstar explained.

The PACE bill would create a national Safe Routes to School program, providing states with a total of \$250 million a year to fix unsafe conditions on roads near schools and encourage children to walk and bike to school. States or local governments would be required to provide a 20% match for Safe Routes projects.

The bill is intended to help address the rapid increase of childhood obesity and inactivity-related diseases. More than 70% of today's parents bicycled and walked to school, but only 18% of their children do today. The bill will most likely be absorbed into the eventual federal transportation bill generally known as "TEA-3."

For more information, visit the website www.transact.org.



We hate to say "told you so," but as SANDAG deliberated the Regional Transportation Plan last December, WalkSanDiego predicted the federal Safe Routes program would emerge and urged SANDAG to set aside funding for the local match. They declined.

If the bill passes, San Diego's local governments will be on their own to provide the match or be forced to take from other regional funding programs.

Walk & roll through Mission Valley July 10

Check out San Diego's riverwalk trail and experience the city's best examples of urban planning at "Walk & Roll: A Walking Tour of Mission Valley's Transit Oriented Developments". Co-sponsored with Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS), this informative walk Thursday, July 10, will be led by City of San Diego Planning Director Gail Goldberg and WalkSanDiego President Jamie Moody.

The walk includes dinner at 5:30 p.m. at the Fenton Parkway Trolley Station (west of IKEA) and concludes at 7 p.m. with a dessert reception at Hazard Center Condominiums.

The cost is \$10 for WSD & WTS members, \$20 non-members, and \$10 for students. RSVP by Monday, July 7, to jessica.krieg@sdmts.com or call 619-557-4574. For more information, visit www.walksandiego.org.





County trails master plan ready for review

The draft Community Trails Master Plan is now available for public review.

The plan offers guidelines for community trail development and management in the unincorporated areas of the county. It allows each community to customize its plan to the

unique characteristics and vision for local trails in its area.

The public review period ends August 1. To see the plan, visit www.sdcounty.ca.gov/parks, and follow the electronic trail to the draft trails plan.

Planning association recognizes pedestrians

by Andy Hamilton

I find it agonizing to report on receiving an award, but here are the facts...

The American Planning Association's San Diego section presented me with a Leadership Award for "my" pedestrian advocacy work at its annual awards banquet June 5. While I appreciated the gesture, the fact is, I am paid to do this. It would be practically scandalous if I didn't succeed.

Recognition *must* go to the Air Pollution Control District and County Board of Supervisors (who serve as the Air Pollution Control Board) for creating my position in the first place and granting me the flexibility to do it well.

Aside from that clear-eyed vision exercised in 1992, this award more importantly reflects the new stature of pedestrians among today's planners. If you look around, improvements for pedestrians are being made in every corner of the county.

Traffic standards are being changed, neighborhoods are demanding safer streets, and architects recognize their contribution to improving pedestrian safety and comfort. San Diego probably has the most new walkable developments of any county in California (Bressi Ranch, Otay Ranch, 4S Ranch, great infill projects, etc.).

True, San Diego is a hot spot for pedestrian injuries and it will take a long time to address all of the problems. But the region's planners, and I would say, a majority of the traffic engineers, understand the need to do things differently. And *that* is worthy of an award.

Conference takes 'how to' approach

California Walks and the California Bicycle Coalition are accepting registrations for Walk/Bike California 2003, a how-to state conference for engineers, planners, elected officials, advocates, and citizens.

The conference will be held October 15-18 in Oakland. Please help us get the word out to local



governments, planning firms, elected officials, and others.

WalkSanDiego is playing a major role in crafting the conference sessions to ensure it will be helpful to professionals as well as advocates.

The City of Oakland, which adopted the state's first comprehensive Pedestrian Plan, is a major sponsor — in part to show off its many pedestrian improvements. Register now at www.walkbikecalifornia.net.

Permitting a Walkable Main Street

Forget driving to the mall. Traditional main streets, accessible on foot from surrounding neighborhoods, are the most walkable way to shop. If you're lucky enough to have one in your neighborhood, you know what we mean. So when the City of San Diego's Development Services Department (DSD), which issues building permits for homes and businesses, recently proposed to increase permit fees, we went to work.

Along with other small business advocates, WalkSanDiego's Andy Hamilton testified in opposition at a key city council committee.



Crossing 5th Avenue challenges pedestrians.

Uptown launches traffic calming efforts

This spring, the Uptown Partnership in Hillcrest launched the 4th/5th/6th Avenue Traffic Calming effort. The project followed recommendations included in "Walkable Uptown", a report commissioned from WalkSanDiego in 2002. The design firm KTU+A was hired to help direct a steering committee, gather community ideas and priorities, and produce a final design.

WalkSanDiego has been deeply involved in the effort. The Uptown Partnership is led by Jeffery Tom, who sees the pedestrian environment as one of Uptown's greatest assets, and one he and the Uptown Partnership Board of Directors hopes to make even better.

You can reach them at (619) 298-2541 or www.uptownpartnership.org.



La Mesa's Main Street attracts pedestrians.

The reason? The department is notoriously slow, mysterious, rude, and expensive in issuing permits to smaller businesses trying to upgrade old commercial buildings – those that inhabit Main Streets.

Some horror stories we heard included a yearlong delay for a permit promised in a few weeks; lengthy arguments over whether paint, a desk, and a room divider constituted "construction"; and new businesses maxing out credit cards, biting their nails, and praying to get their permits before bankruptcy became inevitable.

Department inspectors, we were told, frequently contradict each other, sometimes ordering expensive upgrades only to have the next inspector ordering it removed – at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars. Such practices drive small businesses to the suburbs, and make their customers travel there too. A key walking opportunity for hundreds of residents is lost as a Main Street withers for lack of good service from the city.

Fortunately, the city's Small Business Advisory Board, appointed by Mayor Dick Murphy, took up the cause and extracted multiple promises and action plans from DSD before agreeing not to oppose the permit fee increases. Since then, the agency has adopted several reforms, and top managers appear ready to enforce a new business-friendly attitude. However, only time will tell whether DSD truly reforms and makes walkable "village" communities viable again for incoming businesses.



[A walk around the world](#)

Charting Pedestrian Charters

by Michael L. Lytton

In May of last year Toronto became what advocates claimed to be the first city in North America to adopt a pedestrian charter. The Toronto Pedestrian Charter describes six walking-related principles and a list of ways the city purports to encourage walking. However, translating high-level principles into meaningful policies that significantly benefit pedestrians is another matter. I am hopeful but less than optimistic.

The Toronto Charter borrows liberally (without attribution) from the Australian Pedestrian Charter, developed during the 1999 National Pedestrian Summit in Sydney. The Australian Charter is visionary, ambitious, even tough, with objectives such as “reasserting the rights and freedoms which pedestrians once enjoyed”.

Numerous jurisdictions in Australia have endorsed the national charter. In Perth, for example, the Charter is central to *Perth Walking: The Metropolitan Region Pedestrian Strategy*, adopted in 2000. The *Strategy* is an admirably detailed implementation plan with at least the promise of actual strategies, actions, partners and targets.

Before the Australian Pedestrian Summit of 1999, pedestrian charters had appeared in Dublin as well as on the political platforms of Green Parties in both Scotland and England. Eleven

years earlier, the European Parliament adopted both a resolution on the protection of pedestrians and the European Charter of Pedestrians’ Rights and called on member states to adopt requirements implementing its provisions. This includes promoting “the right to live in spaces made to the measure of persons and not of vehicles.” Especially significant is its acknowledgement of the walking component of public transit trips as an integral part of a city’s transportation system.

In 1994, the European Charter was supplemented with the proposals of the Car-Free Cities movement, which was being promoted by the European Commission and launched by eight European cities (Athens, Barcelona, Bologna, Bremen, Copenhagen, Dordrecht, Granada and Palermo). The growing Car-Free Cities movement seeks to recover the harmony between people and the city without depending on automobiles. One of its fundamental principles is that a city’s walkability is one of the most important measures of the quality of its public realm, social and economic health, and vitality.

In North America we’re working hard to catch up, while arguably facing greater challenges. Toronto is proud to adopt a watered down version of the Aussie pedestrian charter, and progressive U.S. planners reinvent the walking shoe with their *Charter of the New Urbanism*. The latter isn’t as forthright as the European principles, but it’s a small step in the right direction.

Pedestrian charters are a growing fad and, to the extent that they raise awareness, they might be useful. However, if they remain only a collection of noble sentiments that do not result in tangible results they are impotent. And worse, if planners and traffic engineers regard a toothless pedestrian charter as a meaningful concession to those of us who are working to improve our cities, then they become an unintended impediment to our progress. The determining factor lies in the myriad details of measurable goals and implementation strategies.



After an early morning lull at Earth Fair in Balboa Park, WalkSanDiego’s booth enjoyed brisk business.

Michael Lytton is a “lapsed planner,” active walker and WalkSanDiego member who regularly checks the pulse on pedestrian issues around the world.

Walking – A Casualty of Growth Battles

Will our regional comprehensive plan be any different?

If you show the average person photos of three well-designed neighborhoods that differ only in housing density, you are likely to get a warm response to the densest neighborhood. Why? Most people intuitively recognize that you are more apt to know your neighbors and feel a stronger sense of connection in a denser neighborhood. However, just try proposing a dense housing development in an existing neighborhood, and the same people will voice stringent opposition.

This is the main reason we have an affordable housing shortage and freeways packed with Riverside County commuters. It's also why few San Diegans walk for transportation in suburban neighborhoods. Perfectly walkable but low-density communities lack a sufficient customer base to attract retail stores, the workout gym, a post office, or a bus stop, and many other necessities within walking distance of most homes. And without these destinations nearby, most people walk only when they are absolutely forced, or to exercise the dog.

This is the dilemma facing the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) as it tries to plan for the continued onslaught of growth.

A little background: San Diego adds about 15,000 new residents every year. To deal with that growth and acting on behalf of the region's 19 jurisdictions, SANDAG and its various committees are hard at work on a Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) – the first in 25 years. Each jurisdiction has its own growth blueprint, called a General Plan, but many important regional issues such as open space, housing affordability, and transportation are not adequately addressed by these plans taken together. Since SANDAG distributes non-local funding for transportation and

SANDAG's RCP Workshops

Thursday, September 4
El Cajon Community Center
6 to 9 p.m.

Saturday, September 6
Encinitas Community Center
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Thursday, September 11
National City Community Building
6 to 9 p.m.

Saturday, September 13
San Diego State University, East Commons
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Thursday, September 18
San Marcos Community Center
6 to 9 p.m.

Previous workshops established Core Principles for Growth. These workshops will examine different visions for the future region. RSVPs are requested. For more information, visit www.sandag.org/rcp or call (619) 595-5637.

other purposes, its criteria for doing so can reward communities who accept denser growth and take these between-the-cracks regional issues into account.

But as anyone in local government can tell you, our tax system (remember Proposition 13?) doesn't let cities recoup the total cost of serving new residents. And anyway, most residents oppose new development in their backyard. Hence, in most communities, there is no political support to add enough new housing to make walking – or public transit – viable transportation choices.

For all of these reasons, the RCP may be simply another exercise in planning frustration. Or it could be a great opportunity to force all of us to struggle with the tradeoffs we usually fail to consider when we deal with local growth issues. *WalkSanDiego* urges everyone who can to attend SANDAG's public workshops on the RCP (see box). Learn more, make wise choices, and give walking a chance.

Walk21 gathers world's walkers

by Andy Hamilton

Last month, WalkSanDiego board members Tina Zenzola and Andy Hamilton attended Walk21: 4th International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century, held in Portland, Oregon. This is their report:

Portland: A City Made for Walking (and Serendipity)

Any San Diegan who's visited Portland knows it is 30 years ahead of us in planning for pedestrians. Most neighborhoods have traffic calming treatments. The downtown includes pedestrian-only streets, transit malls, and dozens of small green spaces.

Two experiences I had particularly hit home.

One evening, walking back to the hotel from a reception at the Oregon Zoo, about a dozen conferees came upon an art opening at a small but elegant downtown gallery. The owner, who happened to be outside, invited us in. We found a few

*Avid walker
sings the
blues too...*



stragglers and a piano jazz combo packing up its instruments. When I pointed out that America Walks president Ellen Vanderslice was an accomplished jazz vocalist and had her song charts with her (having performed for us at the reception), the pianist took her aside. We were soon treated to fine wine and Ellen's soul-stirring blues, surrounded by gorgeous artwork. It was magical and pure serendipity. And it made me ponder how many such moments we have all missed, confined to our cars.

Another small moment showed how ingrained the "pedestrian culture" has become in Portland. I was standing on a corner of a 3-lane, one-way street, waiting for the light to change. A large "cohort" of vehicles, driving downhill, approached the intersection. Even though their light

WALK 21



Portland's downtown streets routinely feature public art (left) and well-designed crosswalks (above).

was green, the lead car in all three lanes slowed down to make sure I wasn't going to step out. Can you imagine such a thing in San Diego?

The reactions of these drivers suggest Portland pedestrians must be habitual jaywalkers, but I didn't see any. It appeared to me that the pedestrian environment has shaped the behavior of drivers. So...I hereby start the 30-year countdown to San Diego becoming a pedestrian-worshipping region. Ready, set, go!

A warning from the surgeon general

U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona gave the keynote address. Carmona is a Phoenix trauma surgeon and ex-police officer who grew up in the highly walkable Bronx in New York.

Carmona discussed the annual \$115 billion cost of the U.S. obesity epidemic, and the central role of walking in combating this public health scourge. Unfortunately, he did not offer any new programs or support for expanding existing federal funding sources under TEA-21, which is now being debated in Congress.

Giant wakes up

The sleeping giant that is the public health sector has awakened to the importance of walking and community design. Public health officials and practitioners were very much in evidence at Walk21. This important sector has demonstrated its prowess at intervening effectively to change behavior (seat belts, HIV-AIDS, tobacco).

Their involvement in the walking movement seemed inevitable, given the enormous health benefits of walking, and the heavy toll physical inactivity is taking on the nation's health and healthcare system.

Like trash reduction?

Could it be like trash reduction? Years ago, trash reduction was considered infeasible but, beginning with the easiest materials (paper, cans, and bottles), we've diverted 50% to recycling.

Similarly, we could convert up to 34% of trips to walking, biking, and transit by targeting short school, recreation, and shopping trips. Most programs aim at the work trip, which is only 20% of trips – and these may be the hardest to convert.

The potential payoff is huge. Marketing campaigns encouraging mode-shifting in Perth, Australia, and Portland, Oregon, have shown that a 2% increase in walking can result in a 10% decrease in auto trips. To those who scoff this can't work, one expert noted, "We've never really tried it (with sufficient resources)."

Still going...

Wheeling Walks (WV) used media ads to increase walking by 14% among its residents who were 50 to 65 years old. The cost was \$66 per changed person in the target audience, and \$4.35 in the larger Wheeling community.

This compares to \$400 per changed person in traditional "willing volunteer" health interventions.

One year later, the new walkers were still walking at least 30 minutes per day. See www.wheelingwalks.org.



Wheeling residents walk – rain or shine.

Marketing options

M.I.T. lecturer Werner Bröeg described a project in Perth, Australia, in which individual marketing of transit options to commuters reduced car trips in a single neighborhood by 14% at a cost of \$150,000. A similar effort in Portland, Oregon, yielded an 8% reduction.

Equivalent reductions in congestion using traditional road-widening would cost many millions of dollars. Of course, to have a lasting effect, individualized marketing efforts would need to be repeated periodically. (According to one lender, the average San Diego homeowner moves every four years; renters even more often.)

The two marketing efforts showed most commuters have very little idea about the alternative travel options available to them. Though less than 20% of people elected to use the information right away, a large majority of those contacted asked for more details. Putting the public health sector's marketing engines to work on this could have dramatic results.

The good ole days

Dr. Daniel Sauter of Urban Mobility Research, Switzerland, presented the most philosophical and thought-provoking talk of the conference. Invoking the ancient Roman phrase "Via vita est" (Streets are life), he emphasized the loss of personal freedom as pedestrians have been made to follow the rules of car traffic.

To illustrate, he showed two photos of the same European intersection taken 100 years apart. In the first, pedestrians proceeded across the street in all directions, or just stood in the middle conversing, while vehicles (mainly horse-drawn) maneuvered slowly around them. In the second, pedestrians waited patiently at street corners as vehicles occupied all of the street space. He discussed creating better balance between modes.

Begin, he said, by rousing the longings people already have for three things: freedom and self-determination, deceleration in the pace of living, and dignity and respect. He referred to Christchurch, New Zealand's Living Streets Initiative that aims to achieve the desired balance between modes (see next story).

Follow the leader

New Zealanders have generally followed the U.S. path of over-engineering for automobiles to the detriment of city environments and walking. Christchurch's City Council introduced the Living Streets Initiative as an assistance program to residents and merchants wanting to restore the balance streets once had.

Christchurch's Living Streets Principles

- ❑ Living Streets require more than technical engineering solutions.
- ❑ All streets except motorways (highways) are for living.
- ❑ Living Streets help create living cities.
- ❑ Street environments set the stage for activities that enhance quality of life.
- ❑ Car drivers must give way to people and vulnerable road users.
- ❑ Everything we do should be measured against quality of life.
- ❑ Change the priority (in terms of planning) to ensure better balance:
 1. Pedestrians
 2. Cyclists
 3. Public transit
 4. Taxis
 5. Service vehicles
 6. Cars
- ❑ Ensure the above priorities do not compromise current levels of service (traffic flow).
- ❑ Vision: zero road fatalities and zero growth in car kilometres travelled (driving).



Christchurch, New Zealand, has widened sidewalks and installed planters in the middle of streets to create “Living Streets”.

A team of four planners/engineers works with a neighborhood to determine where to strike that balance and the options available. Construction is undertaken as funding becomes available, but a number of streets and intersections have been reconstructed (see photos and www.ccc.govt.nz/LivingStreets/).

Speed by the foot

One presentation concerned street characteristics and the feelings of residents about the “livability” of their neighborhood in the Portland suburb of southeast Vancouver, Washington. Some findings:

- ❑ The study confirmed other studies which found that the street width that corresponds to a speed of 25 mph is 24 feet. [Very few streets in San Diego County are this narrow.]

- ❑ For every 1m increase in street width, the 85th percentile vehicle speed increases 1 mph. (The 85th percentile speed is that which 85% of vehicles are driving at or below and is the legal basis for setting speed limits.)

- ❑ Of five residential streets studied, only the narrowest one (32 feet wide) exhibited traffic that came close to obeying the 25 mph speed limit. At the other extreme, vehicles travelled 36 mph (85th percentile) on a street that was 62 feet wide. [Note: The City of San Diego’s new residential street standard is 30 feet and



Carlsbad’s is 34 feet, while most others in the County are 36-40 feet in width.]

- ❑ Some residents liked their wide streets because “they’re easy to drive on” and did not perceive that vehicle speed was related to street width. However, residents of wider streets consistently rated their neighborhood as less livable.

- ❑ Most residents of speed-plagued streets rejected the idea of shrinking the street width. Rather, they felt stop signs at a nearby intersection would solve everything. By contrast, residents who lived on a corner with a stop sign strongly objected to them. They commonly told interviewers most cars don’t stop, and those that do often “peel-out”, creating a noise and safety problem. They also felt stops signs encourage speeding between intersections.

- ❑ Cut-through traffic increased the 85th percentile speed 4 to 7 mph. Neighborhoods with multiple through-routes (grid pattern) did not experience this problem.

- ❑ Traffic calming alone does not guarantee residents will walk. The design of driveways, the sidewalk itself, crosswalks, and having nearby destinations are also key.

Cities in the San Diego region should make note of these findings and begin to ask whether their street standards are encouraging walking or putting pedestrians at risk.

Become a Member

Membership in **WalkSanDiego**:

- Entitles you to free membership in the San Diego Coalition for Transportation Choices, our partner organization.
- Allows you free admission to walks, talks, and training events.
- Strengthens the pedestrian voice of the region.
- Gives you a "seat at the table" of agencies allocating the region's transportation funds.
- Provides you the know-how to make changes in your community.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Walking interests _____

- Individual - \$25 Family - \$40
- Benefactor - \$50+
- Student, senior or treading lightly - \$10
- Groups 25+ employees or members of a business or organization - \$250
- Corporate member - \$500

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