5. Pedestrian System

Accomplishments Over the Past Five Years

The Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and its partner agencies recognize the importance of improving pedestrian mobility. With an average of 41 annual pedestrian-related fatalities, San Antonio surpasses the national average pedestrian fatality rate and has been named a Pedestrian Safety Focus City by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

An important step toward improving pedestrian safety in the Alamo Area has been the MPO's creation and adoption of a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) in 2012. The PSAP provides templates for different facility designs that make walking safer and easier and outlines action strategies to make the area a better place to walk. Beginning in 2010, the MPO's Pedestrian Mobility Advisory Committee (PMAC) oversaw the development of the PSAP. In April 2012, the TPB unanimously approved a resolution (Figure 5.1) adopting the PSAP and strongly encouraging decision makers within the study area to consider the implementation of the plan within their respective jurisdictions. The plan can be downloaded at:

http://www.alamoareampo.org/Studies/PSAP/PedestrianSafetyActionPlan.pdf.

PMAC, created in 1997, advises the MPO's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on technical matters and the Transportation Policy Board (TPB) on policy issues concerning pedestrian mobility. PMAC meets monthly and is composed of citizens as well as agency staff from the Alamo Area Council of Governments; Bexar County; Bexar County Technical Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities; the Cities of Boerne, New Braunfels, San Antonio, and Seguin; Texas Department of Transportation; VIA Metropolitan Transit; Greater Bexar County Council of Cities; and walking organizations.

The MPO's Walkable Community Program (WCP) continues to be an integral part of the MPO's safety and active transportation programs. Three activities – Walkable Community Workshops, safety talks for adults and children, and bike rodeos – make up the program. Since the previous the Metropolitan Transportation Plan was adopted in 2009, the MPO has facilitated eight Walkable Community Workshops throughout the study area.

Pedestrian components are part of many projects in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Since the development of the MPO's 2011-2014 TIP, 100 points (out of a possible score of 1,100), have been deducted from proposed added capacity and roadway rehabilitation projects that do not include facilities for pedestrians.

Figure 5.1 Pedestrian Safety Action Plan Resolution adopted by the Transportation Policy Board



A Resolution Adopting the San Antonio-Bexar County Pedestrian Safety Action Plan

WHEREAS, the San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is responsible for a multi-modal transportation planning process; and

WHEREAS, the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan is a natural sequence to the Complete Streets Resolution adopted by the MPO Transportation Policy Board on March 23, 2009, and to the City of San Antonio's Complete Streets Policy adopted on September 29, 2011; and

WHEREAS, the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan provides a framework for making decisions about facility design and allocating resources necessary to make walking a viable choice for a wide variety of trips; and

WHEREAS, during the Plan development, the MPO's Pedestrian Mobility Advisory Committee participated as the study oversight committee and is made of representatives from the Alamo Area Council of Governments, Bexar County, Bexar ADA Council, City of San Antonio, Texas Department of Transportation, VIA Metropolitan Transit, citizens and other community stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, adoption and implementation of the Plan supports the:

- Overall mission statement of the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan, "Mobility 2035" adopted by the Transportation Policy Board on December 7, 2009;
- Vision statement, goals and objectives of the "Pedestrian System" and "Public Transportation" Chapters as adopted as part of the "Mobility 2035" on December 7, 2009
- Future population and employment growth scenario adopted by the Transportation Policy Board on March 23, 2009;
- · MPO's Walkable Community Program; and
- · MPO's Walk & Roll Program; and

WHEREAS, the development and adoption of the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan directly supports the Center for Disease Control's Communities Putting Prevention to Work Grant awarded to the City of San Antonio's Health Department on March 18, 2010; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Policy Board, in order to advance a transportation system that is more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable for all residents, including children, seniors and persons with disabilities, adopts the San Antonio-Bexar County Pedestrian Safety Action Plan.

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the MPO strongly encourages decision makers to consider the implementation of the Plan within their respective jurisdictions.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 23rd day of April 2012.

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San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Background

Walking is a viable, active, alternative mode of transportation. Nearly every trip starts and ends with walking, including trips that involve the use of an automobile. A comprehensive approach to planning transportation facilities must identify pedestrian needs. An inclusive approach ensures the needs of all potential users are addressed, including people with disabilities.

Alternative transportation systems can enrich the livability of a community and reduce congestion, improve mobility, as well as improve the overall quality of life for residents. Pedestrian travel does not stop where the sidewalk ends, as seen by the worn pathways throughout the study area, especially along transit routes. Poor street connectivity and low-density development patterns create longer, indirect distances between destinations, making it difficult to conveniently be accessed by walking.

In general, the regional land use patterns and lack of pedestrian facilities and amenities create conditions that are uninviting to pedestrians. Wide streets with narrow sidewalks, the absence of trees or building awnings for shade, and deep building setbacks, are all designed to the scale of the automobile, not the pedestrian. Auto-oriented frontage-road development, in which storefronts are separated from the street by vast, non-shaded parking lots, are not ideal pedestrian environments. A non-existent or unsafe pedestrian system is a barrier to walking. Other barriers to walking include lack of a street grid system, gated communities, cul-de-sacs, and schools and public buildings built on major roadways.

Narrow streets with wide sidewalks, pedestrian islands or medians, buildings close to the street with shade, and parking areas behind buildings provide safer environments and are incentives for pedestrian use.

MPO Programs

Walk & Roll Program

The Walk & Roll Program is a regional effort to focus on pedestrian and cycling issues during the month of May and throughout the air quality ozone season. The program encourages walking, cycling, transit, or car/vanpooling instead of driving alone. It identifies active transportation as viable options that can be chosen to improve the health of the individual as well as the environment. With support from the MPO's transportation partners and the community, the Walk & Roll Rally averages over 300 participants each year, with May 2014 marking the eighteenth anniversary of the Walk & Roll program.

The Walk & Roll Challenge, conducted annually in September, focuses on the benefits to air quality when people leave their single occupancy vehicles and use active transportation. Individuals and employers are encouraged to actively participate in the challenges through use of other modes of transportation.

Walkable Community Program

The Walkable Community Program (WCP) is available to neighborhood associations, religious organizations, Parent Teacher Associations, or a group of active citizens who identify a need within a geographic boundary. Components of the program include Walkable Community Workshops, safety classes for adults and children, and bicycle rodeos. The reports documenting individual Walkable Community Workshops are available on the MPO's website at http://www.alamoareampo.org. These reports are also provided to TPB members, elected officials and partner agency staff to assist in identifying where the greatest transportation needs exist within the study area. Awareness of the potential improvements within the study area, safety, and providing the community with an opportunity for two-way communication with local agency staff are the primary goals of the public workshops.

Pedestrian Safety Action Plan

The Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) defines a set of actions to encourage walking and to make it safer. Propelled by the "Developing a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan" workshop hosted in San Antonio by FHWA in 2009, the PSAP was funded in 2010 as part of a Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant. Throughout 2010 and 2011, PMAC served as the Study Oversight Committee and provided input on community outreach, crash data analysis, and development of the toolkit of 43 recommended countermeasures. The MPO's Policy Board approved the PSAP in 2012, and since then, PMAC members have been working to educate technical groups and public agencies about the plan.

The PSAP is a visionary, yet practical, action strategy to make the Alamo Area a great place to walk. Taking advantage of the latest research, national guidance, and practice throughout the United States, the PSAP provides a framework for making decisions about facility design and allocating resources necessary to make walking a viable choice for a wide variety of trips. Improving the convenience and safety of walking will increase social interaction on the street, offer alternatives to driving on congested roadways, reduce pollution, and improve personal health.

Goals and Objectives

Several funded studies and plans are on the horizon that have the capacity to positively shape the development of the regional pedestrian network. These include the

MPO's Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Study, the City of San Antonio's update of its comprehensive plan and the Strategic Multi-Modal Transportation Plan within Bexar County. The MPO encourages its partner agencies to participate in comprehensive, coordinated and continuous regional planning. The following goals and objectives support the development of a pedestrian network that encourages walking in the Alamo Area and makes it safer:

- Goal 1 Institutionalize transportation planning for pedestrians: recognize and incorporate walking as a significant and required element for all persons.
 - Objective 1.1 Consider pedestrian facilities from the planning and scoping stages through the design and construction of all projects as well as during the review of subdivision and development plans.
 - Objective 1.2 Review all state- and federally-funded projects to ensure that quality pedestrian accommodations are provided.
 - Objective 1.3 Continue to coordinate pedestrian planning with other agencies and organizations, including in the review of land development and transportation projects and studies. Recognize and incorporate the interrelated goals and initiatives, such as Complete Streets and public health promotion, of these partners.
 - Objective 1.4 Continue to assist local agencies and community groups in identifying obstacles to and opportunities for safe pedestrian activities.
- Goal 2 Prioritize, fund, and implement projects that improve safety, accessibility and comfort for pedestrians so that walking is a convenient and viable option.
 - Objective 2.1 Promote land use that encourages pedestrian travel.
 - Objective 2.2 Complete sidewalk gaps and maintain or improve the quality of existing facilities, especially to provide sidewalk continuity and connectivity within and between neighborhoods and activity centers.
 - Objective 2.3 Enhance the pedestrian experience by incorporating pedestrian design enhancements such as landscape buffers, lighting, shade, and street furniture.
 - Objective 2.4 Provide safe and accessible facilities using the 43 treatments described in the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan.

Pay particular attention to improving pedestrian safety in areas with high volumes of pedestrian traffic including near schools and downtowns and within ½-mile of all transit stops.

- Objective 2.5 Ensure safe pedestrian crossings over railroad tracks by providing accessible, well-designed and constructed walkways with adequate warning systems.
- Objective 2.6 Ensure barrier-free sidewalks. Eliminate existing obstructions such as mailboxes, utility poles, overhanging trees, and vehicle parking that limit access.
- Objective 2.7 Ensure that the Americans with Disabilities Act, including all corresponding ADA Amendments, and Texas Accessibility Standards are applied to all related goals and objectives within this document.
- Objective 2.8 Extend pedestrian facilities to serve all transit stops and all transfer facilities.
- Objective 2.9 Continue updating and enhance the database of all pedestrian facilities. MPO staff should report regularly on implementation of pedestrian facilities by its partner agencies.
- Goal 3 Make walking safer through education, encouragement, and enforcement.
 - Objective 3.1 Work with the Pedestrian Mobility Advisory Committee and other organizations to continue promoting pedestrian safety among all road users and educational outreach programs initiated by the MPO and/or its partner agencies.
 - Objective 3.2 Continue the Walkable Community Program and Walk & Roll Program and participate in other outreach opportunities.
 - Objective 3.3 Strengthen public education efforts regarding plans, projects and activities through the MPO's website, social media, and printed publications.

Goal 4 Identify and effectively use available funding.

- Objective 4.1 Identify funding for stand-alone pedestrian facilities.
- Objective 4.2 Encourage local governments to adopt preventive maintenance programs to extend the life of pedestrian facilities.
- Objective 4.3 Explore public-private partnerships to fund new and replacement pedestrian facilities.

Future Pedestrian System: The Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Study

The MPO recognizes the importance of a balance among all transportation modes, the relationship between transportation and land use, and that economic and community development is sustained by the region's quality of life. The region has achieved a great deal in the last five years, especially in the way of identifying needs and planning for improvements, but at this time the need for pedestrian facilities is still a priority. A successful pedestrian transportation system depends on the regional partners' ability to work together to enhance the pedestrian environment. Expanding on the "Complete Streets" concept and developing policies and programs that support walkable communities is a key step for the future.

In September 2014, the MPO took a step toward such development when it began the Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Study to help municipalities accomplish the vision and goals for walking in the region. The study is being conducted with the aid of a consultant planning team who will identify existing walking and biking conditions in the cities of Boerne, New Braunfels and Seguin and prioritize projects for short-, intermediate- and long-term implementation. For the City of San Antonio, on which the 2012 Pedestrian Safety Action Plan focused, the study will work specifically to develop a methodology for prioritizing sidewalk gap and repair projects. It will also pay particular attention to better connecting the areas encompassing the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park with those public lands and shared-use trail running through the Missions.

The study is following a timeline defined by seven core tasks and is scheduled to conclude in May 2015. Project management and coordination (Task 1) is ongoing and involves consultation with the Study Oversight Committee (SOC) during project milestones. Project initiation (Task 2) occurred in September 2014 with meetings of the SOC and with PMAC and the Bicycle Mobility Advisory Committee (BMAC). At these meetings, the SOC and stakeholders discussed opportunities and challenges, received

clarification of project objectives and expectations, defined general project deliverables and were introduced to the public involvement tools.

Task 3 involved developing a public involvement plan (PIP) which is being carried out through a series of public meetings meant both to request input on existing pedestrian and bicyclist issues and educate residents about successful solutions to similar challenges implemented by other communities. Public input collected through an online survey and interactive map will be used to support the study's recommendations, which will stem from an assessment of existing conditions (Task 4), including traffic crash history and inventorying of bicycle and pedestrian networks.

The development of the draft study (Task 5) will present the methodology for recommending projects prioritized at both the municipal and regional levels. Recommended improvements will be provided in map and list form. Current mechanisms for implementing and funding will be evaluated and new strategies may be recommended, which will include (Task 6) non-infrastructure based methods for improving walking and biking through education, encouragement, and enforcement.

The final report (Task 7) will be composed of an Executive Summary highlighting the major recommendations of the Study and sections covering the process for funding and implementing those recommendations and summarizing the specific facility recommendations for each community. A coordinated effort between numerous agencies, stakeholder groups and residents of the Alamo Area, the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Study will be integral to the City of San Antonio's Strategic Multi-Modal Transportation Plan and to informing pedestrian policy and implementation decisions in the communities of Boerne, New Braunfels and Sequin.