

Chapter 3

EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter describes current conditions for walking and biking in the Fresno region. The existing bicycle and pedestrian networks are presented along with a description of the socioeconomic and land use context of walking and biking region. Specific maps and descriptions for each jurisdiction are presented in Chapters 6 to 17.

CLIMATE

Although much of Fresno County is flat and the relatively dry climate is conducive to bicycling and walking, other local environmental conditions make active transportation more challenging. Summers are hot, with average high temperatures exceeding 95 degrees Fahrenheit and daily high temperatures frequently exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Air quality in the region frequently reaches the unhealthy range or higher due to both ground-level ozone and particulate matter.

RAILROADS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Much of the Fresno region was originally settled adjacent to railroads. Railroads historically served the packing industry and continue to serve businesses in the region today. Amtrak also serves passengers in the region with a station in Fresno. Many communities were developed with streets parallel and perpendicular to the railroads. Because the railroads generally traverse the Central Valley in a northwest/southeast orientation, the first streets in these communities were developed at a similar orientation. Later street development in these cities often occurred in a north/south or east/west orientation. Intersections formed where these developments meet are often at angles which make crossing more difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists.

In cities where the railroad still exists, railroad crossings also frequently create barriers due to poor pavement or sidewalk gaps.



Skew intersection in Fowler

HIGH VOLUME REGIONAL CONNECTING ROADS

The region is connected by many roads that serve large volumes of traffic, often at high speeds. Some of these roads are state routes controlled by Caltrans, while other roads are controlled by Fresno County. Some of these roads pass through cities included in this plan. In these cities, speeds are generally slower, but traffic volumes are frequently still high.

In addition to serving as connectors across the county, these roads sometimes serve as main streets in city business districts. When passing through these districts, the roads serve pedestrians, bicyclists, and local vehicle traffic as well as traffic moving between communities. Careful design is required to ensure that these roads serve all users, are safe for all users, and do not serve as a barrier to bicyclists and pedestrians.

Manning Avenue is an example of one of these high volume regional connecting roads. Manning Avenue is an east-west road spanning Fresno County, passing through the cities of San Joaquin, Parlier, and Reedley and the unincorporated community of Raisin City. In Parlier, the road is the location of many local businesses and local apartments and is the expected location of much future development. In Reedley, the road is adjacent to local schools, housing, and retail.



Sign on Colorado Avenue indicating end of bike lane in San Joaquin.

OTHER FACTORS

Several other local conditions affect bicycling and walking in the Fresno County region:

- **Lighting:** Some streets, especially in unincorporated communities, do not have streetlights or have streetlights that are widely spaced. Several public comments requested improved lighting to increase safety and perceptions of safety, which will increase walking and bicycling.
- **Loose dogs:** Several public comments also noted that loose dogs are a deterrent to walking and bicycling in some areas.
- **Gaps in active transportation networks:** Bicycle and pedestrian networks have developed unevenly and evolved over time, resulting in gaps. For example, a sidewalk may cover one block or a few houses but then be interrupted by another block or stretch of houses without sidewalks, forcing pedestrians to walk in the street.

DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

The identification of disadvantaged and underserved communities is a key metric in many grant funding programs such as California's Active Transportation Program. This plan presents four different indicators of disadvantaged communities, often referred to as environmental justice communities:

- **Household median income** – census tracts with median households under 80% of the statewide median, or \$49,454 (ACS, 2016).
- **CalEnviroScreen 3.0 score percentile** – a measure of environmental health by census tract. Inputs include socioeconomic factors, population characteristics, pollution factors, and environmental factors. Tracts with higher percentiles are more disadvantaged. The worst scoring 25% are identified.
- **Free or reduced price meal eligibility** – the share of students at a school who are eligible for subsidized meals. Schools with more than 75% eligible are most disadvantaged.
- **Zero automobile households** – share of households in each census tract that do not own a car.

Specific maps and descriptions for each jurisdiction are presented in Chapters 6 to 17. Many areas covered by this plan have one or more indicators of disadvantaged community status.

CONNECTIONS WITH TRANSIT

The primary transit provider in the jurisdictions covered by this plan is the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency, which has extensive routes across Fresno County. Other transit providers serving Fresno County destinations include

- **Fresno Area Express**, serving the City of Fresno and adjacent communities;
- **Clovis Transit**, serving Clovis and adjacent communities;
- **Kings Area Rural Transit**, connecting Hanford to the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area with stops in Laton and Selma; and
- **The Dinuba Connection**, with service to Reedley.

These agencies provide fixed route and demand-responsive transit service. Buses are provided with bike racks by each of these agencies. Transit stops are shown on the key destinations maps for each jurisdiction presented in Chapters 6 to 17.



This Rural Transit bus serves the City of Huron and nearby communities..

FIVE E'S

The “E’s” of active transportation are a way to view active transportation efforts holistically. The “E’s” include programming and outreach efforts as well as infrastructure:



Education – programs to teach safe walking and bicycling, such as safety rodeos.



Encouragement – programs and events to increase participation in walking and bicycling. Examples include community walks and bike rides.



Enforcement – efforts by law enforcement to ensure laws relating to pedestrians and bicyclists are enforced. These efforts may be directed at motorists as well as pedestrians and bicyclists, for example, monitoring drivers yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks.



Engineering – infrastructure improvements that increase the extent, safety, and quality of networks and facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.



Evaluation – review of data related to pedestrians and bicyclists. Collision data is one example.

A discussion of each jurisdiction’s efforts for each of the E’s is presented in Chapters 6 to 17.