# Planning Commission Report

**Planning Commission Meeting: December 2, 2015**

**Agenda Item: 7-A**

To: Planning Commission

From: Francie Stefan, Strategic and Transportation Planning Manager

Subject: Draft Pedestrian Action Plan

**Recommended Action**

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

1. Review and comment on the Draft Pedestrian Action Plan and its recommended key practices, programs, built projects, and implementation priorities.

2. Recommendation to City Council to adopt of the Pedestrian Action Plan.

**Executive Summary**

The Pedestrian Action Plan is the culmination of an effort that includes community input, detailed data analysis and interdepartmental collaboration. The Pedestrian Action Plan provides a framework for strategic on-going investments that increase pedestrian safety and comfort. It reflects current conditions and anticipates changes associated with Expo Light Rail Service. This document includes the City's first statement on Vision Zero, the effort requested by City Council in March 2015 to strive to eliminate roadway fatalities and severe injuries. It builds on the 2010 Land Use and Circulation Element and subsequent implementation efforts.

The recommendations in the draft Pedestrian Action Plan are based on detailed spatial analysis of where pedestrian demand is highest, where pedestrian facilities could be improved and where pedestrian collisions are occurring. This detailed approach was taken to maximize the effectiveness of implementation actions going forward. The recommended actions take the form of practices that address how the City completes its day-to-day work, programs to encourage people in the community to safely walk more, and specific infrastructure projects to improve Santa Monica's walking environment.

This report summarizes the approach of the plan, explains how it is organized, highlights major recommendations and looks ahead at how it will be implemented. Based on feedback received on the draft plan from the Planning Commission and additional boards, commissions and community organizations, the draft Pedestrian

Action Plan will be revised and presented to the City Council in early 2016 for formal adoption. A biannual pedestrian report card for the Pedestrian Action Plan will be published using key qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate implementation progress through changes in the number of people walking and for what purpose, safety trends, and capital improvements. The report card will inform future efforts to support Plan goals based on the indicators established by the Plan.

**Background**

The 2010 Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) established a comprehensive land use and circulation strategy, emphasizing livability and supporting all types of transportation, including walking. The Circulation Element specifically identifies walking related goals, policies and actions, including:

- Goal T6: Enable everyone to walk comfortably everywhere in Santa Monica
- Goal T7: Ensure that walking is safe for everyone, everywhere in Santa Monica, and
- Goal T8: Provide a beautiful and attractive pedestrian environment throughout the City.

The Pedestrian Action Plan is a direct implementation of the LUCE and provides a contemporary perspective on the community's concerns. It was developed in concert with other LUCE efforts: creating a companion piece to the 2011 Bike Action Plan, incorporating physical improvements identified in the 2013 Bergamot Area Plan, and developed simultaneously with the 2014 Draft Downtown Specific Plan. The Pedestrian Action Plan reinforces the City Council's March 2015 affirmation that pedestrian and bicycle mobility and safety are of the utmost importance by pursuing a multi-departmental approach to complete streets and safety, and that the Pedestrian Action Plan should incorporate best practices from initiatives such as Vision Zero and 8 to 80 Cities.

Vision Zero is an international strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all; it is the first goal of the Pedestrian Action Plan and informs the Plan's recommendations. 8 to 80 communities recognize that a well-designed community works well for residents from 8 years of age (or younger) to 80 years of age; the Plan's recommendations include a range of actions for a wide range of community members, from school age children to seniors.

<u>Community Feedback</u>

Pedestrian Action Plan recommended actions focus on addressing community concerns. Over 600 in-person surveys were completed at community events including the Santa Monica Festival and National Night Out. The survey provided information about reasons people walk in Santa Monica and locations where they would like to see changes.

Two community meetings, including one Planning Commission meeting, enabled people to provide ideas in response to early data analysis in January 2013 and then provide feedback to potential recommendations in September 2014.

An online forum, which hosted over 1400 unique visitors, extended the opportunity for community members to interact and provide feedback on “the question of the week,” identify specific areas of concern on maps and vote on ideas submitted by other participants. Staff participated in meetings from the Commission on the Senior Community, the Recreation and Parks Commission, Disabilities Commission, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Santa Monica Inc., and the Environmental Task Force to solicit feedback on items to address in the Plan.

Throughout the plan development process, in-person and on-line community support for action was consistent, with the most common suggestions including:

- More improved crosswalks
- Separate paths for people riding bicycles and people walking
- Beautiful walking routes with trees, landscaping, public art
- Enforcement of pedestrian related vehicle violations
- Improved lighting at sidewalks, walkways, and intersections
- Clean sidewalks, walkways and beaches
- More, maintained and visible flashing crosswalks Traffic signals with shorter waits and more time to cross
- Safe and attractive freeway crossings and pedestrian overpasses

**Discussion**

Santa Monica is recognized as a community where residents walk for recreation and to make trips within the City, a community where employees walk for daily errands and community visitors from around the world come to walk along the edge of the Pacific Ocean and through commercial areas. Continued investment and conscious decision-making are imperative to continue to improve safety and to ensure that Santa Monica is a comfortable place to walk.

The Pedestrian Action Plan recognizes and celebrates walking as a core part of the City’s identity and character, while laying out a specific vision of the future of walking in Santa Monica, priority projects, and programs to guide improvements to the walking environment over the next 15 years. Making coordinated, strategic and continuous investments for pedestrians can make Santa Monica an even better place to walk.

The Plan continues the City’s longstanding effort to prioritize people walking in its planning and transportation decisions, promoting equity, and ensuring comfort for a wide range of users. The continued evolution of the City and major infrastructure investments such as the new Expo Light Rail line will increase the number of people walking here, and change walking routes. Walking can also improve community health through injury prevention and increased physical activity.

The framework for this plan was developed through a detailed analysis of land use patterns, community input, collision history, pedestrian environment, socio-economic factors and anticipated demand for walking based on destinations and the opening of the Expo Light Rail line.

Community Themes

Hundreds of community members participated in workshops, meetings, online forums, and surveys to help develop the Pedestrian Action Plan. Their input coalesced around the following four essential crosscutting themes which inform the Plan.

1. Walking is part of the sustainable Santa Monica lifestyle and enhances wellbeing. Residents state that walking is a defining experience of living in Santa Monica, and is vital to staying happy and healthy.

2. More pedestrians of all ages and fewer collisions. Consistent with the Council's Vision Zero directive, there is agreement that the number of pedestrians should continue to increase, even while pedestrian fatalities and injuries are reduced, so that more people enjoy this wonderful, sustainable activity.

3. Making the connections, removing the obstacles. Improving pedestrian connections and removing barriers will increase people's willingness and ability to walk, including reducing barriers to crossing the freeway and major boulevards.

4. A shared priority, a shared responsibility. There should be respect and civility among all users of the City's public realm. Pedestrian safety and comfort must be a collaborative effort between walkers, drivers, bike riders, transit riders, and anyone who uses public space.

Analytical Approach

The Pedestrian Action Plan utilized detailed physical, socio-economic, operational and performance data to develop a robust and fact-based plan of action. Relying on data analysis enables the Pedestrian Action Plan to estimate:

- How many people are walking and where
- The current quality of the pedestrian environment
- How well the current pedestrian network and infrastructure works for walking

Today, bi-annual intersection counts show that people walking outnumber vehicles at some of the City's busiest intersections, particularly in Downtown and near the Beach. Detailed future demand modeling considered residential density, community destinations such as parks and schools, transit hubs, commercial areas, and household characteristics such as vehicle ownership and income. Over 18 percent of Santa Monica is identified as a high demand area for walking, and demand is increasing on streets that have been designed to prioritize regional traffic, in part because of their rich transit and commercial services.

Santa Monica is fortunate to have a relatively consistent street and alley system that supports many pathways to destinations. This grid system breaks down with a limited number of streets that cross the I-10 freeway and Pacific Coast Highway, and sometimes limited and challenging conditions crossing major boulevards with multiple lanes of vehicle traffic. Higher speed limits on these streets result in increased severity of injury when crashes occur. Sidewalks are provided on almost 95 percent of Santa Monica streets, and the Plan prioritizes closing the remaining gaps. Pedestrian scale lighting is much more limited, however, and providing adequate sidewalk width and evening illumination to meet increasing demand for walking is a priority going forward.

The analysis reveals that current walkway facilities will not meet the demand near the Expo Light Rail station areas at Bergamot, Memorial Parking and Downtown.

Safety was cited as a primary concern for most community members, and a significant factor in the feeling of comfort while walking. Analysis of collision data from 2001-2012 showed an average of 100 reported injury collisions per year. Seniors and youth were disproportionately represented relative to their share of the population. Police reports indicate that approximately 70 percent of crashes were associated with driver failure to yield, indicating that solutions must involve all roadway users. Pedestrians were crossing in a marked crosswalk in over 65 percent of collisions. Many crashes occurred with drivers turning left at signalized intersections or proceeding straight through intersections with two way stop controls.

These analyses of pedestrian demand, performance and facilities were used to carefully determine recommendations that serve the needs of all road users and improve walking convenience and safety in Santa Monica.

Plan Policies and Actions

The Pedestrian Action Plan includes goals and policies that set citywide direction in key areas related to walking such as supporting safety, eliminating barriers such as difficult crossings, increasing education efforts and promoting health and sustainability through walking. Perhaps most importantly, the Plan identifies a coordinated set of practices, programs, and projects that will improve the City's walking environment over the next 15 years.

*Practices*

Practices describe how City departments approach their daily activities. Some of the most important new practices include elevating pedestrian design concerns in the development and design of all city projects. Maintenance and enforcement practices are also suggested. The Plan recommends that pedestrian upgrades be incorporated into maintenance efforts so they become a day-to-day part of operating activities and budgets. Pursuing strategies to reduce maximum speed limits and increase compliance with posted speeds are proposed to decrease the incidence of crashes and to reduce injury severity when crashes occur.

*Programs*
Programs provide encouragement, outreach, education and a human touch to support walking in Santa Monica. Complementary programs proposed in the Plan include the Vision Zero Santa Monica safety and design program, pedestrian safety campaigns, Safe Routes to School, and a comprehensive wayfinding and signage program. Safe Routes to School programs are geared toward teaching kids about the "rules of the road" and encouraging them to take active transportation to school. Programs provide an opportunity to partner with community organizations and institutions to increase participation and create a culture where walking is a preferred mode of travel. Some programs include the use of operational funds to make incremental improvements in the city's street network, such as traffic signal timing and pavement markings.

*Infrastructure*
The Plan identifies over 100 individual opportunities to meaningfully improve the pedestrian experience through new or enhanced facilities such as crosswalks, curb extensions, wider sidewalks, signals, and pedestrian amenities. Infrastructure projects were informed by community-expressed values that were quantified through prioritization criteria that accounted for access to rapid transit, high collision corridors and intersections, and areas of concentrated jobs and housing. Projects that enhance connections to community assets such as the Downtown, schools, parks, and the beach are particularly prevalent in the Plan. These improvements are anticipated to positively affect the most residents, although they are primarily located in commercial areas. Projects range from large-scale infrastructure projects previously identified, such as better accommodating pedestrians on the northern portion of the Beach Path, to more fine-grained changes, such as installing parklets along Main Street or creating sidewalks on the eastern end of Olympic Boulevard.

The Plan calls for the various capital projects to be completed within a 5-year, 10-year, or 15-year timeframe, depending on project readiness, funding, and priority. Short-term projects include new curb ramps, signal timing changes, pavement markings along paths to schools, sidewalks leading to Bergamot Station, and pedestrian scrambles in Downtown. Longer-term projects include a number of greenways, lighting, reconfigured intersections, new median refuge islands, relocated transit stops, and a concerted effort to overhaul Michigan Avenue (the already-begun "MANGo" project). Other important infrastructure improvements – such as the long-planned capping of Interstate 10 to link Downtown and City Hall – are not specifically called out in the Plan but would be coordinated with the Plan's pedestrian improvements.

<u>Measuring and Monitoring</u>
Finally, the Plan establishes a monitoring and evaluation strategy to ensure the City is meeting the stated goals over time. Trends regarding the number of pedestrians observed, the amount, type and location of crashes, what percentage of trips are made by walking, and student participation rates in Safe Routes to School events will be

tracked. Measuring and monitoring are essential to make informed investment decisions to improve the pedestrian environment and experience in Santa Monica.

Implementation Resources

The Plan includes a number of technical resources related to design and project implementation. These will be included as technical appendices that accompany the final document:

- Appendix A contains specific examples for capital improvements that can be used to support funding applications and further the timely implementation of projects.
- Appendix B provides detailed information about potential funding sources.
- Appendix C examines First Mile-Last Mile pedestrian access to bus and light rail service.
- Appendix D contains a Pedestrian Design Toolkit, which will be leveraged during design and planning of future improvements.

Plan Feedback to Date

The Draft Pedestrian Action Plan was released for public review and comment on October 15, 2015. Through November 19, 2015 public presentations have been made to the Commission for the Senior Community, the Parks and Recreation Commission, Downtown Santa Monica Inc., the Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee, Santa Monica Travel and Tourism, Northeast Neighbors, and Mid-City Neighbors. Additional community meetings are scheduled prior to Council's consideration of the plan. Comments received overall during this period have been consistent with feedback received at the September 2014 Planning Commission community meeting, with requests for consideration of investments at additional locations.

Feedback on the plan has been positive overall. There has been widespread interest in encouraging more people to walk in Santa Monica and support for the concept that pedestrian safety is a shared responsibility – that pedestrians, cyclists and drivers all need to take more responsibility to create a better environment for pedestrians. The conversations have netted specific geographic recommendations. Requests from the community groups currently under consideration include:

- Include a physical project to improve conditions in the commercial portion of Montana Avenue between 7th Street and 17th Streets,
- Widen 23rd Street sidewalk,
- Widen the eastern sidewalk of 26th Street north of Olympic Boulevard, and
- Expand the recommended streetscape project on Santa Monica from 26th Street to Centinela Avenue to Lincoln Boulevard to Centinela Avenue.

**Environmental Analysis**

An Initial Study and Negative Declaration (IS/ND) was prepared pursuant to Sections 15063(c) and 15070 of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines and the City of Santa Monica CEQA Guidelines to address the potential environmental effects of the policies, programs and projects identified in the Pedestrian Action Plan (Attachment B).

Based on the analysis provided within the IS/ND, the adoption of the Pedestrian Action Plan will not result in significant impacts on the environment. No mitigation measures were identified in the IS/ND and none were needed to reduce the severity of an identified impact. The Pedestrian Action Plan is a programmatic document; future individual projects identified in the Plan will be subject to environmental review on a project-by-project basis to determine compliance with CEQA.

The Draft Initial Study/Negative Declaration was circulated for a 20-day public review period from October 27, 2015 to November 17, 2015. No comments were received.

**Next Steps**

The City Council is scheduled to review the draft Pedestrian Action Plan for adoption in early 2016. Staff is scheduled to particpate in additional community forums, including the Recreation and Parks Commission and the Disabilities Commission in December. Staff will document the changes recommended for incorporation into the plan, as well as any analysis, such as additional costs associated with recommendations received.

Once adopted, the Plan will guide the City practices, programs and project implementation efforts. It will be used to shape department work plans, staffing efforts and applications for funding from external soures and outside grant opportunities. To monitor implementation, a biannual pedestrian report card for the Pedestrian Action Plan will be published using key qualitative and quantitative data.

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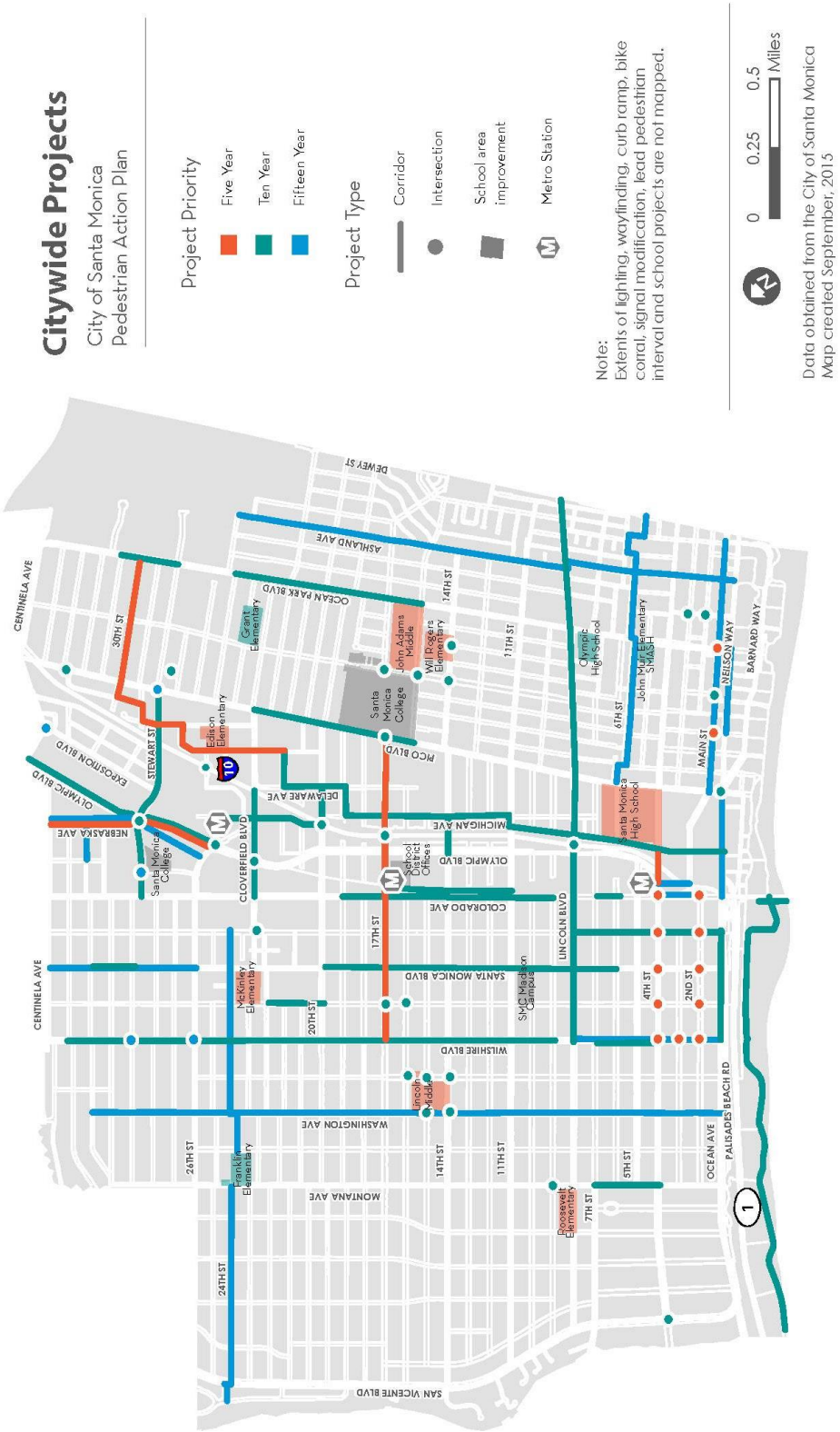
**Attachments:**

A. Map of Citywide Projects
B. Draft Pedestrian Action Plan
C. Negative Declaration

# ATTACHMENT A

## Map of Citywide Project

# ATTACHMENT A



# ATTACHMENT B

## Draft Pedestrian Action Plan

http://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD/Plans/Pedestrian-Action-Plan/

# ATTACHMENT C

## Negative Declaration

http://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD/Plans/Pedestrian-Action-Plan/