

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN THE CITY OF UKIAH



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INTRODUCTION

In collaboration with the Mendocino County Department of Public Health and Walk & Bike Mendocino, the City of Ukiah was identified as a focus community for a Community Pedestrian Safety Training based on resident interest in pedestrian safety and walkability, as well as recent and planned active transportation improvements in and around the downtown core.

Following additional conversations with the Ukiah Department of Public Works, the community invited the University of California at Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research Center (SafeTREC) and California Walks (Cal Walks) to Ukiah to facilitate a pedestrian safety action-planning workshop with an immediate focus on strengthening the City's grant application to the California Active Transportation Program (ATP) through a community-driven process. Cal Walks facilitated the workshop on May 5, 2015, which consisted of: 1) an overview of multidisciplinary approaches to improve pedestrian safety; 2) two walkability assessments through downtown Ukiah during the afternoon rush hour; and 3) small group action planning discussions to facilitate the development of recommendations for the City's ongoing active transportation efforts, as well as to inform the City's ATP application. This report summarizes the workshop proceedings, as well as ideas identified during the process and recommendations for pedestrian safety projects.

BACKGROUND

Community Pedestrian Safety Training Program

The Community Pedestrian Safety Training (CPST) program is a joint project of UC Berkeley SafeTREC and Cal Walks. Funding for this program is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The purpose of the CPST is to train local neighborhood residents and safety advocates in pedestrian safety and to educate them about collaborating with local officials and agency staff to make communities 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 to address and improve pedestrian safety conditions and concerns (the 6 E's: Evaluation, Engineering, Enforcement, Education, Encouragement, Empowerment). Participants are then guided on a walkability assessment of nearby streets before setting pedestrian safety priorities and actionable next steps for their community.

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

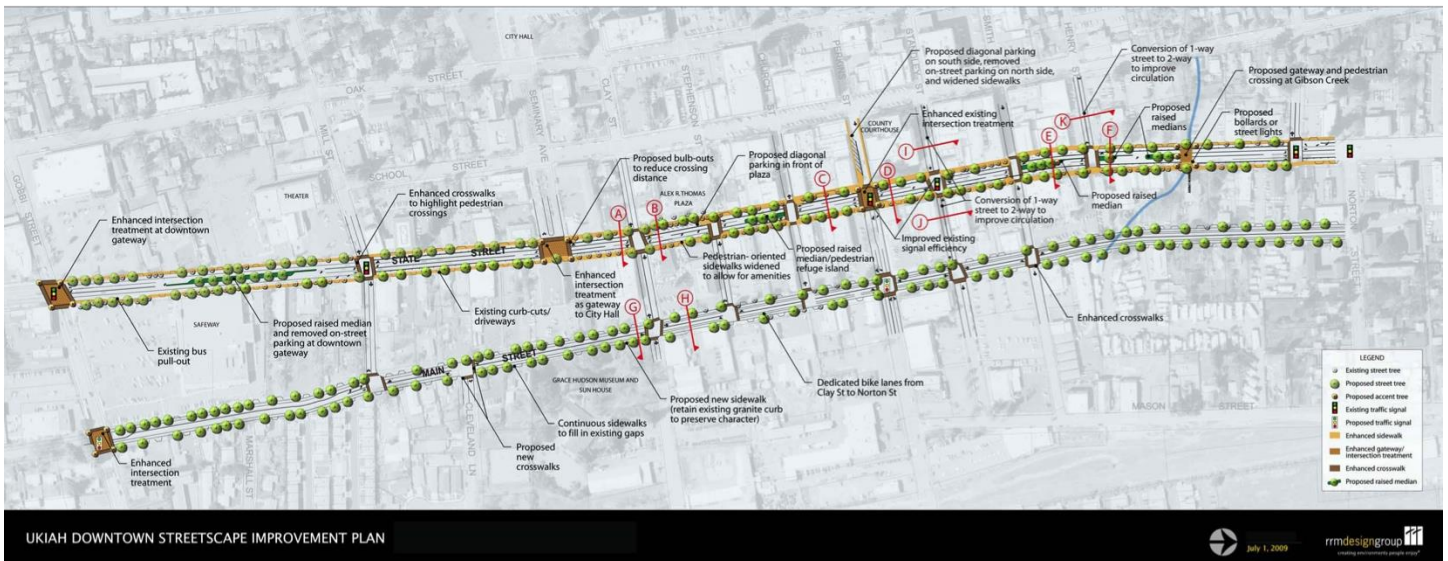
www.californiawalks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/CPST_Follow-Up_2009-14.pdf

Selected Pedestrian Safety Conditions in the City of Ukiah

High Speeds & Diminished Walkability along State Street

State Street is a 4-lane, 25 MPH arterial road that runs north/south through the 8-block downtown area, and it is a 4-lane, 30 MPH arterial road both north and south of downtown. State Street is the former US-101, and as the only local road that runs through the northern and southern city limits, it is expected to accommodate both through-traffic and traffic to and from downtown. Many of the crossings in the downtown area are uncontrolled and otherwise unimproved with safety enhancements.

Recognizing the need to transform State Street to meet the community's evolving needs, the City Public Works Department worked with community residents to develop the "Ukiah Downtown Streetscape Improvement Plan Final Report" in 2009. The Plan outlines proposed improvements to both State Street and Main Street from Gobbi Street at the south and Norton Street at the north, including a road diet for State Street. The road diet will convert State Street from 4 lanes to 3 lanes, and the 3-lane conversion will provide one (1) through-lane in each direction and a center two-way left-turn lane. State Street sidewalks will generally be widened, and Main Street sidewalk gaps will be filled. Both corridors will receive additional street trees, enhanced pedestrian crossings and intersection treatments, new street furniture, and some changes to parking and traffic flow at cross streets.



STATE STREET AND MAIN STREET PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS FROM THE UKIAH DOWNTOWN STREETScape IMPROVEMENT PLAN FINAL REPORT, 2009

High Traffic Volumes & Speeds along East Perkins Street

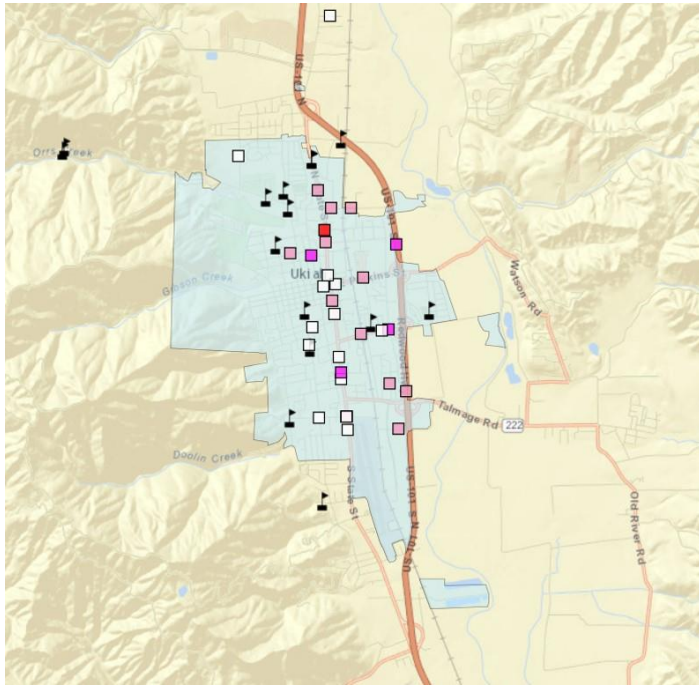
East Perkins Street is a four-lane, 30 MPH street between State Street and US-101, with sections dropping to 3 lanes with a dedicated left-turn lane. Perkins is one of three streets that connect the City of Ukiah to US-101 to the east. Sidewalks are present and continuous on both sides of east Perkins Street, with the exception of the perimeter around the railroad tracks. East Perkins provides a route to Ukiah Valley Medical Center, as well as retail at the Pear Tree Center and Orchard Plaza Shopping Center. Due to being one of the few routes to access US-101, as well as the main route for entrance and egress to the Medical Center campus, traffic becomes congested during rush hours.

Outside of the morning and afternoon rush, residents have noted that drivers routinely exceed the posted speed limit. The intersection at Hospital Drive currently has legal pedestrian crossings at three legs. Future plans are to extend Hospital Drive to the south, and extend East Clay Street to the east—the two roads will intersect at the future site of the new courthouse. When those extensions are made, the City plans to improve the pedestrian crossings at East Perkins Street and Hospital Drive, including opening up the fourth leg of the intersection for crossing.

As part of the recent rail trail construction, the City Public Works Department will soon install a high-visibility marked crosswalk, pedestrian safety island, and advanced yield signs and markings at the East Perkins Street/trail crossing, and a similar crossing is currently under construction on East Gobbi Street.



IN-PROGRESS INSTALLATION OF NEW PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ISLAND AT GOBBI STREET RAIL TRAIL CROSSING



PEDESTRIAN COLLISIONS IN UKIAH FROM 2008-2012; RED: FATAL; DARK PINK: SEVERE; LIGHT PINK: OTHER VISIBLE INJURY; WHITE: COMPLAINT OF PAIN; FLAG: SCHOOL

Ukiah’s Pedestrian Collision History

Between 2008-2012, there were 33 pedestrian collisions in the City of Ukiah, including 1 fatality and 4 severe injuries. Pedestrian collisions during this time period occurred primarily on the State Street corridor as well as along East Perkins Street, East Gobbi Street. The top two Primary Collision Factors for these pedestrian collisions were: Pedestrian Right-of-Way Violations (43.8%) and Pedestrian Violations (28.1%).

Unfortunately, several pedestrian collisions occurred recently leading up to the workshop. In April 2015, a man in a motorized wheelchair and a young student walking to school were hit and injured by vehicles on N. State Street on separate occasions, and on May 5, 2015, a man was hit and injured by a vehicle in a crosswalk in front of Ukiah’s library.

MAY 5 WORKSHOP

The City of Ukiah requested a workshop to address two goals: 1) to inform the development of the City’s ATP grant application in alignment with community residents’ identified and prioritized needs, and 2) to provide City staff, community organizations, and residents with a toolkit for promoting pedestrian safety and walkability to inform future comprehensive active transportation planning and improvement efforts. The workshop was hosted from 3:00 PM-7:30 PM with refreshments and a light dinner provided to encourage community resident participation, as well as Spanish-language translation and child care services. The workshop was attended by 30 individuals representing a wide range of organizations and disciplines, as well as the community-at-large, including:



CITY COUNCIL MEMBER MAUREEN “MO” MULHEREN WELCOMING RESIDENTS TO WORKSHOP

- City Council Member Maureen “Mo” Mulheren
- City Council Member Kevin Doble
- Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, John McCowen (2nd District)
- City of Ukiah Public Works Department
 - Tim Eriksen, Director
 - Ben Kageyama, Senior Civil Engineer
 - Staff
- Ukiah City Manager’s Office
 - Assistant City Manager Sage Sangiacomo
- City of Ukiah Police Department
 - Police Chief Chris Dewey
- City of Ukiah Planning Commission
- City of Ukiah Planning Department
- Mendocino Council of Governments
- North Coast Opportunities
- Walk & Bike Mendocino
- Mendocino County Public Health Department
- Mendocino County Safe Routes to School Program
- Redwood Empire Fairgrounds
- 12th District Agricultural Association
- Community Residents

Reflections from Walkability Assessment



WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS DISCUSSING OBSERVATIONS DURING WALKABILITY ASSESSMENT

Walkability assessments were conducted along East Perkins Street between North School Street and Warren Drive and along a circuit that included South Oak Street, West Gobbi Street, and South State Street. Participants were asked to 1) observe infrastructure conditions and the behavior of all road users and 2) note strategies and solutions that could help overcome infrastructure deficiencies and unsafe driver, pedestrian, and bicyclist behavior. Following the walkability assessment, participants shared the following reflections:

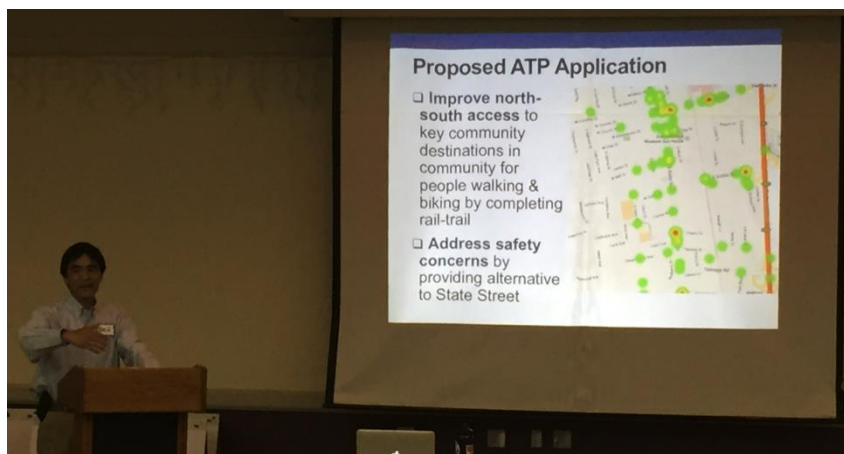
- **East Perkins Street:** Participants noted that they typically avoid walking on Perkins if possible because it is an uncomfortable experience, in large part due to the volume and speed of vehicular traffic. Visually, the street is long and straight, and there was discussion on how to “break up” that experience for drivers to encourage lower speeds.

There is also a lack of shade and street furniture along the street, and very little buffer between walkers and traffic. The already narrow sidewalks contained a number of obstructions, including utility poles which are currently being undergrounded, and the old railroad crossing barrier. The sidewalk itself is in poor condition in a number of spots due to age, maintenance, and previous cuts and patches. Many of the existing crosswalks markings—both at signalized and unsignalized crossings—are faded, and participants voiced the need for more marked crosswalks. As participants crossed from the north side to the south side of Perkins, they noted the unpredictable yielding patterns of drivers.

- **Numerous Driveways Present Accessibility Challenges:** The numerous driveways along several streets—including S. State, Gobbi, and Perkins—presented a number of challenges for people walking. First, the ingress/egress of vehicles increased potential conflicts between drivers and pedestrians, especially since several driveways had poor sight lines due to parked vehicles close to the driveways. Secondly, the driveways generally were not ADA-compliant, with cross slopes too steep for wheelchair users and other persons with disabilities.
- **Building Upon Local Successes:** Participants noted several existing features that are successful in facilitating a safer and more pleasant walking experience. School Street, for example, provided wide sidewalks and ample trees and shade and was much quieter than State Street just one block to the east. The new rail-trail was also noted as being very enjoyable due to its full separation from traffic and noise.
- **Maintenance Enforcement:** Participants brought up the need to enforce maintenance concerns with property owners, including cutting back plants that obstruct or narrow sidewalks.
- **North Ukiah Area Near the High School:** While not a part of our workshop walkability assessments, participants are concerned about the existing crosswalk placement by Ukiah High School—visibility is particularly low at dusk—and that traffic currently obscures students who are crossing. These concerns and others are addressed in the City’s 2014 Safe Routes to School Plan.
- **Need for Culture & Policy Changes:** Participants noted the need for culture change around walking—many in the community view walking as punishment (e.g., the result of a DUI) or as the result of unemployment or not being able to afford a car. Additionally, the importance of involving a diversity of stakeholders—including, for example, the disability community—in establishing policies and implementing standards and designs for the City was brought up; workshop participants would like to see the City “go beyond standards.”

Community Resident Recommendations

Following a presentation by Ben Kageyama, Senior Civil Engineer with the City of Ukiah Public Works Department, on the City’s potential Active Transportation Program (ATP) grant application, Cal Walks facilitated small-group action planning discussions. Workshop participants were tasked with developing concrete recommendations to improve pedestrian safety in the City of



SENIOR CIVIL ENGINEER BEN KAGEYAMA SHARING THE PROPOSED ATP APPLICATION WITH RESIDENTS

Ukiah observed during the workshop, including evaluating whether the City’s ATP application aligned with the community’s priorities and if so, determining whether a north or south extension made the most sense. The ATP application proposal concept involves Phase 2 of the Rail Trail. Workshop

participants provided the following recommendations for the grant application and overall pedestrian safety improvements in Ukiah based on the 6 E's of pedestrian safety and the walkability assessment:

- 1) ATP Application for Rail Trail Phase 2:** Two of the three small groups expressed strong support for the southern extension over the northern extension, while the third group did not express a preference. Participants cited that the southern extension would connect the community to more shopping destinations—both existing and planned—and that it was ultimately “more bang for the buck.” Participants identified several features they believed to be critical for maximizing community use of the rail trail, such as trees and/or shade structures, benches, fitness and/or play equipment, restrooms and water fountains, landscaping and the involvement of the Native Plant Society and other community groups, murals and public art, and doggie “rest areas” with waste bags and trash cans. Participants also noted the need to consider access along the trail for emergency vehicles.
- 2) Ladder Crosswalk Policy for all Maintenance/Resurfacing Projects:** Participants identified a low-cost, short-term policy solution to improving pedestrian safety that would codify existing Public Works Department practice: whenever street maintenance or resurfacing is performed, all marked crosswalks affected by the project should be upgraded to high-visibility ladder style crosswalks. This policy would be one component of a holistic “Complete Streets” policy guiding street maintenance and improvements.
- 3) Encouragement through Wayfinding:** Workshop participants identified pedestrian-scale wayfinding as a priority strategy to encourage more walking. Participants noted that any new wayfinding effort should build upon the existing Ukiah Walks program. The enhanced program should incorporate both walking distances and times, as well as additional wayfinding signs near/in parks, bus stops, and busy corners. Additionally, participants identified the creation of a smartphone app for the program would broaden its reach; the app could include mile markers with estimates for minutes and steps walked.



RESIDENTS DEVELOPING ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UKIAH

4) Community Events to Foster Vibrant Walking Environment: Participants came up with a range of community events meant to foster a culture of walking in Ukiah, including a series of movies in the park, group events like dog walking clubs, and deliberately encouraging residents and visitors to park and walk to destinations downtown.

5) Pedestrian Safety Education Efforts: Safety education targeted specifically to parents was highlighted as a priority, with separate efforts needed to reach students at the schools and senior centers attendees.

- 6) Encourage More Safe Routes to School Strategies:** In addition to targeted safety education at schools and for parents, participants identified a number of additional Safe Routes to Schools strategies they would like to see implemented, including the establishment of off-site drop-

offs/pick-ups and the incorporation of multi-modal education like “traffic city” assemblies/demonstrations.

- 7) **Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan Update:** The update to the 1999 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan is still in draft; public comment will open once the draft is sent to the City Traffic Committee, and from there the draft plan will go to the City Council. Community participants were also interested in learning of and attending the City Traffic Committee’s meetings. At the workshop, the City committed to posting the draft to City website for public comment and running a newspaper announcement. Walk & Bike Mendocino also committed to help circulate and promote the public comment opportunity on the draft plan.
- 8) **State Street Road Diet:** Participants supported the plans for the State Street Road Diet and encouraged the City to work with the County to explore the future possibility of extending the diet north of Norton Street, particularly in light of a recent crash which injured a student at Redwood Academy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the City of Ukiah for inviting us and for hosting the Community Pedestrian Safety Training. Thank you to Ben Kageyama, Senior Civil Engineer with the City of Ukiah Public Works Department and Neil Davis of Walk and Bike Mendocino and Ukiah Valley Trail Group for their full commitment to and leadership of community-driven transportation planning and meaningful engagement with community residents. Thank you also to Colleen Schenck, Meredyth Reinhard, and Basima Sisemore with the Mendocino County Department of Public Health for providing leadership and organizational support in planning the workshop. We would also like to acknowledge Ukiah City Council Members Maureen “Mo” Mulheren and Kevin Doble, Mendocino County Supervisor John McCowen, Ukiah Assistant City Manager Sage Sangiacomo, Ukiah Police Chief Chris Dewey, Ukiah Public Works Director Tim Eriksen, and community members whose dedication to pedestrian safety meaningfully informed and strengthened the workshop’s outcomes.

Funding for the Community Pedestrian Safety Training program was provided by a grant to University of California at Berkeley Safe Transportation Research & Education Center from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.