

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY & WALKABILITY IN CRENSHAW/LEIMERT PARK



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Safe Transportation
Research & Education Center

SafeTREC

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INTRODUCTION

The Crenshaw/Leimert Park neighborhood of the City of Los Angeles was identified as a focus community for a Community Pedestrian Safety Training, in collaboration with Crenshaw Walks, based on residents' interest in pedestrian safety and walkability, as well as recent and planned active transportation improvements in and around the neighborhood.

Following additional conversations with the Active Transportation and District Operations Divisions of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), Los Angeles Bureau of Street Services (LABSS), Los Angeles Department of City Planning, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), Community Health Councils, Inc., Community Intelligence, LLC, Crenshaw Walks, Prevention Institute, Ride in Living Color, Ride On Bike Co-Op, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, and TRUST South LA, the community invited the University of California at Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC) and California Walks (Cal Walks) to Crenshaw/Leimert Park to facilitate a community-driven pedestrian safety action-planning workshop. Cal Walks facilitated the workshop on August 22, 2015, which consisted of: 1) an overview of multidisciplinary approaches to improve pedestrian safety; 2) two walkability assessments of Crenshaw Boulevard, King Boulevard, and other neighborhood streets; and 3) small group action planning discussions to facilitate the development of community-prioritized recommendations to inform the City's ongoing active transportation efforts—including implementation of the Crenshaw Streetscape Plan; planning for pedestrian connections to the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line; and ensuring potential development in the neighborhood supports a safe and walkable community. This report summarizes the workshop proceedings, as well as ideas identified during the process and recommendations for pedestrian safety projects, policies, and programs.

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 on how to collaborate effectively 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 (the 6 E's: Empowerment & Equity, Evaluation, Engineering, Enforcement, Education, Encouragement) to address and improve pedestrian safety conditions and concerns. 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 Crenshaw/Leimert Park

High Traffic Speeds & Wide Streets

The major thoroughfares through the neighborhood are Crenshaw Boulevard and King Boulevard—both wide streets with high traffic volumes and 4-6 lanes. The current street configuration prioritizes the movement of automobiles in accordance with the Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2035. However, the Mobility Plan also designates sections of Crenshaw Boulevard as a transit and pedestrian priority street and encourages the following implementation of street improvements to foster walking and transit use. Despite these designations, the current street configuration presents many challenges for people walking and taking transit in the neighborhood, including long crossing distances, lack of curb extensions, lack of pedestrian safety islands, and faded crosswalk markings.



VERY WIDE ARTERIAL STREETS PRESENT CHALLENGES FOR PEOPLE CROSSING

Accessibility Challenges throughout Neighborhood Streets



While sidewalks are present and wide along the neighborhood’s major thoroughfares and residential streets, many accessibility challenges exist throughout, especially in conjunction with the construction of the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line. For example, many residential neighborhood streets lack ADA-compliant curb ramps and the placement of accessible pedestrian signals is not ADA-compliant, which puts them out of reach for people utilizing mobility assistance devices.

LACK OF CURB RAMPS AND PEDESTRIAN SIGNAL PUSHBUTTONS PLACED IN INACCESSIBLE LOCATIONS PRESENT CHALLENGES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES OR MOBILITY ISSUES

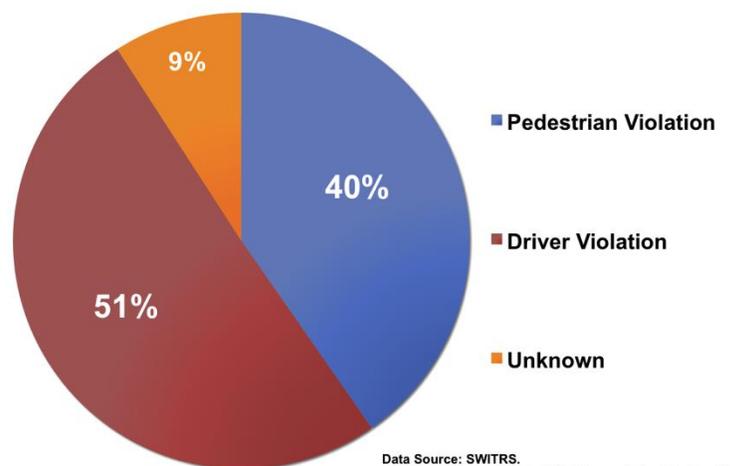
Lack of Continuous Bicycle Facilities Contribute to User Conflicts on Sidewalk

The lack of continuous bicycle facilities on Crenshaw Boulevard and King Boulevard results in bicyclists using the sidewalk as a safe refuge from fast moving traffic. This invites unnecessary conflict between pedestrians and bicyclists on the sidewalk, especially near transit stops where there are large numbers of bus riders boarding and alighting.

Crenshaw/Leimart Park’s Pedestrian Collision History

Between 2010-2014, there were 186 pedestrian collisions in Crenshaw/Leimert Park,¹ including 7 fatalities and 17 severe injuries—an alarmingly high number of pedestrian collisions given the neighborhood’s compact size. Pedestrian collisions during this time period occurred throughout the neighborhood, though many are clustered along Crenshaw Boulevard, King Boulevard, Leimert Boulevard, Colliseum Street, La Brea Avenue, La Cienega Boulevard, and Rodeo Road. Roughly 51% of pedestrian collisions in Crenshaw/Leimert Park can be attributed to a driver violation, while 40% can be attributed to pedestrian violations. The top two Primary Collision Factors (PCF) in terms of driver violations were: Pedestrian Right-of-Way

Pedestrian Collisions by Primary Collision Factor (PCF), (2010-2014)



Data Source: SWITRS. Collision data for 2013 and 2014 is provisional and not final.

¹ Collision data for 2013 and 2014 are provisional and not final.

Violations² (66%) and Unsafe Speed (15%)—accounting for over 80% of driver violations found to be the PCF in pedestrian collisions. For pedestrian violations, the top two PCFs were: Failure to Yield to Drivers when Outside a Marked or Unmarked Crosswalk³ (56%) and Walking on the Roadway⁴ (21%).



PARTICIPANTS LEARN THE 6 E'S APPROACH TO PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

AUGUST 22 WORKSHOP

Community-based organizations requested a workshop to 1) provide City/County staff, community organizations, and residents with a toolkit for promoting pedestrian safety and walkability to inform future comprehensive active transportation planning and improvement efforts, including the planning for pedestrian connections to the Crenshaw/LAX

light rail line currently under construction and implementation of the Crenshaw Streetscape

Plan; 2) foster an open and collaborative relationship between community groups, residents, and City/County of Los Angeles agencies; and 3) develop consensus pedestrian safety priorities and actionable next steps for the Crenshaw/Leimert Park neighborhood.

The workshop was hosted from 9:30 am-2:00 pm with lunch and childcare provided to encourage community resident participation; residents were encouraged to join at any point during the workshop. Nineteen (19) individuals attended the workshop, representing a wide variety of organizations and the community-at-large, including:

- Council Member Marqueece Harris-Dawson & Staff
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)
- Community Health Councils
- Community Intelligence, LLC
- Crenshaw Walks
- Prevention Institute
- Ride in Living Color



COUNCIL MEMBER MARQUEECE HARRIS-DAWSON ENCOURAGES PARTICIPANTS TO WORK WITH HIS OFFICE AND THE CITY TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND WALKABILITY

² Pedestrian Right-of-Way Violations are defined as instances where a driver fails to yield to a pedestrian in a marked or unmarked crosswalk when the pedestrian has the right of way (e.g., when the pedestrian has a “Walk” signal at a signalized intersection).

³ Pedestrians have the right-of-way in marked and unmarked crossings, and drivers are legally required to yield to pedestrians in these instances. However, when pedestrians cross outside of marked or unmarked crossings, pedestrians must yield the right-of-way to drivers. This is not the same as the term “jaywalking,” which refers to crossing outside of a marked or unmarked crossing between two signalized intersections. A pedestrian is legally able to cross outside of a marked or unmarked crossing between two intersections where one or none of the intersections is signalized but only if the pedestrian yields the right-of-way to oncoming drivers.

⁴ Where sidewalks or other physically separated pedestrian facilities do not exist, pedestrians are permitted to walk on the roadway but only on their left-hand side. This violation may either refer to pedestrians walking on the roadway where sidewalks do exist or to pedestrians walking with their back to traffic where sidewalks do not exist.

- Ride On Bike Co-Op
- Safe Routes to School National Partnership
- Unity Sports
- Local Residents

Reflections from Walkability Assessment

Walkability assessments were conducted along major streets including Crenshaw Boulevard and King Boulevard, as well as minor streets, such as Stocker Street, Degnan Boulevard, Santa Rosalia Drive, and Marlton Avenue. Participants were asked to 1) observe infrastructure conditions and the behavior of all road users; 2) apply strategies learned from the 6 E's presentation that could help overcome infrastructure deficiencies and unsafe driver, pedestrian, and bicyclist behavior in Crenshaw/Leimert Park; and 3)

identify positive community assets and strategies which can build upon these assets.

Many participants expressed how the assessment was an eye-opening experience, by enabling participants to shift from a driver perspective to someone on foot. Following the walkability assessment, the participants shared the following reflections:

- **Vibrant Street Life at Leimert Park Village:** Participants observed and recounted the vibrant street life and activities at Leimert Park Village, including the weekly farmers market. Participants also lauded the recently opened Leimert Park People Street Plaza as a wonderful positive asset for the community at large, particularly in how it celebrates the neighborhood's cultural roots. Moreover, the street-oriented businesses in Leimert Park Village contributed to a safe and bustling street environment for people walking.
- **Abundant Parks & Open Space:** Participants highlighted the numerous parks and open space preserves located close to the neighborhood—including Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, Norman O. Houston Park, Stocker Corridor Trail, Rueben Ingold Parkway, Monteith Park, Jim Gilliam Park, and Ladera Park.



PARTICIPANTS OBSERVING INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITIONS AND DRIVER/PEDESTRIAN BEHAVIORS DURING WALKABILITY ASSESSMENT

Unfortunately, signage and wayfinding is lacking at the neighborhood level to direct residents and visitors to access these wonderful recreational facilities for walking and biking.

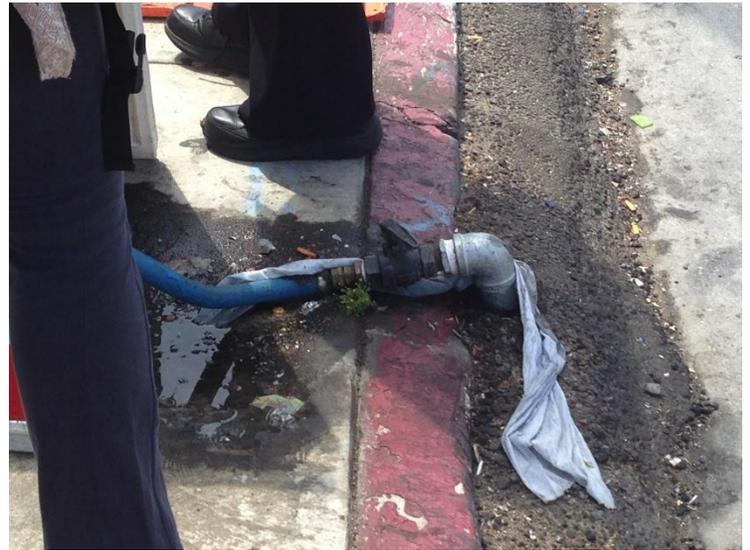
- **Challenges Crossing Major Thoroughfares:** Participants noted the high volume of traffic on major arterials in the neighborhood, including Crenshaw Boulevard, King Boulevard, and Stocker Street,



HIGH TRAFFIC VOLUMES COMPOUNDED BY CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES; DRIVERS CAN BE SEEN BLOCKING THE CROSSWALK AND INTERSECTION

and commented that they perceived traffic volumes to be especially high due to construction activities. Participants noted several challenges with crossing these streets, including the long crossing distances, faded crosswalk markings, and wide turning radii.

- **Construction Barriers & Quality of Life Impacts:** Participants directly observed the impacts of the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line construction on pedestrian mobility, access, and circulation through the neighborhood during the assessment, including exposed water pipes on Crenshaw Boulevard between King Boulevard and Stocker Street that made walking challenging. Additionally, the east side of Crenshaw Boulevard was closed around the construction area for the station, though signage and a temporary path were provided. Participants noted the lack of construction signage and clear delineation of spaces contributed to a chaotic environment, as well as commonplace neglect through littering and dumping in the construction zone.



CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES NEGATIVELY IMPACTING PEDESTRIAN MOBILITY AND CONTRIBUTES TO SENSE OF NEIGHBORHOOD NEGLECT

- **Lack of Shade on Crenshaw Boulevard:** Participants noted the lack of shade along Crenshaw Boulevard, due in part to the removal of dozens of mature trees to enable the movement of the space shuttle Endeavor to the California Science Center in 2012. Furthermore, the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line construction has removed an additional hundreds of mature trees on Crenshaw Boulevard. Though there are plans and commitments from the California Science Center and LA Metro to replant more trees than the number removed, these tree plantings will not occur until after completion of the light rail line construction (expected 2019).

Community Resident Recommendations

Following the walkability assessment, Cal Walks facilitated small-group action planning discussions. Workshop participants were tasked with developing concrete recommendations—based on the 6 E's of pedestrian safety and walkability—to 1) help implement the Crenshaw Streetscape Plan and 2) detail strategies to improve pedestrian access to the planned Crenshaw/LAX light rail stations in the neighborhood. Workshop participants provided the following recommendations:

- **Implementation of the Crenshaw Streetscape Plan**
 - **Background:** Participants were asked to identify what they viewed as the best funding sources to implement the Streetscape Plan; identify what aspects of the plan should be considered for priority implementation as soon as possible; and identify aspects of the plan that should be implemented in conjunction with the light rail construction.
 - **Funding:** In addition to the developer-based mechanisms outlined in the Streetscape Plan to enable implementation, participants identified and encourage the City to explore the following sources of funding to accelerate implementation of the Streetscape Plan: state Active Transportation Program (ATP); Measure R2 (if passed); Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program; partnering with the existing Leimert Park Village/Crenshaw Corridor Business Improvement District (BID), particularly for maintenance needs; public-private partnerships, especially with local universities and private foundations (such as the Surdna Foundation).
 - **Accessibility:** Participants stressed the need to prioritize accessibility in the implementation of the pedestrian improvement strategies identified within the Streetscape Plan (wider sidewalks; wider crosswalks; crosswalk ADA ramps; curb extensions; median refuge islands).
 - **Traffic Calming:** Participants strongly supported curb extensions as a treatment with multiple traffic calming and pedestrian safety benefits. Participants also supported improving other land use/environmental cues to help calm traffic and unsafe behaviors, including street trees, parked cars as a buffer, bike lanes, and planted medians.
 - **Placemaking at Planned Transit Stops:** Recognizing the transformative nature of the planned light rail stations in the community, workshop participants stressed leveraging the Streetscape Plan to implement placemaking strategies at these stops, as well as at major bus stops in the neighborhood. Participants identified the need to create stations that are inviting, well-lit at night, provide restrooms, and secure bicycle parking. Participants also expressed interest in replicating projects like the Leimert Park People Street Plaza to reclaim and create additional open space in the community, particularly along Degnan Boulevard between West 43rd Street and West 43rd Place.
 - **Increase Partnerships with Schools:** Participants identified the need for City agencies involved with the Streetscape Plan to partner and better engage the school communities in the neighborhood, particularly regarding crosswalk placement and needs as it relates to student travel to/from school.
 - **Increase Partnerships with Community Advocates:** Since numerous City agencies have been and will continue to be involved with the Streetscape Plan and its implementation, workshop participants voiced the need to work more close with City agencies to better understand the various processes guiding the Plan's Implementation. With such increased understanding and capacity, community advocates will be better equipped to assist City agencies in moving ahead with implementation.
 - **Public Art:** Workshop participants were strongly supportive of installing more public art through the Streetscape Plan and would be interested in working with the Department of Cultural Affairs on decorative pavers, street light fixtures, sculptures, street furniture (bus shelters, benches, trash receptacles), tree wells, bike racks, and planters.

- **Pedestrian Access to the Crenshaw/LAX Line**

- **Background:** Participants were asked to identify priority near-term improvements that should be pursued to lay the groundwork for seamless pedestrian access to the planned light rail stations, as well as improvements that should be implemented during and/or shortly after light rail construction.
- **Quality of Life at Transit Stations:** Participants identified the need to create safe and inviting transit stations that are well-lit at night and provide bathrooms, trash receptacles, and water fountains.
- **Shade Trees:** As noted during the walkability assessment, there is a marked lack of shade on Crenshaw Boulevard due to the removal of mature shade trees. Participants reiterated their support for the replacement of the removed shade trees but also recommend exploring other shade alternatives given the long timeline required for a tree to mature and provide a shady canopy.



PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED IN ACTION PLANNING DISCUSSION TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO THE CRENSHAW/LAX LIGHT RAIL LINE

- **Improving Routes to Transit:** In addition to transit station improvements highlighted above, participants identified the need to provide transit riders with pedestrian-scale lighting, water fountains, and trash receptacles along commonly used routes to access the transit stations.

- **Wayfinding/Signage:** Participants supported expanding the Walk this Way LA wayfinding signage sited at the Leimert Park People Street Plaza throughout the neighborhood, particularly in conjunction with LA Metro signage. Participants supported highlighting community assets and local businesses, in addition to identifying transit stops and stations.

- **Maintenance:** Participants identified the need to properly account for maintenance needs at the outset, with a focus on maintaining the cleanliness of station elevators, bathrooms, and trash receptacles.

California Walks/SafeTREC Recommendations

California Walks and SafeTREC also submit the following recommendations for consideration by community advocates, the City of Los Angeles, and LA Metro:

- **Formalize Partnerships between Community Advocates to Form Community-Based Coalition Focused on Pedestrian Safety & Walkability:** The community advocacy groups who helped organize the workshop have a long history of collaborating with one another on a variety of quality of life issues impacting the neighborhood. Cal Walks and SafeTREC recommend these community advocates organize into a formal coalition that has an explicit focus on pedestrian safety and walkability to further strengthen partnerships with City/County agencies and to engage residents.

The coalition could build upon already existing resources to educate, inspire, and engage residents, such as Active Streets LA Toolkit,⁵ created by the LADOT, LA County Department of Public Health, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, and TRUST South LA.

- **Cultivate Partnership with the Crenshaw/LAX Community Leadership Council to Advance Pedestrian Safety & Walkability:** The Crenshaw/LAX Community Leadership Council is an advisory body appointed by Metro to represent the diverse interests of residents and business owners for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Project. Cal Walks and SafeTREC recommend community advocates organize and present on the Community Pedestrian Safety Training and the community's recommendations for better integrating pedestrian safety, access, and walkability into the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Project as construction continues.
- **Organize First/Last Mile Walking & Biking Tour:** Cal Walks and SafeTREC recommend community advocates work with LA Metro and the Crenshaw/LAX Community Leadership Council to host a walking and biking tour from different points in the neighborhood to the planned transit stations. These tours could highlight pedestrian and bicyclist access and safety needs for LA Metro planners and Community Leadership Council. LA Metro and Community Leadership Council could also conclude the Tour with a guided preview of the stations in mid-construction to educate residents about the project and generate familiarity and excitement with the planned transit stations.
- **Cultivate Partnership with Neighborhood Councils to Advance Pedestrian Safety & Walkability:** Specifically as it relates to the Crenshaw Streetscape Plan, Cal Walks and SafeTREC recommend community advocates organize and establish partnerships with the Neighborhood Councils along the Crenshaw Boulevard Corridor—including the West Adams Neighborhood Council, United Neighborhoods Neighborhood Council, Empowerment Congress West Area, Park Mesa Heights Community Council—to help ensure implementation of the Streetscape Plan as development occurs, as well as to identify non-development opportunities to fast track much needed pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements along the corridor.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the Crenshaw/Leimert Park neighborhood for inviting us into their community and for hosting the Community Pedestrian Safety Training. Thank you to Randal Henry, Manal Aboelata, and Adé Neff for their full commitment to and leadership of community-driven transportation planning and meaningful engagement with community residents. We would also like to thank Community Health Councils for generously donating the meeting space for the workshop, as well as Community Intelligence, LLC and Prevention Institute for generously donating lunch for workshop participants.

We would like to acknowledge Council Member Marqueece Harris-Dawson and the community members whose attendance of the workshop and 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 (SafeTREC) from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

⁵ Available at http://la-bike.org/sites/default/files/Websitefiles/ActiveStreetsLA_Toolkit.pdf