

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN THE TOWN OF PARADISE



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INTRODUCTION

In response to the recent death of a Paradise youth who was struck on Skyway Road, the Town of Paradise invited California WALKS to facilitate a workshop providing community residents, Town staff members, and other professionals with an overview of pedestrian safety best practices, to conduct a walkability assessment of areas near the downtown core, and to lead small group discussions to develop specific recommendations for Town Council to improve the safety and walkability of Paradise. This report summarizes overall walkability and pedestrian safety observations of downtown Paradise, as well as specific recommendations from community residents who attended the September 5, 2013, Community Pedestrian Safety Training facilitated by California WALKS staff members. This report is intended for use by Town of Paradise staff members, parents, community residents, and professionals.

BACKGROUND

Community Pedestrian Safety Training Program

The Community Pedestrian Safety Training (CPST) program is a long-running, joint project of the University of California at Berkeley, Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC) and California WALKS. Funding for this project is provided by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The purpose of the CPST is to empower and train local neighborhood residents and safety advocates to collaborate with local officials and agency staff to make their community safer and more pleasant to walk. The half-day training is designed to provide participants with pedestrian safety best practices and a range of proven strategies (the 8 E's) to address pedestrian safety. Participants are then guided on a walkability assessment of a nearby corridor before setting pedestrian safety priorities and actionable next steps for their community.

For a summary of outcomes from past CPST workshops, please visit:

http://californiawalks.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CPST_Outcomes_2009-11.pdf

Paradise's Pedestrian Collision History

Over a ten-year period (2002-2011), there have been a total of 67 pedestrian collisions in the Town of Paradise, of which 5 have been fatal. In analyzing the collision data, the following trends were established:

- Motorists are at-fault for these collisions more often than pedestrians (61% v. 39%);
- Failure to yield to pedestrians with the right-of-way was found to be the primary collision factor for 50% of all collisions in this time period; and
- Collisions occur primarily along major arterial roads in Town, namely Skyway Road, Clark Road, Pearson Road, and Elliott Road.

Existing Pedestrian Safety Issues in the Town of Paradise

Traffic Volumes & Speed along Skyway Road

Skyway Road serves as the Town of Paradise’s main commercial corridor and is the primary connection to employment and shopping in the greater Chico area. However, a large number of drivers use Skyway as a primary commute route to other destinations within Butte County and accordingly, drivers treat Skyway more like an expressway than a main street. Furthermore, many of the sidewalks along Skyway do not have a buffer zone between pedestrians and traffic, which creates an uncomfortable and perceived unsafe walking environment.

Cal WALKS Recommendation:

- **Implement gateway treatments** at entry points to downtown as a traffic calming measure. Gateways can be used as a visual cue to drivers that they are entering a different environment that will require them to drive more slowly. Additionally, gateways are often used to convey a sense of neighborhood identity and sense of place. Generally, gateway treatments alone cannot discourage speeding traffic without additional traffic calming measures. However, with the upcoming Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) project, many traffic calming measures are already being considered, such as a road diet, bulb-outs/curb extensions, and pedestrian safety islands. Together, the HSIP improvements along with a gateway treatment could contribute to reductions in traffic speed along Skyway Road. Gateway treatments can vary from simple monument signs to more elaborate street spanning arches, and costs for such designs can be as much as \$75,000. Potential funding sources include future cycles of the HSIP, as well as the newly established state Active Transportation Program.



GATEWAY TREATMENT IN DOWNTOWN GRIDLEY, CA

Sidewalk Connectivity & Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Compliance

One of the major issue areas Cal WALKS observed—reiterated many times by workshop participants—is the discontinuous nature of sidewalks outside of the downtown core, as well as the poor state of repair of existing sidewalks and curb ramps. The poor state of repair of sidewalks in the downtown core creates an environment that is difficult to navigate on foot, and the lack of safe walking connections to more residential streets can encourage residents to drive to the downtown core for shopping and entertainment even if they are within reasonable walking distance. Improving the walking conditions in the downtown core and the connections to it

can help with existing or planned downtown revitalization efforts by encouraging more people to be out on foot enjoying what the community has to offer.



ACCESSIBILITY BARRIERS AT BUS STOP ON SKYWAY ROAD

Cal WALKS Recommendations:

- **Seek funding to repair sidewalks** in the downtown core up to ADA standards. Potential sources of funding include the state Active Transportation Program, state Transportation Development Act/Local Transportation Fund (under Article 8), or the State Community Development Block Grant program.
- **Collaborate with Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) to evaluate accessibility barriers** of transit stops and seek funding to remove barriers.
- **Explore the feasibility of a downtown business improvement district** to fund sidewalk repair and maintenance, as well as for pedestrian-scale streetscape improvements and amenities. This would require buy-in and approval by the local business owners, Town Council, and County Supervisors.

SEPTEMBER 5 WORKSHOP

The Paradise CPST was hosted on September 5 at the Paradise Ridge Family Resource Center. The workshop was attended by 28 participants representing a wide range of organizations and disciplines, including:

- Town of Paradise Government Agencies
 - Vice Mayor
 - Council Members
 - Town Manager's Office
 - Town Engineer
 - Community Development Department
 - Police Department
 - Parks and Recreation Department
 - Planning Commission
- Paradise Ridge Family Resource Center
- Paradise Senior Center
- Downtown Businesses (The Law Office of Joseph Earley, Juice and Java)
- Parents, Other Members of the Community
- Feather River Hospital
- Traffic Works
- Board of Realtors
- Let's Move Coalition
- Butte County Supervisor Doug Teeter (District 5)
- Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG)
- Butte County Department of Public Health
- Butte County Board of Education
- Butte County Bicycle Coalition
- Strengthening Families Initiative, First 5 Butte County
- Center for Nutrition & Physical Activity Promotion (CNAP), CSU Chico
- Safe Routes to School Program, City of Chico

Reflections from Walkability Assessment

Walkability assessments were conducted in small groups primarily along Skyway Road, with one group evaluating parts of Pearson and smaller side streets (Fir, Almond) as well. Participants were asked to complete a standardized walkability checklist form from the national Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC)—a national clearinghouse for pedestrian- and bicycle-related resources. Cal WALKS received 12 completed assessment forms. The top 3 issues identified by participants during the walk assessment dealt with sidewalk maintenance and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance (sidewalks obstructions and need for ADA-compliant or repair of curb ramps). The next tier of issues identified by the majority of respondents touched upon sidewalk connectivity (or lack of sidewalks/paths/shoulders) and perceived high traffic speeds. Respondents also expressed that they felt too close to traffic when walking, that crosswalk markings were faded and needed to be restriped, and that they observed a fair amount of driver inattention/distraction. Using the PBIC scoring scale (1 being the worst walking conditions and 5 being the most pleasant), respondents were evenly split between a score of 1-3.

Community Resident Recommendations

Following the walkability assessment, workshop participants were divided into three groups to discuss and provide concrete recommendations for the following three topics: Pedestrian Safety Education, Highway Safety Improvement Program grant project for Skyway Road, and Marked Crosswalks as part of the Skyway Micro-surfacing Project.

Pedestrian Safety Education

Two small work groups discussed how best to develop and disseminate pedestrian safety education messages within the Town of Paradise. Both groups pinpointed key safety messages they wanted to be communicated and then developed various dissemination strategies the Town can pursue.

SAFETY MESSAGES

After much discussion, the groups settled on the following as key safety messages that need to be taught and broadcast to all Paradise residents:

- Make eye contact with drivers before and while crossing.
- Look both ways before beginning to cross.
- Marked crosswalks are not absolutely safe and caution must still be exercised when crossing.
- Failing to exercise caution while walking or crossing has real-world consequences.
- Do not use electronic devices while walking, especially high school-age youth.
- Distracted driving has real-world consequences.
- When no sidewalk is present, walk against traffic.
- When walking at night, wear reflective clothing or some sort of illumination.

RESIDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish a traffic safety commission/committee** (or equivalent) for the Town of Paradise: This commission or committee would be coordinating body to develop and champion education efforts and would be the central focal point for the Town to disseminate information about engineering projects to residents.

- **Create a “Rules of the Road” postcard** to capture key messages in short, easy-to-understand language. This postcard could be distributed to community centers, schools, as well as mailed directly to the older adult population. One participant suggested exploring whether the postcard could be placed within phone books before they are distributed to residents. This postcard could also form the basis for short public service announcements either on the radio or at the local movie theater. Another suggested that these key messages should be developed as short, sweet, and catchy—comparable to “Stop, Drop and Roll.”
- **Utilize existing and free newsletters** at the senior center, garden club, church, schools to disseminate safety messages.
- **Organize a crosswalk action** to educate both drivers about their responsibility to yield to pedestrians, as well as pedestrians on how to cross the street safely and properly. These actions could be accompanied with onsite educational panels on how to cross safely. These actions could also be themed around holidays or as “Run for your life” style events to maximize local media coverage and to extend the educational reach of the messages.
- **Utilize social media, particularly the Town’s Facebook page** to reach residents (especially younger ones) with traffic safety messages. Explore using boosted posts on Facebook to maximize reach.
- **Coordinate education efforts with existing programming in high schools.** Introduce the importance of pedestrian and bicycle safety education to PTAs to cultivate local champions to work with the schools. Explore whether safety education can be incorporated into a driver’s education or health education (9th grade) class. Participants agreed that working with high school age youth would work best if pedestrian safety skills are framed within the broader context of driving safely. One participant suggested exploring whether the driver’s education classes could require students to learn and demonstrate how to walk/bike safely and navigate on transit before students receive their completion certificate to apply for a driver’s license permit. Another suggested that traffic safety could be introduced to service clubs, youth organizations, or as potential senior projects to have the youth teach traffic safety skills to their peers.
- **Encourage peer mentorship for elementary school students.** Tap into the existing Big Buddies program to have older youth teach and demonstrate pedestrian safety skills to younger children.
- **Encourage parents to educate their younger children 1-on-1.** Provide parents with the Rules of the Road postcard, which they can use to model good behavior to their young children.
- **Start a walking school bus for elementary school students** from Clark/Pearson and Skyway/Pearson to schools.
- **Host traffic safety assemblies in elementary schools.**

Cal WALKS Recommendation:

Seek funding for education and enforcement efforts through the California Office of Traffic Safety grants or including an education and/or enforcement component in future Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) or Active Transportation Program grant applications.

Skyway Road, Highway Safety Improvement Project (HSIP) Project

Town Engineer Marc Mattox presented preliminary design options for the upcoming HSIP project for Skyway Road. The Skyway HSIP project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase and is expected to go into construction in Summer 2014. Skyway currently has four travel lanes, two parking lanes, and eight uncontrolled crossings. The HSIP project provides funding to improve safety along Skyway Road between Vista Way and Elliott Road.

RESIDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, workshop participants strongly supported the road diet countermeasure as part of the HSIP project, as well as the addition of refuge islands, bulb-outs, and pedestrian activated flashing beacons. Participants strongly recommend that ADA compliance be addressed along Skyway as part of the HSIP project since the micro-surfacing project will not be upgrading any curb ramps nor repairing sidewalks. It was also suggested that the Town rename or brand the project as something less wonky and more approachable and descriptive about what the HSIP project will accomplish. In terms of how best to educate the Town's residents about the project and to build support for it, participants suggested the Town engage with the following audiences:

- Local media outlets to help get the word out about the project and its benefits;
- Downtown businesses to alleviate concerns about construction impacts and to make the case that the improvements will help with revitalization efforts;
- Parents/schools/PTAs; and
- Seniors and disabled population.



EXISTING UNCONTROLLED MARKED CROSSWALKS

Marked Crosswalk Safety along Skyway Road

The Town currently has a micro-surfacing contract that will be improving the pavement condition along Skyway Road from Neal to Pearson and from Elliott to Bille. The project will first require the removal of all striping along these sections of Skyway Road, and upon completion, restriping can follow existing markings or be modified. Town Engineer Marc Mattox posed the following three questions to workshop participants in light of this project: 1) Should the uncontrolled, marked crosswalks be re-striped upon the completion of the micro-surfacing project? 2) Should the Town adopt a daylighting/no-parking next to crosswalks policy? and 3) Should the Town adopt an overall policy for when crosswalks should be marked?

RESIDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

After much discussion, workshop participants felt strongly that Crosswalks A (Skyway at Black Olive), D (Skyway at Center), and E (Skyway South of Maxwell) should be maintained and restriped upon completion of the micro-surfacing project. Participants reasoned that the distance to the nearest signalized crossing for these 3 crosswalks is too far.

For Crosswalks B (Skyway North of Elliott) and C (Skyway South of Oliver), participants ran out of time to make a final decision on whether both crosswalks should be restriped. Participants decided that they could support either: combining the 2 crosswalks into a single crosswalk between Pearson and Elliott or eliminating only one of the two crosswalks, **NOT both**. In either scenario, participants expressed that it was important to ensure that the resulting crosswalk be as ADA-compliant as feasible.

Adopt a Standardized Daylighting Policy

In addition to restriping Skyway Road, the micro-surfacing project presents the Town with the opportunity to implement daylighting treatments, where parking is restricted (through the use of painted red curbs and signs) near crosswalks to increase pedestrian visibility. If implemented along existing crosswalks along Skyway in the downtown corridor, this could reduce parking by a total of 4-6 on-street spaces.

Fully understanding this trade-off, workshop participants supported the adoption of a formal Town daylighting policy for all marked crosswalks. Participants recommend that the policy could be worded as follows: “Parking may be restricted up to 24’ on each side of a marked crosswalk, with final determinations for implementing daylighting made by the Town Engineer.” The workshop participants’ intent is to ensure that the Town Engineer has reasonable discretion to implement the daylighting policy, while also requesting that any such determinations are documented in a clear and objective manner that articulates the Town Engineer’s thought process. Workshop participants also remarked that there is plenty of free, off-street parking available to the public (for example, the parking lot at the Family Resource Center) and suggested improved signage to direct drivers to such parking.

Crosswalk Marking & Enhancement Policy

Workshop participants ran out of time to discuss whether the Town should adopt a crosswalk marking and enhancement policy that would set up local standards for when a crosswalk should be marked and when such a marked crosswalk requires additional safety treatments (such as pedestrian activated flashing beacons or refuge islands). Cal WALKS recommends that the Town further engage the public and solicit feedback on a crosswalk marking and enhancement policy and recommends reviewing similar crosswalk policies as a starting point (for example, Caltrans Traffic Operations Policy Directive 12-03 and Washington County, Oregon’s midblock crossing policy).

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