

Northern News

NORTHERN SECTION, CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

Are Pedestrians an Endangered Species?

A SUMMARY OF THE STATE OF THE BAY AREA PEDESTRIAN REPORT: 1999

By Zachary Wald

JUNE 1999

RECEIVED

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A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

—Lao Tse

What is the state of the pedestrian in the Bay Area? One way to answer this question is to look at the policies and plans that shape the pedestrian environment. Pedestrians are often given short shrift when allocating resources of any kind. Despite the fact that an estimated 11% of all trips in the region are made by pedestrians and bikes, and 25% of all traffic fatalities involve bikes or pedestrians, funding levels of pedestrian and bike programs are below 1% of regional spending allocations. Planning for the automobile takes the lion's share of the state and regional budget.

There are few examples in the Bay Area of transportation agencies with dedicated staff for pedestrian planning. Neither the state transportation planning agency CALTRANS, nor the MTC have staff members devoted to pedestrian planning. The total area of land that is dedicated to the automobile attests to its power in shaping our cities and towns. One-quarter to one-half of the land area of every city is devoted to streets and parking. In many suburbs housing is located several miles away from services such as schools or grocery stores. This type of land use pattern restricts the ability of residents to choose to walk or bike instead of using an automobile.

PEDESTRIAN PLANS

The Federal Government through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century requires that for every state and metropolitan area "The plans and programs...shall provide for the development and integrated management and operations of transportation systems

and facilities (including pedestrian walkways)...that will function as an inter-modal transportation system..." Some states and metropolitan areas have interpreted this as a requirement to adopt pedestrian plans. Despite this mandate, neither the state of California, nor the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MTC) has developed such a plan. There are but a handful of documents at the state, regional and local levels which relate directly to pedestrian planning in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Whether at the State, County or Municipal levels, a pedestrian plan should be enforceable by law, as an integral part of the General Plan or Master Plan. There needs to be a vision, with clear policies and objectives. Citizen participation in the plan making process should be encouraged. As with any plan, there must be project priorities and funding identified, responsibilities designated, and design guidelines implemented.

A pedestrian plan can be part of the transportation element or a stand-alone plan. It is preferable to be integrated into the transportation element because the transportation functions of cities are normally clearly defined, staffed and funded.

DESIGN MISSTEPS

Among the intersections studied for this report, one of the worst in terms of pedestrian safety was the intersection of El Camino Real and 37th Street, in San Mateo. Much can be learned from a careful analysis of the design of this intersection which can lead to more pedestrian-friendly designs.

This portion of El Camino Real consists of five lanes of traffic, plus one turn lane. The

(continued on page 4)

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FROM THE EDITOR...

In our vehicular society, it seems strange that we seem to have forgotten to include the most basic form of transportation in our planning...the feet. The article by Zachary Wald helps to illuminate one of the facets of our planning which we all experience from time to time as a deficiency. Many of us living in urban areas know all too well how difficult it can be to get around by foot if our vehicles suddenly fail us. Even crossing a street, sometimes five or six lanes wide, can be very life-threatening. It's refreshing to find that there is an organization working toward increasing the recognition of the pedestrian in our planning efforts, and their website at www.bayped.org deserves a look.

Please note the announcement repeated from last month about the Awards Banquet, to be held June 18th.

And an apologetic note: please correct the date on your last month's newsletter to May 1999, rather than 1998. We missed by a year. Sorry.

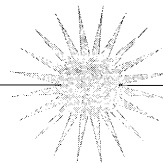


1999 NORTHERN SECTION ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

DON'T FORGET... secure your reservation NOW for the Awards Banquet. This is the time for us to honor the excellent planning efforts conducted in the Northern Section. Award winners will go on to compete in the state, and if successful, the national levels. This is a popular event with about 100 planners attending each year, so sign up now.

Friday, June 18th at the Fort Mason Officers Club on the beautiful San Francisco waterfront. Social hour and no host bar begins at 6:15, and awards presentations follow at 7:15.

To secure your reservation, mail a check payable to "NSCCAPA", and your name and address, BY JUNE 11, for \$32 per person, to: Wayne Goldberg, Director; Department of Community Development; P.O. Box 1678; Santa Rosa, CA 95402-1678.



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Stormwater Management Workshops

The Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association introduces new interactive workshops on Stormwater Management Techniques for commercial, industrial, and residential development. These site planning and design workshops are geared for planners, public works officials, consulting engineers, developers/builders, land development decision makers, EIR consultants, and landscape architects.

Attendance is free but limited...sign up early, on-line at www.tomrichman.com or by phone (650) 328-5976.

Workshops are from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. as follows:

Belmont	June 17
San Ramon	June 22
Fremont	June 24
Marin	June 29
San Francisco	June 30
Vallejo	July 15
Campbell	Aug 4

Special Planning Education Tour

Five examples of co-housing and cooperatives in the Bay Area Saturday, August 14

The Shared Living Resource Center (SLRC) invites planning, housing, and design professionals from governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private firms to examine this rapidly growing "Community Housing" phenomenon where social and environmental sustainability come together.

Visit five outstanding examples of housing infill, reuse, and rehab that provide an increase of density that is more livable, energy and resource conserving, and socially supportive than conventional market rate housing. Units visited will be in Emeryville, Oakland, Davis, and Berkeley. The tour is from 8:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., led by Architect-Planner Ken Norwood, AICP, who is the founder and executive director of SLRC. Total cost is \$75 including an information packet, lunch, and van travel.

Call Ken Norwood at 510-548-6608 or email slrcnorwood@igc.org for advance reservation information. Reserve by credit card over the phone, or send check or a purchasing order number for invoicing to SLRC, 2337 Parker Street, Berkeley, CA. No cancellations after August 4. See the SLRC web site, www.sharedliving.org

The Bulletin Board section of the Northern News is intended to provide a forum for individuals to provide the membership with information about events or current topics. If you would like to submit an item for the Bulletin Board section, contact the Newsletter Editor at (510) 642-3258.



...Endangered Species?

total pedestrian crossing distance is 86 feet. At an assumed pedestrian crossing speed of four feet per second, it takes a pedestrian approximately 20 seconds to cross the street. With a peak hour traffic volume of almost 4600 vehicles per hour, the situation is ripe for disaster. That there has not been more than five intersection-related pedestrian collisions over three years is probably explainable by how uninviting this street is to pedestrians.

Compounding the dangers to pedestrians inherent in this intersection are several observed design characteristics:

- The distance to the next intersection or crosswalk is greater than people are willing to walk, which encourages jaywalking.
- The sidewalk width is only 1 foot in some places.
- The width of the street encourages automobiles to travel at high speeds.
- The «walk» light does not activate unless a button is pushed, therefore some pedestrians cross on green but without a walk signal.
- The assumed walking speed of crossing pedestrians of 4 feet/second is insufficient for older pedestrians.

This intersection represents a major liability to the City of San Mateo and since it is a designated state highway, to the State of California. Not only does it fail to comply to ADA regulations regarding minimum sidewalk widths, it is dangerous for all but the nimble footed.

Several recommendations emerged from the study of this particular intersection. The distance across should be shortened with sidewalk bulb-outs at each corner and a center refuge island. The large width of

(continued from page 1)

El Camino Real may encourage speeding. The pedestrian-clear pathway should be widened to a minimum of five feet in consideration of the bus stops and to make it accessible to the disabled. The walk signal should activate regardless of whether a button is pushed, and adequate crossing time should be given to accommodate slow-walking seniors. The pedestrian barriers on the North end of the intersection should be removed to provide an opportunity to cross directly to the bus stop on the other side. Pedestrians must be given more frequent chances to cross El Camino Real in a protected manner in the middle of the super-blocks of San Mateo, otherwise they will continue to jaywalk rather than go out of their way to the next intersection.

NEXT STEPS IN PEDESTRIAN DESIGN

Pedestrian-oriented design is good urban design. A well-designed street makes pedestrians feel safe and comfortable, and helps to make walking an alternative to the automobile for short trips.

A "healthy" street attempts to carry more vehicles in fewer lanes of traffic. Usually, the number of lanes on a street can only be justified for two or three peak hours of the day. However people who live on or near these streets must deal with the negatives of a super-wide street twenty-four hours a day. Not only must pedestrians cross greater distances, but automobiles on relatively uncongested but wide roads are inclined to speed. An alternative that reduces width without necessarily reducing lanes is street corner bulb-outs and center refuge islands, both of which have the effect of "necking-down" streets at intersections. The provision of bicycle lanes can narrow the street and may divert some automobile trips to bicycle trips.

(continued on page 6)



Director of Community Development

City of Menlo Park

Salary: \$99,000 – 118,860

This newly created position will report directly to the City Manager and be responsible for all planning, building, environmental, and transportation functions. The Department will have a staff of 23 and a total operating and capital budget of \$5 million. The ideal candidate is an experienced community development executive who has exceptional leadership, communication, and consensus building skills and possesses broad experience in all aspects of community development. A bachelor's degree with major course work in urban planning and preferably an advanced degree in public or business administration is required. Submit resume, cover letter, current salary and three work-related references by Friday, June 25, 1999, to Shannon Associates, 1601 Response road, Suite 390, Sacramento, CA 95815. (916) 567-4280. FAX (916) 567-1220. Email: resumes@shannonassoc.com

Planner I

City of Gilroy

Salary: \$39,378 – 47,870 plus benefits

Under general direction of the Planning Division Manager, performs most professional planning duties, using independent judgement in making decisions; may be assigned full responsibility for particular projects or phases of planning work; performs functions in all levels of the planning process. Requires Bachelor's in Planning or related field and one year of f/t planning experience. For application and job flyer, (408) 846-0406. Deadline 6/24/99 at 5:00 p.m. (<http://www.ci.gilroy.ca.us>)



JOBS

Senior Transportation Planner

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

Salary: \$5,052 – \$6,669/mo.

This position will supervise professional planners and consultants and carry out activities relating to transportation/transit planning. The ideal candidate would have transportation/transit planning experience with specific experience in the planning of public transit services including transit corridor studies. At least two years experience should be in a project lead/manager capacity. Excellent working conditions and extensive benefit package. For application and a job bulletin call (408) 321-5575 or write to: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, Personnel Department, 3331 N. 1st St. Bldg. B, San Jose, CA 95134-1906 (WWW.VTA.ORG) EOE/AA

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Salary: \$4,450 – 5,410/mo

Three years governmental experience plus Bachelor's degree with a major in urban or regional planning. For application (707) 588-2258. Final filing date: 6/30/99. EOE

Planning Manager

City of El Cerrito

Salary: \$4,866 – \$5,915/mo plus benefits

A division head management position that reports to the Community Development Manager. Responsible for organizing and managing the planning activities of the city. Supervises a staff of one full-time clerical and one part-time associate planner, and outside consultants as necessary. This position requires a thorough knowledge of urban planning and zoning practices, laws and literature; five years professional planning experience (some supervisory); and the equivalent of a B.A. degree in planning/related field (M.A. plus four years experience will substitute). Ideal candidate must be able to work skillfully with public officials, staff and community. Computer applications knowledge and experience desirable. Apply by Friday, June 25, 1999. City application and supplemental may be obtained from Employee Services, City of El Cerrito, 10890 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. (510) 215-4300. Expected employment date: 9/7/99

FROM OUR MEMBERS

Sharing APA Seattle — 1999

*M*y account of the annual gala conference...served to bolster my bias for trains, which was helped by the numerous conference sessions and mobile workshops on light rail, station design, transit oriented development, and regional transit planning. I was satiated with rail talk, the spectacular Seattle and Puget Sound settings, and the overwhelmingly lavish Host Committee's opening reception which royally treated the 5700 planners and spouses....I came there with another bias, that planners were overdue to learn about social-environmental cluster community design such as Cohousing. Seattle is becoming a focus, with two Cohousing communities and three more underway. In the surrounding region there are dozens of beginning communities and several under construction. Our Cohousing/SLRC table in the nonprofit exhibit area did get reasonable attention.

The failing of the conference planners to present unconventional, socially supportive, and ecologically inspiring housing choices like Cohousing, while choosing to play up the neo-traditional and new urbanism development models is an indicator that the APA and the AICP are still attached to the condo and single family house subdivision model.

In all it was a major conference about the usual planning issues, although I sensed a void regarding how planners can address global warming, social alienation, homelessness, and energy consumptive developments. Application of the tools for sustainable development, and innovative and ecologically designed TOD's were hinted at. Maybe the New York 2000 conference will be the opportunity for APA to really address planning in the new millenium.

by Ken Norwood AICP

...Endangered Species?

(continued from page 4)

Curbs should be squared off wherever possible. A large curb radii makes it possible for vehicles to make turns at high speeds, clearly an undesirable situation for pedestrians. Furthermore a large curb radii makes the distance to cross at the intersection even greater. This is partly responsible for the perception among some pedestrians that crossing at places other than the intersection, where the road is narrower, is safer.

Finally, a healthy street should guarantee a minimum clear path for pedestrians. About five feet will guarantee that a wheelchair user can safely pass, or two friends walking side by side. The "healthy" streets studied in general

have shorter curb radii, shorter crossing distances, and fewer lanes than the «unhealthy» ones. They also have design features, such as protective bollards, human-scaled lighting, and special pavement designs which help to create a pedestrian realm. At the same time, they do not necessarily carry less vehicles than their "unhealthy" counterparts. They do carry greater numbers of pedestrians in greater comfort and safety.

Zachary Wald is the Director of BayPeds (www.baypeds.org) and a recent MCP graduate of the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California at Berkeley.

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June

- 3 NSCCAPA Board Meeting, 6:30 pm
City of Berkeley's Permit Services Center, 2120 Milvia Street

- 18 1999 Northern Section Awards Banquet
Fort Mason Officer's Club, 6:15 pm
(reservations by June 11)

- 23 HAZUS User Group meeting
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