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From: Megan Wooley-Ousdahl and Belinda Judelman, Toole Design

Date: November 25, 2019

Project: Alameda Active Transportation Plan

Subject: November 7th Open House Summary

SUMMARY

On Thursday, November 7, 2019 from 5:30pm to 8:30pm, the City of Alameda, with support from Toole Design, hosted an Open House for the Alameda Active Transportation Plan (referred to here as “Active Alameda”). The Open House was held at the Alameda Free Library.

In all, **approximately 150 people participated in the Open House**. The participants included people of all ages, including young children, teens, adults, and older adults (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Community Members Participating in Open House Activities

The goals of the Active Alameda Open House were to:

- Publicize and build momentum around the Active Transportation Plan process (see Figure 2)
- Familiarize the community with different types of active transportation facilities and treatments
- Gather public input on existing and desired walking and bicycling conditions in Alameda

City staff and Toole Design provided several types of activities for gathering input, kids' activities, a formal presentation, and informational posters.

During the Open House, attendees circulated among the various activities, and from approximately 7:00pm to 7:30 pm, City staff and the Toole Design project manager gave a presentation. The presenters:

- Provided a recognition of the recent collisions and the steps the City is taking to address this
- Celebrated the City's recent adoption of a Vision Zero Policy
- Gave an overview of the project
- Discussed different types of bicycle facilities and pedestrian improvements
- Shared ways for community members to participate in the Active Alameda planning process.

The remaining time was designed for attendees to continue circulating among the various activities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Several key themes emerged from Open House participants:

Schools and Children

- Many children walk and bike to school in Alameda, and the community is very concerned about the safety of children traveling along roadways and crossing streets near schools.
- Community members would like to see more enforcement and design changes to encourage drivers to travel more slowly, especially along streets near schools.

Improving Safety and Connections

- Several elements of the existing active transportation network feel unsafe and are not well-connected to destinations.
- Some community members are concerned about north-south multimodal connections to major destinations, such as Alameda Landing and the Jean Sweeney Open Space Park.
- There is an interest in improving connections to the City's existing and planned Class I and Class IV facilities.
- Barriers such as the bridges and major streets (e.g., Central Ave, Constitution Way, Lincoln Ave, Encinal Ave, and Webster St) result in circuitous or high-stress bike routes.
- Participants would like to see improvements to bicycle and pedestrian connections between Alameda and Oakland and new crossing options, especially around the High St and Fruitvale Ave bridges and the connection to the Fruitvale BART station.

Street Crossings

- While sidewalk coverage is good in Alameda, there are many places where it is difficult to cross the street due to lack of designated crossings or uncomfortable existing crossings (e.g., Fernside Bl, Otis Dr, and Lincoln Ave).

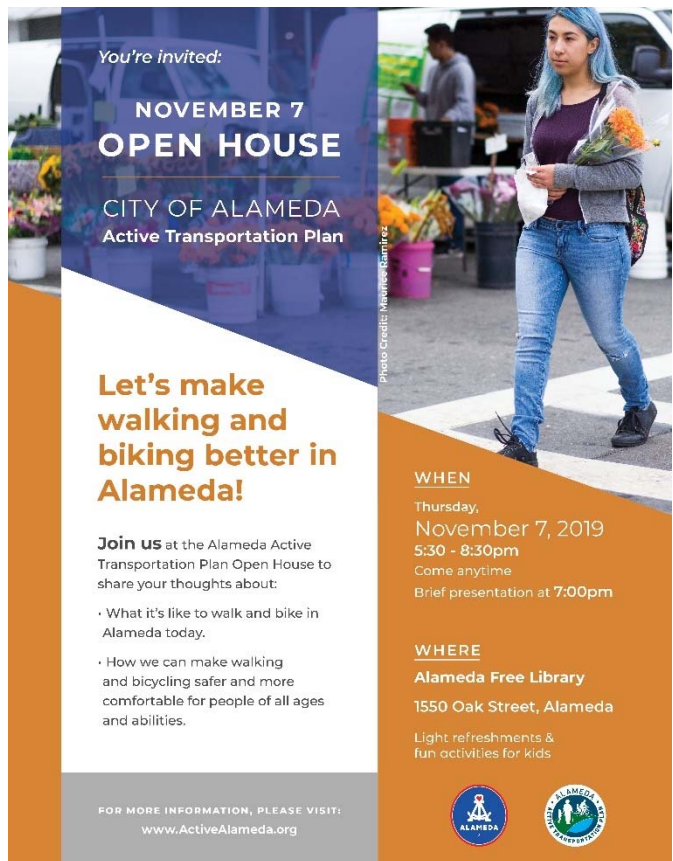


Figure 1. Open House Flyer

Educational Support Programs

- Community members would like to see increased education for drivers, bicyclists, scooter riders and skateboarders about how to share the road and sidewalk safely.

Additional details on community member feedback during the Open House activities is presented in the following sections.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

PROJECT POSTCARD

A flyer was distributed during the Open House to provide community members with general project information and to direct them to the project website for more information about the project and how to stay involved (see Figure 2).

The flyer was designed as a postcard so that community members could mail it to their friends. Attendees also suggested that the postcard could be mailed to the City as a way to share their comments.

OPEN HOUSE POSTERS

The Open House included three informational posters for participants to view. These includes:

- **Approach and Schedule poster** which included information about active transportation planning and the Active Alameda planning approach and schedule (see Figure 4).
- **Bicycle Facilities poster** which listed different types of bicycle facilities, ranging from those with little separation from motor vehicles (e.g., shared lanes and bicycle routes) to those with robust separation (e.g., separated bicycle lanes and off-street shared-use paths). It also provided examples of intersection treatments including pavement markings and signals.
- **Pedestrian Facilities poster** which listed different types of pedestrian facilities and crossing treatments.

The intent of the bicycle and pedestrian facilities posters was to help participants learn about different facility types and develop a deeper understanding of the types of facilities they may want to see installed in Alameda in the future.

The “Build a Street” activity was designed to be fun and spark conversation among older children and adults. This activity allowed participants to design their own street using a series of street elements and a board with a picture of a street with specific amount of available right-of-way. This activity is particularly useful for helping people think

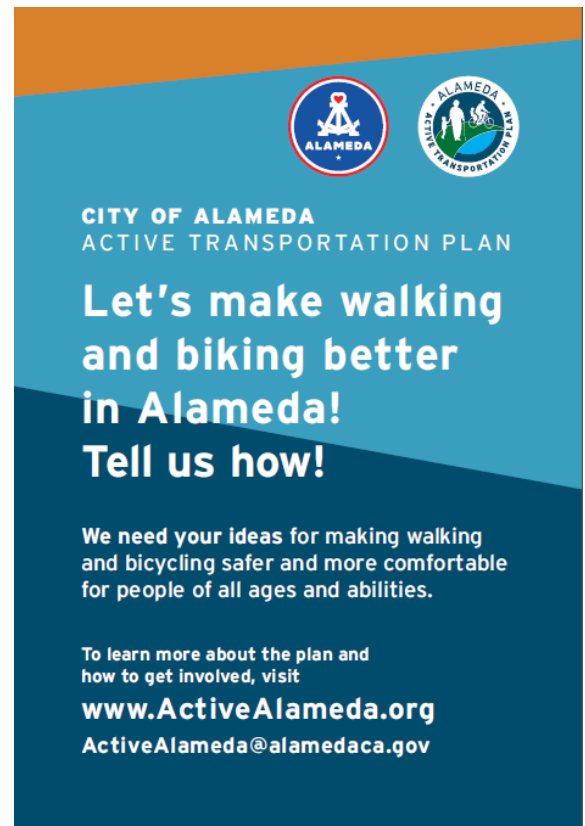


Figure 2. Project Postcard

about the tradeoffs needed when installing different types of bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and personal automobile infrastructure.



Figure 4. Approach and Schedule Poster

INPUT ACTIVITIES

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

The Open House included several interactive activities for participants to provide their feedback. The first activity, "Tell us what you think!", asked community members to write down their responses to two questions about plan priorities - "How can we make walking and bicycling in Alameda safer and more comfortable?" and "What specific issues should we address in the Alameda Active Transportation Plan?" This activity was conducted in English (see Figure 5).

In response to the first question, a few key themes emerged. In general, community members would like to see the following changes to make walking and bicycling more comfortable in Alameda.

- More separated bike lanes
- A more connected bicycle network
- Maintenance and pavement repairs to the sidewalk and roadway

- More signs, signals, or flashing lights to encourage drivers to watch for pedestrians, especially near schools
- More bicycle encouragement events, such as open streets
- Improved pedestrian crossings
- More lighting
- Better bike rack placement



In response to the second question, community members would like to see the following issues addressed in Active Alameda.

- Intersection daylighting
- Bike (and scooter) rental programs
- Water taxis and pedi-cabs
- Concrete-protected bike lanes throughout the island
- Improved education and enforcement of the appropriate way to use the road (e.g., bicyclists and skateboarders respecting pedestrians on sidewalks)

Tell Us What You Think!

How can we make walking and bicycling in Alameda safer and more comfortable?

What specific issues should we address in the Alameda Active Transportation Plan?

www.ActiveAlameda.org

Figure 5. “Tell Us What You Think” Activity

BIKING AND WALKING IN ALAMEDA – TODAY AND TOMORROW

The second input activity, “Biking and Walking in Alameda – Today and Tomorrow”, asked participants to describe their experiences walking and bicycling in Alameda today as well as what they hope it will be like in the future, using three words for each scenario. Input from this exercise will inform a draft vision and goals for the Plan. This activity was conducted in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Twenty-five activity sheets were left at the end of the event, and the responses from those respondents are displayed in word clouds below. All activity sheets left at the end of the event were completed in English.

Common themes emerged in this exercise. In general, bicycling in Alameda today was described as both positive and negative, words like “fun” and “easy” were used, but so were words like “unsafe,” “dangerous,” and “scary” (see Figure 636).



Figure 63. “What’s it like to bike in Alameda today?” Results

Participants want walking in Alameda in the future to be safer, pleasant, and easier (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. "How should walking in Alameda be in the future?" Results

MY BEST IDEA FOR MAKING STREETS SAFER

A third input activity asked participants to write or draw their best idea to make streets safer (see Figure 10). This activity was a huge success! Participants were given markers to draw or write their responses which they could then post on the wall. Some participants were also willing to have their picture taken with their idea. This activity was provided in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

Forty-four participants left their activity sheets at the end of the Open House. The major themes from responses to this activity include:

- Safety improvements near schools
- Enforce speed limits
- Encouragement activities and open streets events
- Education for drivers and bicyclists about laws
- Intersection treatments
- Protected bike lanes
- Slower speeds
- Greater variety of transportation options (e.g., bike/scooter rentals, pedi-cabs, water taxis)
- Signals and design treatments to improve crossings
- Bike education at schools

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- The image shows a large wooden bulletin board with numerous handwritten notes and drawings. The notes are organized into columns and rows, each with a title starting with "My best idea for making streets safer is...". The ideas include:
- Bike Lanes:** "Bike Lanes on Park Street". A drawing shows a car accident scene with a car and a person on the ground.
 - Water Taxi:** "Water Taxi". A drawing shows a person on a boat.
 - Wood Middle School:** "Wood Middle School". A drawing shows a school bus and a person on a bike.
 - Safe! BIKE LANE:** A drawing shows a street layout with a bike lane and a car.
 - Stop signs + Roundabouts on Fernside:** A drawing shows a street layout with a stop sign and a roundabout.
 - Dawnlight Intersections & Reduce Speed Limits:** A drawing shows a street layout with a car and a person on a bike.
 - More Outreach to New Residents:** A drawing shows a car and a person on a bike.
 - Educate Uber + Lyft Drivers:** A drawing shows a car and a person on a bike.
 - Make Park St really safe for pedestrians:** A drawing shows a street layout with a car and a person on a bike.
- The notes are written in various colors of ink (blue, black, red) and include many small drawings and diagrams. The board is covered with these notes, with some overlapping others.

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MAP COMMENTS

The final input activity involved participants annotating maps of Alameda with pens, pencils, and sticky notes to indicate locations where people have difficulty or feel unsafe walking or bicycling in Alameda (see **Error! Reference source not found.** and Figure 12). A question sheet was displayed beside the map to help spark conversation, which included:

- Where do you feel safe walking and biking in Alameda now?
- Are there specific locations where you do not feel comfortable walking and biking? What concerns you about these locations?
- Specifically, which locations should the City improve access to?

Toole Design staff will input comments from the map into the project's online map, and these comments will inform draft recommendations for Alameda's active transportation network.

Generally, comments focused on the following:

Bicycling-Related Comments

- Current on-street bicycle infrastructure is disconnected, feels unsafe, and serves few destinations.

Walking-Related Comments

- Existing sidewalks are too narrow.



Figure 117. Pedestrian Network Map

Intersection and Crossing-Related Comments

- Intersections are dangerous and stressful.
- There are long stretches of roadways (often near schools) without signalized crossings, and it is difficult for people of all ages and abilities to cross the street.

User-Related Comments

- There is a lack of awareness and respect between drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, skateboarders, and scooter riders.
- Motor vehicles travel above the speed limit on long stretches of streets without traffic signals.
- Drivers use some residential streets as cut-throughs.

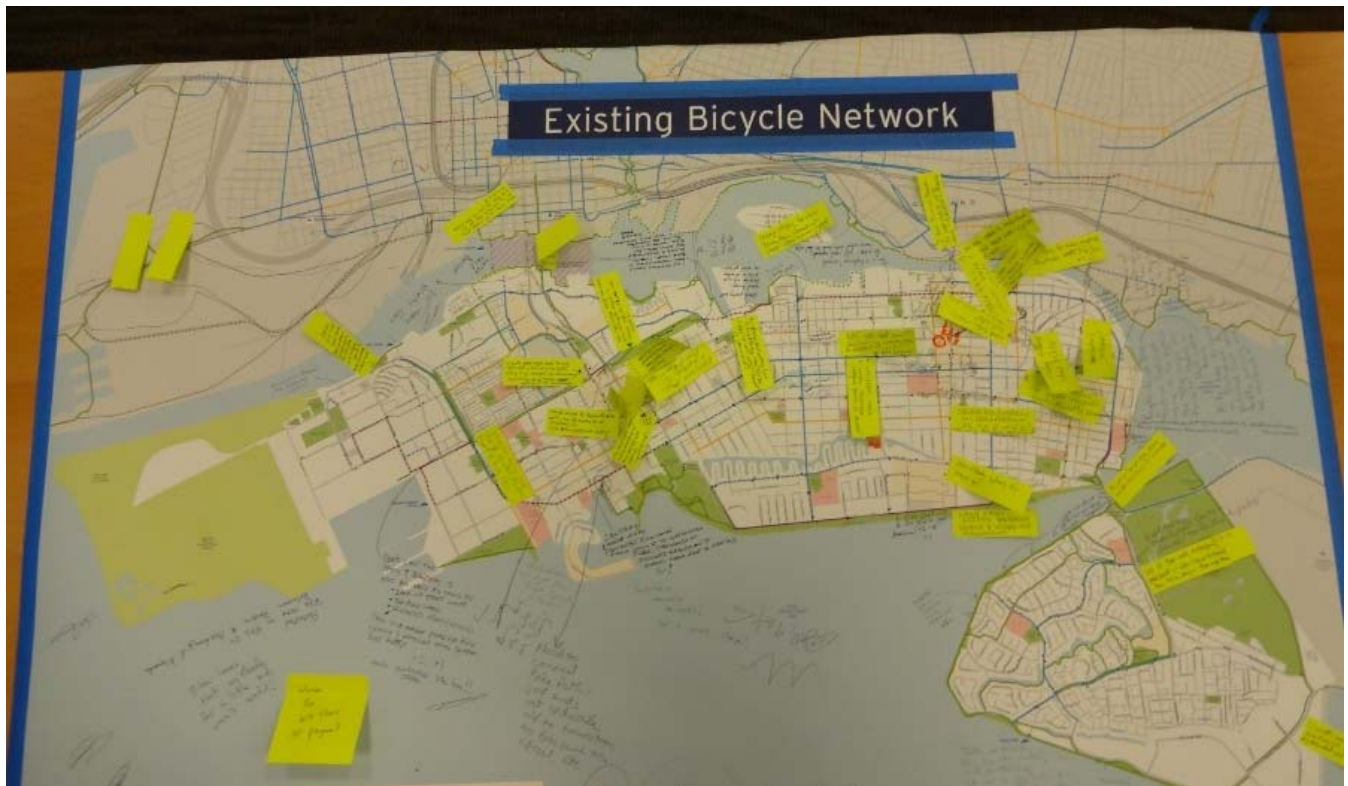


Figure 12. Bicycle Network Map

KIDS' ACTIVITIES

Kids were welcome at this event, and many people brought their children. Children of all ages were able to participate through a variety of activities, and a well-used kids table was filled with active transportation-oriented coloring materials and stickers (see Figure). Kids were also encouraged to participate in all of the other input activities, either with or without their parents. Many children helped their parents draw or write ideas for the “My Best Idea to Make Streets Safer” activity. The “Build A Street” activity was also kid-friendly.



Figure 13. Children Coloring at the Kids Table

EQUITY EVALUATION

This section provides an opportunity for reflecting on how well the Open House integrated equity and inclusivity into the event.

PARTICIPATION AT THE OPEN HOUSE

Participation at the Open House was evaluated based on several demographic components, including age, race/ethnicity and language, household composition, and socio-economic background.

- **Age:** There was a fairly good representation of people of all ages at the event. There were many young children and a few small groups of teenagers. While there were some older adults, there were not many, and it was brought up by several community members that we should make sure to engage the older adult population of Alameda.
- **Race/Ethnicity and language:** A visual scan of the room indicated that the majority of participants appeared to be white plus there were some Asian-Americans; however, no formal demographic survey was completed. Some of the activities were provided for people who speak Spanish and Chinese, but there were not Spanish or Chinese translators present, nor were the Open House outreach materials (e.g., flyer) provided in Chinese or Spanish. None of the activities offered in different languages were filled out in different languages.
- **Household composition:** There appeared to be a good mix of single adults and adults with families.
- **Socio-Economic background:** While it is useful to understand whether the people who attended the Open House were from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, this type of information was not collected at the event.
- **Geographic representation:** Since the meeting sign-in sheet requested addresses, the City can informally evaluate how well the different areas of Alameda were represented. Of the 85 people who provided addresses, 27% live west of Sherman, 25% live between Sherman and Willow, 41% live east of Willow, and 7% live on Bay Farm Island.

NEXT STEPS

Toole Design is interested in the City's feedback about the inclusivity in the Open House and equity implications, especially as we look forward to planning the focus group meetings which could include participation from:

- Non-white populations
- Older adults
- People with different mobility limitations
- People who may not speak English as their primary language