



SAN DIEGO COUNTY

San Diego County Bicycle Coalition  
300 15th St.  
San Diego, CA 92101



March 16, 2022

Mario Sanchez  
City of El Cajon, Project Manager  
200 Civic Center Way  
El Cajon, CA 92020

CC: Katja Dillman, Andrew Prescott

**Subject: Comments on El Cajon Active Transportation Plan**

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Dear Mr. Sanchez, Ms. Dillman, Mr. Prescott, and Project Team

The San Diego County Bicycle Coalition advocates for and protects the rights of all people who ride bicycles. Since 1987, our organization has acted as the voice for bicyclists and has advocated for safer streets and hundreds of miles of bike paths, lanes, and trails across the San Diego region. We actively conduct educational programs, promote awareness of bicyclists and bicycling issues, review infrastructure improvements, and act as a liaison between bicyclists and government officials.

Circulate San Diego is an active partner of the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition, and works throughout the San Diego region to promote great mobility choices, more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, and land uses that promote sustainable growth.

We are writing to provide feedback on the recently released draft of the El Cajon Active Transportation Plan. We have greatly appreciated the project team's willingness to incorporate our input throughout the planning process, and are grateful for all of the thought and care that was devoted to the creation of this plan. However, we believe that this plan will require significant modifications in order to allow El Cajon residents of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to safely walk and bike in their communities.



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### **Bike Facilities:**

While several of the projects included in this plan are exemplary of the type of bicycle infrastructure that the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition advocates for, many other projects do not meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities. Moreover, in its current state, this plan would leave many of El Cajon's most dangerous streets without any new safety upgrades.

When evaluating bike infrastructure networks, the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition applies two principles:

1. Bike routes must exist to all destinations.
2. All bike facilities must be safe and comfortable for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

To evaluate whether a bike facility is safe for people of all ages and abilities, the San Diego Bicycle Coalition prefers to use the National Association of City Transportation Officials' (NACTO) Contextual Guidance for High-Comfort Bicycle Facilities.<sup>1</sup> In short, this design guide asks for any road with a speed limit of over 25 mph to have a separated bike facility. Numerous studies have shown that separated bike facilities are not only nine times safer than shared lanes,<sup>2</sup> but are comfortable for the 56% of people who would like to ride their bikes more, but are not comfortable using shared lanes or striped bike lanes.<sup>3</sup>

Recognizing, however, that El Cajon has very few existing separated bike facilities, and that these options are often the most expensive to build, the San Diego Bicycle Coalition believes that Caltrans' slightly less strict Contextual Guidance for Bike Facilities can be used as the minimum standard for what constitutes a safe bikeway. Caltrans' Bikeway selection matrix is pictured below:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/designing-ages-abilities-new/>

<sup>2</sup> Teschke, K. PhD, M. Anne Harris PhD, Conor C. O. Reynolds PhD, Meghan Winters PhD, Shelina Babul PhD, Mary Chipman MA, Michael D. Cusimano MD, PhD, Jeff R. Brubacher MD, MSc, Garth Hunte MD, PhD, Steven M. Friedman MD, MPH, Melody Monro MPA, Hui Shen PhD, Lee Vernich MSc, and Peter A. Cipton PhD. "Route Infrastructure and the Risk of Injuries to Bicyclists: A Case-Crossover Study." *American Journal of Public Health*. 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Dill, Jennifer and Nathan McNeil. "Revisiting the four types of cyclists." *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*. No. 2587, Transportation Research Board, Washington D.C. , 2016. Pg. 90-99.



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Caltrans Contextual Guidance for Preferred Bicycle Facilities**					
Place Type and Surrounding Land-Use 1		Posted Speed			
		15-20	25-30	35-45	> 45
Urban Areas & Suburban Main Streets	<2,500	Standard Shoulder or Shared Lane	Standard Shoulder or Shared Lane	Class II or Class IV	Class IV
	2,500-5,000				
	5,000-10,000	Class II or Class IV	Class II or Class IV	Class IV	
	>10,000	Class IV	Class IV		
Rural Areas (Developing Corridors)		15-20	25-30	35-45	> 45
	<2,500	Standard Shoulder (may be designated as a Class III facility):			
	2,500-5,000				
	5,000-10,000				
	>10,000				
Rural Main Streets		15-20	25-30	35-45	> 45
	<2,500	Standard Shoulder or Shared Lane	Class II	Class II	Class I or IV
	2,500-5,000				
	5,000-10,000	Class II		Class II	
	>10,000			Class I, II, or IV	

1 Highway Design Manual (HDM) Index 81.3

2 HDM, Tables 302.1 and 307.2

\*\* Chart is not a replacement for engineering judgement. Intended for planning purposes, to identify minimum preferred bikeway facility under different place type, volume and speed conditions.

The vast majority of streets in El Cajon fit into the “Urban Areas and Suburban Main Streets” category and therefore should be designed with bike facilities consistent with the requirements of that category. ***Broadly, we urge the project team to ensure that all proposed bike facilities in the active transportation plan are consistent with Caltrans’ Contextual Guidance before bringing this plan before the City Council.***

### **Feedback on Proposed Bike Projects**

Based on Caltrans’ Contextual Guidance matrix, we would like to provide the following recommendations on the top ten bike projects contained within the draft active transportation plan.

1. **Johnson Avenue Bike Path:** This is an excellent project proposal that will be safe for people of all ages and abilities. We recommend that the project team make an effort to consolidate driveways in order to minimize turning conflicts wherever possible, and highlight places where driveways cross the bike path with green paint or raised crossings.
2. **El Cajon Boulevard / Main Street Bike Route:** Considering the narrow right of way between El Cajon Boulevard and Claydelle Avenue on Main Street, sharrows are an acceptable bike facility in this context. For these sharrows to be safe for people of all ages and abilities, however, the speed limit must be lowered to 25 mph or lower. California’s recently passed AB 43 allows cities to lower speed limits as low as 20 mph in



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residential and commercial areas without conducting traffic studies.<sup>4</sup> This bill should be used to lower speed limits on any sections of roadway in El Cajon where the current speed limit makes the existing or proposed bicycle facilities unsafe. This lowered speed limit should be accompanied by bulbouts, traffic circles, and other traffic calming features wherever possible. On the other sections of this roadway, however, where there are two or more lanes of traffic in each direction, sharrows are absolutely not safe. For these sections (I-8 to West Main Street on El Cajon Boulevard, and Claydelle Avenue to El Cajon city limits on Main Street) the design of Project #6, Main Street Cycletracks, should be continued per Caltrans' contextual guidelines.

3. **Avocado Avenue Bike Route:** With a speed limit of 40 mph and two lanes of traffic in each direction, Avocado Avenue is only set up to be safe for cars. This proposed installation of sharrows will have little to no effect on rider safety, and blatantly violates Caltrans' contextual guidance for bike facilities. Studies have shown that installing sharrows has little to no benefit for increasing safety or bike ridership rates.<sup>5</sup> To make this project safe for people of all ages and abilities, the project team could either lower the speed limit to 30 mph or below and install a buffered bike lane, or, more ideally, install one-way cycletracks along each side of the street. Additionally, this facility should be extended south of Chase Avenue to El Cajon city limits, where the speed limit is currently 45 mph.
4. **Lexington Avenue Bikelanes:** While Class II bike lanes are an appropriate facility for this roadway, placing the bike lanes directly adjacent to the on-street parking creates a dangerous door-zone bike lane, in which cyclists traveling in the center of the bike lanes are at risk of running into open car doors. To mitigate this issue, the City of El Cajon should remove on-street parking along this corridor. Along the full length of Lexington Avenue, there is ample off-street parking, making the on-street parking spaces nonessential. The traffic lanes must be narrowed, and a buffer should be added between the bike lanes and vehicle lanes. Additionally, the narrowing of traffic lanes should be accompanied by a lowering of the speed limit to 30 mph or below.
5. **Fletcher Parkway Cycletracks:** This is an exemplary project that has the full support of our organization. However, there is no reason for the cycletracks to end at the intersection with Ballantine Street, as the speed limit remains at 40 mph as Fletcher Parkway continues onto Broadway. We recommend that the cycle tracks continue along the full length of Broadway, as the existing Class II bike lanes do not meet Caltrans guidelines.
6. **Main Street Cycle Tracks:** This is another exemplary project that has our full support. As referenced in **3**, this design should continue along all the sections of Main Street where there are two or more lanes of traffic in each direction.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=202120220AB43](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB43)

<sup>5</sup> <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2016/01/14/study-sharrows-dont-make-streets-safer-for-cycling/>



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7. **Madison Avenue Bike Lanes:** This is a great application of Class II bike lanes. Special care should be taken to ensure door zone conflicts are mitigated where the bike lanes run parallel to on-street parking spaces. Additionally, the speed limit should be lowered to 30 mph or below to maximize cyclist safety.
8. **First Street Bike Route:** In order for a shared lane to be safe for people of all ages and abilities, the speed limit must be lowered to 25 mph or less. In addition, traffic calming features such as bulbouts, traffic circles, and/or speed bumps/cushions should be added to ensure traffic abides by the lowered speed limit.
9. **Second Street Bike Route:** With two lanes of traffic in each direction in addition to turning lanes, Second Street's volumes are far too high for shared lanes to be safe. We strongly recommend either lowering the speed limit to 30 mph or below and installing buffered bike lanes, or installing one-way cycletracks along each side of the street.
10. **Jamacha Road Bike Lanes:** With multiple lanes of traffic in each direction and a 40mph speed limit, Jamacha Road's traffic speeds and volumes are far too high for buffered bike lanes to be safe. The planned buffered bike lanes could easily be upgraded to cycle tracks. In addition, the cycle tracks should be continued through the length of Jamacha Road to the El Cajon City limits, where the speed limit increases to 45 mph.

#### **Other Needed Bike Facilities:**

Since this Active Transportation Plan is a long-term planning document that presents a vision of what El Cajon's active transportation network will look like after years of development, it should present a comprehensive network that will allow people to safely bike and walk to every major destination in the city. Although not specifically described in the current plan, the following roadway segments should have their bicycle infrastructure upgraded as part of the current plan.

1. **Washington Avenue:** With speed limits ranging from 40 to 45 mph and two lanes of traffic in each direction, Washington Avenue has traffic speeds and volumes far too high for the currently existing narrow Class II bike lanes to be considered safe. To make this roadway safe in accordance with the Caltrans matrix, the project team should either lower the speed limit to 35 mph or less and widen the existing Class II bike lanes to buffered bike lanes, or create one-way cycle tracks along each side of the road by eliminating the center turning lane.
2. **Chase Avenue:** Chase Avenue's current road striping designs and speed limits are almost exactly identical to Washington Avenue's. To make this roadway safe, the project team should either lower the speed limit to 35 mph or less and widen the existing Class





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II bike lanes to buffered bike lanes, or create one-way cycle tracks along each side of the road by eliminating the center turning lane.

3. **Mollison Avenue:** While the existing Class II bike lanes along Mollison Avenue are adequate, to make this infrastructure safe, the speed limit must be lowered in the places where it is currently 40mph to 35mph.
4. **Cuyamaca Street:** The section of Cuyamaca Street between Fletcher Parkway and El Cajon City Limits has two lanes in each direction and speed limits from 40 to 45mph. Again, this section of roadway would require lower speed limits and widened bike lanes, or a cycletrack to be safe. This would be another excellent opportunity to apply AB 43 and lower speed limits through this corridor.

### **Proposed Intersection Improvements:**

Overall, the intersection improvements proposed in this plan are excellent and will go a long way towards reducing the epidemic of traffic violence that El Cajon residents are facing. While we fully support most of the proposed intersection improvements, we have minor comments on the following intersections:

1. **1st Street and Main Street:** The on-street parking lane on Main Street leaves plenty of room for curb extensions on both the East and West legs of this intersection. Adding curb extensions will make crossing the five lanes of traffic on Main Street much more safe and comfortable for pedestrians.
2. **Jamacha Road and Lexington Avenue:** There is ample room for curb extensions on all legs of this intersection. Installing them would significantly increase pedestrian safety and comfort.
3. **Jamacha Road and Granite Hills Road:** Again, there is space and need for curb extensions on both the East and West legs of this intersection.

### **Other Needed Intersection Improvements:**

In its current draft, this plan fails to address many of the most dangerous intersections for people who walk and ride bikes in El Cajon. All of the following intersections were the locations of three or more bike/pedestrian crashes between 2014 and 2018, and do not have any safety upgrades scheduled in the current plan:

1. **Jamacha Road and East Main Street:** Three pedestrian crashes and two bike crashes between 2014 and 2018.
2. **Avocado Avenue and Main Street:** Three pedestrian crashes and one bike crash between 2014 and 2018.



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3. **Chase Avenue and Emerald Avenue:** Three pedestrian crashes and one nearby pedestrian crash between 2014 and 2018.
4. **South Second Street and East Main Street:** Five nearby pedestrian crashes between 2014 and 2018.
5. **North Second Street and Madison Avenue:** Four nearby pedestrian crashes and two bike crashes between 2014 and 2018.
6. **Washington Avenue and Jamacha Road:** Four pedestrian crashes and two bike crashes between 2014 and 2018.

The high number of crashes at each of these intersections within recent years is clear evidence that the current pedestrian crossings do not provide an adequate level of safety. The project team should examine each of these intersections and determine which facilities— enhanced crosswalks, curb extensions, traffic circles, or otherwise— would best promote bike and pedestrian safety.

### **Conclusion:**

We're very grateful for all of the thought and hard work that the project team has devoted to this active transportation plan. At this point, however, the plan still needs significant modifications in order to meet the needs of everyone who walks and rides a bike in El Cajon. We're appreciated how thoughtfully your team has engaged with our feedback in the past, and we hope you'll take our recommendations into consideration.

Sincerely,

Will Rhatigan  
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San Diego County Bicycle Coalition

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Circulate San Diego