

FootNotes

A Regional Coalition Promoting Walkable Communities



Prop A – TransNet – You Decide

On November 2, voters will decide whether to extend the half-cent sales tax known as TransNet, which is set to expire in March 2008. Passage requires a 2/3 vote.

Long-time readers know the funding proposal (Prop A) includes pedestrian funding that WalkSanDiego fought long and hard to include. However, some environmental groups and most transit advocates feel the measure is fatally flawed.

A majority of the County Board of Supervisors feels the amount earmarked for freeways isn't enough.

Is the measure good for pedestrians? Well, yes and no. WalkSanDiego was unable to agree on a position, but here are the facts, to help readers decide for themselves.

The 1988 measure establishing TransNet has been used for a variety of freeway, transit, and bicycle projects across the region – mostly as matching funds to attract state and federal transportation money. Anyone can see our

traffic is bad now, but it would probably be worse without TransNet.

WalkSanDiego joined the TransNet battle for two years, pressing for funding for pedestrian facilities, traffic calming, safe routes to school projects, and smart growth incentives. We weren't as successful as advocates in some other California regions, but SANDAG did finally earmark 2% – an estimated \$280 million over 40 years – for bicycle, pedestrian, and neighborhood safety projects, and another 2% for smart growth incentives.

TransNet would fund major transit projects and their operations, including new Bus Rapid Transit services that operate like trolleys, continued services for senior and disabled riders, the Oceanside to Escondido trolley known as the "Sprinter," and other new facilities. If TransNet is not extended by 2008, it is fair to say service cuts and fare hikes are all but certain.

But critics feel SANDAG's transit planning process is simply too flawed, and the transit portion too lean, to ever seriously address the region's growing traffic congestion. They argue that no region has solved traffic by building more roads – only transit does that. They also feel developers are being asked to share too little of the burden. Prop A would require a \$2000 transportation surcharge on new residential units (except subsidized housing) but exempt commercial projects. Bicycle advocates say Prop A would essentially level-fund the existing bike program.

(continued on page 2)



Our Newest Sponsors



Otay Ranch Company
Visionary Sponsor (\$2000)

Quarry Falls
by Sudberry Development, Inc.
Benefactor (\$1000)



RBF Consulting
In-kind Services Pledge
(See inside for details.)



Deputy Mayor Atkins to speak

Uptown Partnership launches 'Be Alert' safety campaign

With help from WalkSanDiego, the Uptown Partnership will unveil a pedestrian safety campaign aimed at pedestrians and drivers in central Hillcrest in time for the holiday shopping rush.

A kick-off press conference is scheduled for November 12 at the corner of 5th and University Avenues, featuring Deputy Mayor Toni Atkins. Also at the event, WalkSanDiego will discuss the campaign and highlight recent safety improvements we negotiated with the city at this key intersection.

The theme of the campaign is "Be Alert" and targets both pedestrians and drivers. One of the most popular pedestrian areas in

the region, central Hillcrest has also experienced a number of tragic crashes.

Other participants in the campaign are the Automobile Club of Southern California, the California Department of Motor Vehicles, and the San Diego Police Department.

Flyers and cards encouraging safe travel behavior will be distributed at various locations, including the Hillcrest Farmer's Market.



TransNet *(continued from page 1)*

The history of transportation sales tax measures in California shows that, with the 2/3 requirement, having *any* major opposition, from left or right, usually dooms the measure. If Prop A fails, SANDAG will try again in 2006, but with expected lower turnout, chances are not as good, since the die-hards who vote in non-presidential election years tend to be more of the anti-tax variety.

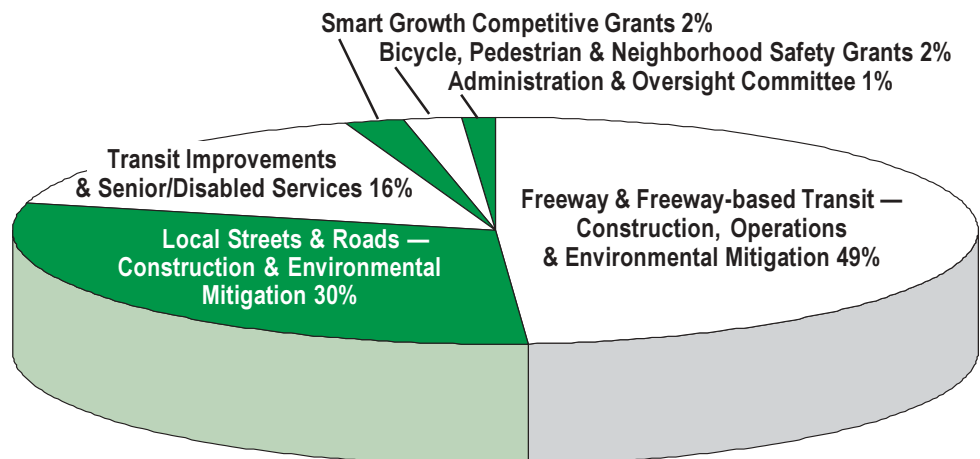
Some say we have to take our shot now, even if the plan isn't perfect, before the tax expires. Opponents say we shouldn't lock in a flawed 40-year plan. What do you think?

For more information, view the project list at www.sandag.org and click on TransNet.

The Pro-TransNet lobby's website is www.sdcongestionrelief.com.

Arguments of the Vote No side can be viewed at www.askyourself.org.

Prop A Proposed Allocations



Next Steps Project

Grant, sponsors help low-income areas

WalkSanDiego recently obtained a state grant and generous donations — from Otay Ranch Company, RBF Consulting, and Quarry Falls by Sudberry Properties, Inc. — to launch our Next Steps Project targeting low-income communities.

While these neighborhoods already exhibit high rates of walking, they have two to four times more pedestrian injuries and significantly higher rates of obesity, but rarely seek outside help. Unlike in La Jolla or Torrey Hills, residents in these neighborhoods don't have the wherewithall to implement WalkSanDiego's suggested improvements.

To fund the Next Steps project, WalkSanDiego applied for and won a grant from the California Kid's Plates Program (www.kidsplates.org) administered by the California Center for Injury Prevention Policy and Practice at San Diego State University.

The grant will help cover our assistance in three communities — San Ysidro, Sherman Heights, and South-eastern San Diego.



A wide promenade links two neighborhoods of Otay Ranch in Chula Vista. The Otay Ranch Company is a major sponsor of WalkSanDiego's Next Steps Project.

Kid's Plates are speciality California license plates with one of four symbols: heart, star, hand, or plus sign. Proceeds benefit childhood safety programs such as pedestrian safety, drowning prevention, and sudden infant death syndrome.

All three of our new sponsors are creating walkable neighborhoods.

Otay Ranch Company and

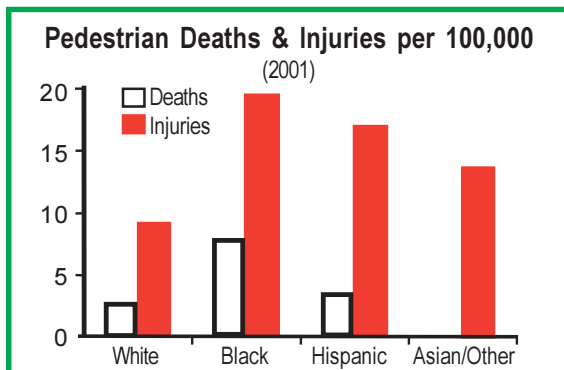
Sudberry Properties are two developers of purposely walkable communities. Otay Ranch Company planned and partially built the Otay Ranch development in Chula Vista, which

WalkSanDiego toured last October.

Sudberry Properties is planning no less than "the region's most walkable development." Quarry Falls will be a 4000-unit mixed use development on a hillside opposite the Fenton Marketplace in Mission Valley with wide pedestrian promenades where one might expect roads.

RBF Consulting, a full-service planning and engineering firm, has pledged professional services to support the Next Steps Projects.

We extend our sincere thanks for these contributions to San Diego's low-income communities.



Should we put in a crosswalk?

Experience shows you can't expect pedestrians to walk more than about 150 feet to reach a crosswalk. If the nearest intersection is 300 feet away, what do you do?

Barring unusual circumstances, a mid-block crosswalk is called for. Unfortunately, many U.S. cities have erroneously concluded crosswalks in uncontrolled locations are not an option.

Engineers are appropriately cautious about placing a crosswalk in any uncontrolled location, especially if the street is wide and fast. However, engineers have erred the other way — actually taking out crosswalks and pronouncing the pedestrians safer.

It is important to understand the flawed history that got us to this point.



Marked crosswalks in Solana Beach (above) and in Del Mar illustrate how the markings themselves must often be coupled with other treatments to afford safe crossing.

The 'False Sense of Security' Theory

For many years, where and when to paint a crosswalk in the U.S. has been decided on gut feelings and assumptions drawn from a San Diego study published in 1972. The so-called Herms Study found that there were more pedestrians struck (per person crossing) at uncontrolled intersections where a crosswalk was marked than in those left unmarked. However, Herms didn't account for the fact that markings were probably provided at precisely those locations where pedestrian-vehicle conflicts were an issue.

The Herms study did not control for these locational differences, but neither did it conclude all crosswalks are unsafe. Yet, that is the common (mis)interpretation.

Rather unfortunately, Herms also speculated that marked crosswalks at uncontrolled intersections may give pedestrians a "false sense of security" that traffic will stop when they enter the crosswalk.

On the basis of this theory, engineers have been removing crosswalks for three decades and failing to provide new ones in critical locations.

Debunking the 'False Sense of Security'

The Herms Study's theory of pedestrian behavior was finally tested in recent studies, which show Herms was wrong.

For example, Knoblach et al. found that pedestrians exhibit more, not less caution, in a crossing location after a crosswalk has been marked. (Notice, the comparison was at the *same location*, before and after the crosswalk was marked.)

For their part, drivers were found to slow down slightly when approaching the marked crosswalks.

This does not mean it is safe to provide a crosswalk anywhere — some locations are simply too dangerous. Rather, it indicates that crosswalk markings, signage, and other

In a scene repeated throughout the region, pedestrians access Balboa Park without the aid of a marked crosswalk.



safety measures aimed at warning motorists should not be avoided on the theory that they induce a “false sense of security” in pedestrians. Pedestrian advocates are sick of hearing this phrase, especially given its shaky empirical underpinnings.

To clarify once and for all where pedestrian crosswalks may be placed, the Federal Department of Transportation conducted a study which examined thousands of pedestrian crashes in all 50 states and set guidelines for when it is safe to provide a crosswalk.

This so-called Zegeer Study is the most thorough of its kind ever conducted.

Importantly, it controls for pedestrian volume and crosswalk location and has a more than adequate sample size — all serious flaws in earlier studies.

New Guidelines for Crosswalks

The Zegeer guidelines for crosswalks, as an example, indicate that, for a two-lane road, a crosswalk is safe to provide if the speed limit does not exceed 40 mph and traffic volumes fall below 12,000 daily trips.

This assumes there are no unusual circumstances, such as a blind curve, a visibility problem, or a high volume of large trucks. In this situation, a crosswalk alone is not unsafe, but provides no particular safety advantage.

The authors emphasize that *“In most cases, marked crosswalks are best used in combination with other treatments (e.g., curb extensions, raised crossing islands, traffic signals, roadway narrow-*

ing, enhanced overhead lighting, traffic calming measures etc.). Think of marked crosswalks as one option in a progression of design treatments. If one treatment does not adequately accomplish the task, then move on to the next one. Failure of one particular treatment is not a license to give up and do nothing. In all cases, the final design must accomplish the goal of getting pedestrians across the road safely.”

As these guidelines suggest, this region’s cities should provide crosswalks — yes, even mid-block — when there are lots of pedestrians crossing, consistent with the DOT guidelines. For example, raised medians were found to dramatically decrease pedestrian crashes. Raised medians are expensive, but so is the alternative.

In a recent letter to the City of San Marcos, we recommended installing a mid-block crosswalk in front of a business that provides parking in a lot across a two-lane street. The business was willing to fund and maintain a solar-powered, pedestrian-activated flashing sign.

The city had turned down the offer, but we recommended they accept it. We also recommended safety training for the employees, since we know the city still clings to that “false sense of security” theory like it was, well, a security blanket.

The bottom line is, once a city has been notified of a pedestrian crossing safety issue, if it elects to do nothing based on outdated and flawed research, it stands to lose big in court. We won’t name names, but it’s already happened in our region.

An expert speaks

Narrow streets more efficient

In July, national pedestrian design expert Dan Burden visited San Diego to conduct trainings for planners, engineers, and elected officials, and two neighborhoods.



WalkSanDiego organized workshops in the Gaslamp Quarter and North Park on July 14. Here's some key lessons:

➤ As streets get wider, signalized intersections rapidly lose efficiency. As a result, engineers are frequently tempted to truncate the pedestrian crossing time, leaving slow walkers dangerously stranded in the middle. Corner bulbouts not only improve safety, but reduce the walk-time, sometimes substantially, allowing the green time for cars to be longer. This is one reason narrow streets are more efficient.

The Care & Feeding of Pedestrians

Dan Burden emphasizes that any city hoping to create a vital pedestrian zone must meet five basic requirements:

- 1) Security — The area must look and feel crime-free. This means controlling litter, graffiti, and deteriorating infrastructure or buildings.
- 2) Convenience — Safe crossing points should be available every 300 feet, stores should be clustered, convenient access to transit provided.
- 3) Efficiency — When a pedestrian has to wait five minutes to get a Walk sign, he might instead choose to drive.
- 4) Comfort — There should be benches, shade trees, awnings, trash receptacles, places to eat or drink.
- 5) Welcome — A clean, even pavement, public art, interesting store windows, and small signs communicate welcome.



Dan Burden leads community leaders on a walk audit of the Gaslamp Quarter in July 2004.

➤ This also explains why one solution to congestion can be the so-called “road diet.” Literally, a road is slimmed down by removing two or more through-lanes. Paradoxically, this can increase road capacity by causing intersections to function better. Intersections, not the number of lanes, are usually the cause of congestion.

➤ Most streets have unused pavement that can be reallocated — to a bike lane, street trees, or intersection bulbouts. The typical 12-foot lane width (a standard borrowed from freeways) can usually be reduced to 10 feet, calming traffic and freeing up pavement. You need only watch how vehicles use the street to understand what spaces are unused.

➤ Excessive pavement signals drivers it's okay to increase speed beyond the posted speed limit.

➤ Sidewalk details matter and set the tone for driver and pedestrian behavior. For example, some sidewalks in the Gaslamp Quarter suddenly drop down to driveways entering Horton Plaza's parking garage. The pedestrian is inconvenienced — a wheelchair user endangered — while the motorist's path is smooth. What does this communicate to pedestrians?

➤ In North Park, Dan showed how to diagnose and correct speed zones. By the end of his presentation, audience members were able to suggest nuanced solutions to persistent problem streets, in ways many engineers are not yet able to do, due to lack of appropriate training.

Walk To School Day shines



Students plan their Walk To School Day routes.

Walk to School Day is held each fall world-wide. This year the event took place October 6.

This event is dedicated to walking to school with a purpose – to promote physical activity, safety, health and concern for the environment.

International Walk to School Day is promoted nationally by The Partnership for a Walkable America; visit their website at www.walktoschool.org.

Ten schools in the San Diego region, from Chula Vista to Carlsbad, were officially registered participants. Others we contacted stated they intend to hold their event in the spring.

Walking to school can be an eye-opener for parents and school staff, and it helps to keep pedestrian safety on the radar screen. For many children, it is their only experience of getting to school without the family car. Congratulations to all the participating schools!

Become a Member of WalkSanDiego

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Walking interests _____

- Individual - \$25 Family - \$40
- Benefactor - \$50+ Sponsor - \$100
- Student, senior or treading lightly - \$10
- Groups 25+ employees or members of a business or organization - \$250
- Corporate member - \$500-\$2,000+

Send to: WalkSanDiego
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To our members:

Keep the Faith!

Although WalkSanDiego enjoys a membership renewal rate consistently over 80%, we were curious to know why some members don't renew. So we asked them.

A telephone survey of 10 non-renewing members indicated they feel we're concentrating on the right issues, but aren't more tangible or visible to them. This is the typical struggle of a volunteer-run non-profit.

We ask for your membership, but also your faith that we're quietly making a difference. And we're generating other revenues to hire an executive director. We are furiously writing grants, jumping at contracting opportunities, and finding like-minded partners, most recently in the field of obesity prevention.

You'll be seeing more references to WalkSanDiego in the media as time goes by. In the meantime, please respond promptly when you receive your membership renewal notice. And keep the faith!

Study shows 87% of intersections hazardous to schoolchildren

An October 6 release from the the National SAFE KIDS Campaign reports nearly nine out of 10 intersections studied have hazards that put children at risk as they walk to and from school. Of the signalized intersections SAFE KIDS studied, 87.3% have at least one of four common environmental and behavioral hazards that put children at risk as they walk to and from school.

Governator signs 'Safe Routes To School'

The California Alliance for Transportation Choices sent word that Gov. Schwarzenager extended the life of California's ground-breaking Safe Routes to School program by signing Senate Bill 1087 on September 9.

As a result, this award-winning program will continue for another three years with an annual allocation of \$20-25 million dollars. Since its inception in 1999, the enormously popular Safe Routes to School program has funded \$90 million worth of traffic safety projects near schools in almost all of California's 58 counties.

The Safe Routes to School program has been instrumental in both making communities safer for families and encouraging healthy transportation choices for children, who are highly vulnerable to injuries and deaths caused by motor vehicles and increasingly at risk for diseases related to physical inactivity.

WalkSanDiego is one of a multitude of walking, bicycling, child safety and physical activity advocates who pulled together once again to extend the program for a third time. The heavy lifting for this effort was done by the California Alliance for Transportation Choices.

We thank WalkSanDiego's members for giving us the opportunity to participate in this critical effort. For more information about the program, visit www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/saferoute2.htm.

The four hazards are as follows: drivers who fail to stop or who stop and then turn illegally; crosswalks in poor condition or not present at all; posted speed limits during school hours of 35 mph or more; and curb ramps that are missing or outside the crosswalk.

Kids at the Crossroads: A National Survey of Physical Environment and Motorist Behavior at Intersections in School Zones found:

- Nearly half (47.5%) of the observed intersections had crosswalk markings in poor condition, with some markings missing, or not present at all.

- 30% of observed drivers stopped within or past the boundaries of crosswalks, obstructing the pedestrian crossing.

- Almost 15% of observed drivers either passed straight through the crosswalk or stopped and then made an illegal turn.

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign is the first and only national nonprofit organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury — the number one killer of children ages 14 and under.

SAFE KIDS Walk This Way, a grassroots pedestrian safety initiative in more than 300 schools nationwide, is made possible through support from program sponsor FedEx Express.

For information, visit www.safekids.org.



Curb extensions at this downtown San Diego intersection make it "Family Safe".

Homebuyers favor shorter commutes, walkable neighborhoods, says survey

WASHINGTON — The prospect of lengthening commutes is leading more Americans to seek walkable neighborhoods in close-in suburbs and cities, according to the 2004 American Community Survey sponsored by the National Association of Realtors and Smart Growth America.

A commute time of 45 minutes or less is the top priority in deciding where to live for 79% of Americans. Other top priorities include easy access to highways (75%) and having sidewalks and places to walk (72%). Having a large house on more than one acre of land is important to 57% of Americans.

Among people planning to buy a home in the next three years, 87% place a high importance on a shorter commute as their top priority. Asked to choose between two communities, six in ten prospective homebuyers chose a neighborhood that offered a shorter commute, sidewalks and amenities like shops, restaurants, libraries, schools and public transportation within walking distance over a sprawling community with larger lots, limited options for walking and a longer commute. Those who are in the market to buy a home are also more likely to say they want to be in or near a city as opposed to living in a farther out suburb or rural area.



“New Urbanist” developments feature narrow, walkable streets — and achieve 20% higher resale value.

Minorities are even more likely than other Americans to choose a walkable neighborhood that has a shorter commute, with 59% of women, 57% of Hispanics and 78% of African Americans selecting those communities over communities with bigger lots and longer commutes. After hearing detailed descriptions of two communities, Americans favored the attributes of walkable, smart growth communities over sprawling communities with longer commutes 55% to 45%.

This survey shows that most Americans prefer to live in walkable communities with a shorter commutes, sidewalks and amenities close by. Smart growth communities are the wave of the future, especially since they’re heavily favored by prospective buyers and minorities, who represent a growing share of the homebuying market.

Information about NAR is available at www.realtor.org. For more on Smart Growth America, please see smartgrowthamerica.org.

WSD to launch pedestrian safety campaign in Imperial Beach

WalkSanDiego has been engaged by the City of Imperial Beach to help conduct a pedestrian and bicycle safety campaign. The campaign is funded by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

Imperial Beach has an unusually large rate of pedestrian and bicycle crashes among California cities of similar size. Over a recent five-year period, there were 62 pedestrian crashes (2 fatal) and 72 bicycle crashes (1 fatal).

The campaign will start with a safety fair at a beachfront park in December — featuring “Safety Santas” giving away bicycle helmets to children in attendance.

WalkSanDiego opposes bridge proposal

Whatever happened to “smart growth”?

In a letter this month to San Diego City Councilmember Scott Peters, WalkSanDiego urged the councilman not to back a controversial proposal to divert north-south traffic in University City by building a bridge through Rose Canyon, one of the city’s eight Open Space Parks. The City’s own study shows the Regents Road bridge would not provide significant traffic relief on Genesee Avenue, a congested roadway during peak hours.

Instead, opponents suspect the bridge will attract traffic from Interstate 5 and steer it through their neighborhood. Is this the smart growth the city purports to favor?

Building additional roadway capacity through a quiet urban neighborhood is exactly the wrong approach, and contrary to the city’s

emphasis on walkable communities and its new general plan philosophy known as a “City of Villages”.

The highly controversial project would cost \$23 million that could be better spent on alternatives now under study, or on safety, pedestrian improvements, and better transit. Many of the neighborhood residents work at or attend UCSD, but few have a reliable, convenient transit alternative to get there. Most drive. Making it possible for even more people to drive is a temporary solution at best. More likely, it will simply set the congestion level at a higher volume of traffic, with no permanent relief.

WalkSanDiego urged the Councilman to learn from other cities that are beefing up transit service and neighborhood pedestrian and bicycle facilities. That’s only smart.



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