

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE SAFETY IN THE COMMUNITY OF FLORENCE-FIRESTONE



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By Miha Tomuta, Wendy Ortiz, California Walks;
Jill Cooper, Katherine Chen, UC Berkeley SafeTREC

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BY MIHA TOMUTA, WENDY ORTIZ, CALIFORNIA WALKS;
JILL COOPER, KATHERINE CHEN, UC BERKELEY SAFETREC

INTRODUCTION

At the invitation of the YWCA Supervisor Gloria Molina Community Empowerment Center of Greater Los Angeles, the University of California at Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC) and California Walks (Cal Walks) facilitated a community-driven pedestrian and bicycle safety action-planning workshop in the unincorporated community of Florence-Firestone to improve pedestrian safety, bicycle safety, walkability, and bikeability across the County. Cal Walks facilitated the workshop on Wednesday, July 26 from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm which consisted of: 1) an overview of multidisciplinary approaches to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety; 2) walkability and bikeability assessments along two key routes; and 3) small group action-planning discussions to facilitate the development of community-prioritized recommendations to inform Florence-Firestone active



transportation efforts. In preparation for the workshop, Cal Walks conducted a site visit on Monday, June 19. This report summarizes the workshop proceedings, as well as ideas identified during the process and recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle safety projects, policies, and programs.

BACKGROUND

Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training Program

The Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training (CPBST) 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 CPBST program is to train local neighborhood residents and safety advocates on how to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and to strengthen their collaboration with local officials and agency staff to make communities safer and more pleasant to walk and bike. For each training, the program convenes a multi-sector, multi-disciplinary local planning committee to tailor and refine the training's curriculum and focus to meet the community's needs. Additionally, Cal Walks staff conduct pre-training site visits to collect on-the-ground observations of existing walking and biking conditions to inform the training's scope and focus.

The half-day training is designed to provide participants with both pedestrian and bicycle safety best practices and a range of proven strategies (the 6 E's: Empowerment & Equity, Evaluation, Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Encouragement) to address and improve pedestrian and bicycle safety conditions and concerns. Participants are then guided on a walkability and bikeability assessment of nearby streets before setting pedestrian and bicycle safety priorities and actionable next steps for their community.

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

www.californiawalks.org/projects/cpbst and <https://safetrec.berkeley.edu/programs/cpbst>

Selected Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety Conditions in Florence-Firestone

HIGH SPEEDS AND WIDE ROADS

Along two of the principal roads in the community—Compton Avenue and Nadeau Street—the posted speed limits are 30 and 35 miles per hour (mph) respectively. Near school zones on Nadeau Street and Antwerp Avenue, the posted speed limit is 25 mph. However, Cal Walks staff observed drivers traveling at much higher speeds during our site visit. As part of the training, a community speed assessment of vehicle traffic traveling southbound down Compton Avenue was conducted at 5:00 pm on the day of the training at the intersection of Compton Avenue and Nadeau Street, which revealed an average speed of 45.7 mph with 72.3% of drivers, whose speed was recorded, traveling above the posted speed limit of 30 mph. Both Compton Avenue and Nadeau Street are wide roads, 63 feet and 60 feet



Compton Avenue traveling north towards 83rd Street.

respectively, with two travel lanes in each direction, a left turn lane, parallel parking in various locations along both sides of the street, sidewalks, and a mix of unmarked and marked crosswalks.

High speeds and unsafe driver behavior were also observed along several residential streets, including on Parmelee Avenue and near Parmelee Avenue Elementary School. At several residential intersections, circular skid-mark patterns indicated drivers were performing “doughnuts” on the roadway. Research has demonstrated that wide streets and wide travel lanes are associated with higher vehicle speeds¹, which affect the safety of people walking and bicycling.

¹ See Kay Fitzpatrick, Paul Carlson, Marcus Brewer, and Mark Wooldridge, “Design Factors That Affect Driver Speed on Suburban Arterials”: *Transportation Research Record* 1751 (2000):18–25.

POOR ROADWAY CONDITIONS



Faded road markings and debris in Florence-Firestone.

During the site visit staff observed poor pavement conditions in the area around the Florence-Firestone Community Service Center, including potholes, debris, and faded road and crosswalk markings along arterials and residential streets. In some instances, the stop bar and crosswalk were barely visible, resulting in drivers failing to respect pedestrians using marked crossings. We also observed trash, especially plastic bags, accumulated along road gutters and near crossing areas.

INADEQUATE ENHANCEMENTS FOR MARKED PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS AND UNMARKED CROSSINGS

During the site visit and the workshop, we observed drivers failing to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians in marked and unmarked crosswalks. Residents noted that even in marked crosswalks with high-visibility pedestrian signage (e.g., on Nadeau Street/Parmelee Avenue and South Hooper Avenue/74th Street) with an overhead pedestrian flashing beacon, drivers often refuse to yield when the beacon is lit and pedestrians are already crossing. Drivers routinely stop in the pedestrian crosswalk when stopping at a stop sign or making a turn. Several high-visibility crosswalks can be found in Florence-Firestone but the majority of crossings are unmarked or standard transverse crosswalks, which can be difficult for drivers to see when traveling at high speeds.



A driver stops in the crosswalk before making a right turn.

BICYCLE NETWORK GAPS AND LACK OF SIGNAGE



One of only several bike route signs in the community.

In the area around the Florence-Firestone Community Service Center, there are new bike lanes on Hooper Avenue. Aside from this bike lane, there is a general lack of bicycle facilities in the area, resulting in a discontinuous bicycle network. The overall lack of bicycle lanes contributes to a feedback loop where many residents who bicycle do not feel comfortable using bike lanes or do not know how to safely use the bike lanes and where drivers often mistake the new bike lanes for an additional driving lane. There is also limited bicycle route signage on Hooper Avenue. Three different signs, including bike lane signage on East 81st Street and Hooper Avenue, were placed along a street curve, making it difficult for vehicles to see. We also observed several bicyclists riding on the sidewalk or riding in the bike lanes against traffic on Hooper Avenue. Residents noted that a main safety concern for people who bike riding on Hooper Avenue and the adjacent streets is the high speed of drivers.

SIDEWALKS IN DISREPAIR AND CHALLENGES WITH ILLEGAL DUMPING



Various sidewalk conditions in Florence-Firestone.

Sidewalks in the community are in various states of disrepair and are obstructed due to vegetation and debris from illegal dumping. Low hanging tree branches block the view of the street, as well as the view of drivers backing out of driveways, while overgrown bushes and grass narrowed the walking space, making it difficult to walk and navigate, especially for parents with strollers and those using assisted mobility devices. The sidewalks

on residential streets are also narrowed by illegal dumping and debris. Various types of debris from household items, vehicle parts, business signs and displays, and trash were observed during the walk assessment.

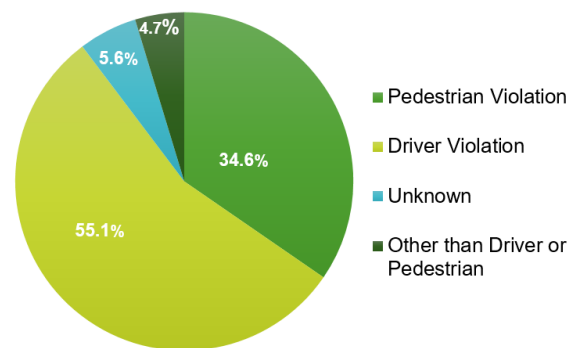
The sidewalks along Compton Avenue in the community's commercial district are narrowed by store signage (sandwich boards) and displays, store shade structures, and items for sale. The sidewalks are also narrowed and obstructed by various types of street furniture, from fire hydrants, light poles, bus shelters, and utility poles and anchors. Utility poles and anchors, which are light in color and missing reflectors, present numerous challenges for people walking in the community, especially at night.

Sidewalks in the community, especially in the residential areas, varied in width. Widths varied depending on the presence or absence of a landscaping buffer between the sidewalk and the street. In some areas, landscaping buffers contained only grass and no trees, while in other areas the landscaping buffer and tree well had been paved over, creating more room to walk but offering no shade to pedestrians.

Pedestrian and Bicyclist Collision History

Between 2006-2015², there were 450 people killed or injured in 384 pedestrian collisions in the Florence-Firestone unincorporated community of Los Angeles County. Over the 10-year period between 2006-2015, pedestrian collisions appear to be on a downward trajectory. During the same time period, there were 342 people killed or injured in 333 bicycle collisions in the Florence-Firestone unincorporated community of Los Angeles County. Over the 10-year period between 2006-2015, bicycle collisions appear to be on a downward trajectory.

Pedestrian Collisions by Primary Collision Factor (PCF)



Between 2011-2015, there were 221 people killed or injured in 185 pedestrian collisions, including, 13 fatalities and 31 severe injuries, with collisions concentrated on major corridors like Florence Ave. and Firestone Ave. Approximately 45.3% of these collisions can be attributed to a driver violation and 37.6% can be attributed to a pedestrian violation. Driver violations largely included failure to yield to pedestrian right-of-way³, while pedestrian violations were primarily failure of the pedestrian to yield to vehicle traffic when crossing outside a crosswalk⁴.

² Please note 2014 and 2015 data is provisional.

³ 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).

⁴ 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

Between 2011-2015, there were 213 people killed or injured in 206 bicycle collisions, including, 2 fatalities and 9 severe injuries, with collisions concentrated on major corridors like Florence Ave. and Firestone Ave. For bicycle collisions, 33% are attributed to bicycling on the wrong side of the road (against traffic) and an additional 28.6% are attributed to a right-of-way violation either by a bicyclist or a driver⁵.

JULY 26 WORKSHOP

The YWCA Supervisor Gloria Molina Community Empowerment Center of Greater Los Angeles requested a workshop to 1) provide County staff, community organizations, and residents with a toolkit for promoting pedestrian and bicycle safety to inform future active transportation projects; 2) strengthen working relationships between various agencies and organizations and other stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes for the residents of Florence-Firestone; and 3) develop consensus regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety priority and actionable next steps.

The workshop was hosted from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm, and dinner, childcare, and simultaneous English-to-Spanish interpretation were provided to maximize community participation. Twenty-nine (29) individuals attended the workshop, including representatives from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health-PLACE Program, the Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Los Angeles County Department of Planning, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, the Los Angeles Educational Partnership (LAEP) and the Florence-Firestone Community Service Center, and Florence-Firestone residents.

Reflections from Walkability and Bikeability Assessment

As part of the workshop, participants conducted walkability and bikeability assessments along two routes:

- Route 1 traveled North on Parmelee Avenue around Parmelee Elementary School and South on South Hooper Avenue.
- Route 2 traveled West on Nadeau Street, South on Naomi Avenue, and North on South Hooper 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 concerns and unsafe driver, pedestrian, and bicyclist behavior; and 3) identify positive community assets and strategies which can be built upon. Following the walkability and bikeability assessment, the participants shared the following reflections:

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.

⁵ The California Vehicle Code 21200(a) specifies that a person riding a bicycle "has all the rights and is subject to all the provisions applicable to the driver of a vehicle..." Accordingly, some primary collision factors are ambiguous as to whether the driver or bicyclist committed the violation without examining individual traffic incident reports.

BICYCLE SIGNAGE, BICYCLE NETWORK & BICYCLISTS BEHAVIOR



A bicyclist rides against traffic in the bike lane on Hooper Avenue while another rides on the sidewalk.

Participants who walked both assessment routes observed unsafe bicyclists behavior, including bicyclists riding on the sidewalk to avoid sharing the road with drivers and bicyclists riding the wrong way in the bike lane. They also observed drivers crossing over into the bicycle lane or driving in the bicycle lane and treating it as an additional driving lane on Hooper Avenue. A lack of visible bicycle lane and bicycle route signage and wayfinding was also observed. Participants also noted a lack of bicycle routes and connectivity to neighboring communities' bicycle lanes and regional networks.

DRIVER BEHAVIOR AT CROSSINGS

Participants expressed concern that drivers consistently failed to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians in marked, unmarked, and even signalized crosswalks. At South Hooper Avenue and 74th Street, participants observed a driver continue to drive through the enhanced pedestrian crossing despite the pedestrian activating the pedestrian flashing beacon. Similarly, at Nadeau Street and Parmelee Avenue, drivers do not respect the pedestrian right-of-way in the marked crosswalk. Participants noted this is a common occurrence in the community, even in school zones. At Parmelee Avenue and E 77th Street, there is a sight distance issue for drivers due to an advanced stop bar that is located in the ADA walking path.

POOR SIDEWALK CONDITIONS

On both assessment routes, participants observed poor sidewalk conditions due to overgrown vegetation encroaching on the sidewalk; illegal dumping, debris, and trash blocking the sidewalk; and street furniture like light poles, trees, and utility boxes narrowing the sidewalk. Participants also shared that stray, aggressive dogs in the neighborhood make the walking experience feel less comfortable and safe. Along Route 2, participants observed several large cracks in the sidewalk and uneven pavement, including a large asphalt lip at South Hooper Avenue and East 76th Street. In several locations, graffiti was found on the sidewalk, utility boxes, and buildings.



A sidewalk with and without a landscaping buffer.

LACK OF CONTROLLED OR ENHANCED UNCONTROLLED CROSSINGS



Unmarked crossing in Florence-Firestone.

Participants who walked to Parmelee Avenue Elementary noted that many intersections near schools, churches, and community centers lacked marked crosswalks, pedestrian crossing signage, or other traffic control devices. These conditions contributed motorists consistently driving through marked and unmarked crosswalks. In many locations where marked crosswalks exist, they do not high-visibility crosswalk markings and are faded and difficult to see as a driver.

LACK OF A DESIGNATED SCHOOL DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP ZONE

Participants on Route 2 expressed concern about the lack of a designated school drop-off and pick-up zone at Parmelee Avenue Elementary, which results in double parking in front of the school and unsafe driving behavior from parents, including speeding and U-turns in the residential neighborhood with relatively narrow streets.



One of the drop-off and pick-up locations for Parmelee Avenue Elementary School.

Community Resident Recommendations

Following the walkability and bikeability assessment, Cal Walks facilitated small-group action planning discussions. Workshop participants discussed two sets of questions:

- The first set of questions focused on prioritizing infrastructure improvements for reducing the number of injuries and fatalities.
- The second set of questions focused on prioritizing non-infrastructure community-led education and encouragement projects.

Workshop participants provided the following recommendations for overall pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements:

Infrastructure Concerns & Priorities

IMPROVED BICYCLE NETWORK

Participants expressed a need to create a community bicycle route network with additional bike lanes to common community destinations, green bicycle-vehicle conflict zone markings, wayfinding signage, and enhanced roadway markings to make it clear to bicyclists and drivers where bike routes begin and end. Existing bicycle signage is small and hidden by trees, making it difficult for drivers to see. Participants expressed strong support for bike lanes enhanced with green conflict zone markings and believed these enhanced bike lanes will help drivers to notice bike lanes and avoid confusing bike lanes for additional driving lanes.

During the site visit, drivers were observed driving in the bike lanes, preventing people who bike from using the facilities. Bike lanes on Hooper Avenue end at each crosswalk and turn into a right turning vehicle lane, creating a vehicle and bicycle conflict zone.

IMPROVED CROSSING CONDITIONS

Participants identified the need for additional marked crossings and high-visibility crosswalks near schools in the area (Parmelee Elementary, Miramonte Elementary, Edison Middle, Charles Drew Middle), local churches, and community service centers. Participants also identified the intersection of Nadeau Street and Parmelee Avenue for the addition of a rectangular rapid flashing beacon to improve safety for students and parents crossing on their way to and from school. Participants also requested reflective stop sign poles and signs to make them more visible to drivers in these areas.

SPEED SIGNAGE

Participants on Route 2 requested a school zone and driver speed feedback signs be installed near schools, especially near Parmelee Avenue Elementary School, to remind drivers to maintain the school zone speed limit of 25 mph.

COMMUNITY CLEANUP AND BEAUTIFICATION

Participants noted the need for a general community cleanup project to remove debris and trash from the sidewalk and roadway and trim overgrown bushes, grass, and trees. Additionally, they would like to build off existing efforts and continue enhancing blank walls and facades with colorful community-specific murals.

REMOVAL OF PARKING

Residents expressed concern about the narrowness of Naomi Avenue from 83rd Street to Nadeau Street where there is currently vehicle parking on both sides of the street, participants requested that parking be limited to one side of the street to improve traffic flow and safety.

Non-Infrastructure Concerns & Priorities

Participants also identified the following enforcement, education, and encouragement programs that could be implemented to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in Florence-Firestone:

BICYCLE AND DRIVER EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

Participants would like to develop and implement a driver education campaign focused on the new bike lanes on Hooper Avenue to educate drivers about the existence of the bike lanes, the right to use the full lane by people who bike, and how to manage conflict zones with people who bike. Education is also needed for people who bike to educate them on safe cycling skills and the rules of the road.

SAFE ROUTE TO SCHOOLS EDUCATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

With numerous elementary and middle schools located in the area, participants, especially parents, were interested in developing safe walking and biking education materials and implementing Safe Routes to School activities, such as walking school buses and student safety patrol.

Representatives from Los Angeles Education Partners (LAEP) were also interested in developing opportunities for more parent and community involvement in Safe Routes to School efforts and exploring ways to involve youth and the neighboring community of Walnut Park. Participants also hoped to lead their own community walk assessment with key stakeholders from each school.

California Walks/SafeTREC Recommendations

California Walks and SafeTREC also submit the following recommendations for consideration by the County of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles Education Partners, and other community organizations:

TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES

Traffic calming measures—including a road diet along Compton Avenue and Nadeau Street—and the addition of marked and enhanced crossings—including temporary curb extensions can help reduce drivers' speed along these routes to the posted speed limit of 30 or 35 mph. A Compton Avenue road diet project would not only improve access for people who walk and bike along the corridor but also allow drivers to slow down and see the various shops and community amenities located along the street. Traffic calming measures would also improve safety for pedestrians crossing Compton Avenue, improving access to transit stops and other amenities, such as the grocery store. We recommend the County and community collaborate on the development of a Pedestrian Plan for the Florence-Firestone unincorporated area, similar to the one being developed for Walnut Park to identify community needs and priority projects for future funding applications.

BICYCLE CONNECTIVITY AND SIGNAGE AND PARKING

Cal Walks and UC Berkeley SafeTREC commend the County for the recent addition of bike lanes in Florence-Firestone. The bike lanes are the beginning of a much needed bicycle network for Florence-Firestone that will benefit both Florence-Firestone residents and neighboring communities. We encourage the County to complete a bicycle travel demand assessment for the Florence-Firestone community to identify the most needed bicycle routes and possible connections to existing bicycle routes in the area. We also encourage the use of additional markings and/or signage to better highlight the new bike lanes, whether through the use of green paint or additional bike route signage and wayfinding. Workshop participants expressed concern about the safety of people who bike where the bike lanes currently end—we recommend the County consider installing conflict zone markings to highlight these areas of concern for the community.

No bicycle parking was observed during the site visit or walk assessment, so accordingly, we encourage the County to identify areas for bike parking installation in Florence-Firestone.

CROSSING ENHANCEMENTS

Curb ramp designs and conditions varied throughout the community, with the majority of intersections having no curb ramps at all. Where curb ramps were present, they were the older concrete, non-compliant ramps or newer Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant ramps. Some curb ramps were older style apex ramps, directing pedestrians into the intersection rather than directly into the marked or unmarked crosswalk. Cal Walks recommends creating an ADA transition plan specifically for the Florence-Firestone community to prioritize ADA compliant curb ramp updates for school areas, senior areas, community centers, the commercial corridor, near government building, and other areas with high pedestrian volumes.

Cal Walks and SafeTREC also recommend the County work with residents and other community-based organizations to conduct crosswalk audit to identify and inventory which residential intersections near schools, churches, and communities would benefit from installing marked crosswalks and other crossing enhancements. We recommend the use of high-visibility crosswalks near all schools and areas of high pedestrian activity. The

SafeTREC Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) Safe Routes to School viewer tool can help identify intersections near schools with high rates of pedestrian and bicycle injuries and fatalities.

PEDESTRIAN-SCALE LIGHTING

California Walks and SafeTREC recommend the County work with residents and other community-based organizations to conduct a community night-time light assessment to identify and inventory nighttime lighting needs for pedestrians and cyclists, including the addition of pedestrian-scale lighting in nighttime pedestrian areas. A nighttime assessment will also inventory and identify lighting fixtures in need of repair or replacement.

EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Community specific education campaigns focused on illegal dumping and, if necessary, code enforcement action is needed to clean up and reclaim the sidewalk space for pedestrians. Many sidewalks, particularly along larger thoroughfares, have large amounts of trash blocking the walking path. Walk assessment participants were not aware of the County's [SeeClickFix](#) Smartphone app and website for reporting community concerns such as code enforcement violations. More education and outreach is necessary to get educational information and resources, like SeeClickFix out into the community. Residents at the workshop also requested that educational materials and resources, including SeeClickFix be available in Spanish.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Maria Elena Chavez, the Center Director of the YWCA Supervisor Gloria Molina Community Empowerment Center for inviting us into their community and for hosting the Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training. We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of the following Planning Committee members: Miguel Ramos of LA County's Department of Public Health-PLACE Program; Cecilia Quiñones of the Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' office; Jonathan Bell of the LA County Planning Department; Abu Yusuf of the LA County Department of Public Works; Estephania Vazquez of the Los Angeles Educational Partnership (LAEP), and Tony Brooks, Director of the Florence-Firestone Community Service Center.

We would like to also acknowledge the many community members and agencies present at the workshop and their dedication to pedestrian and bicycle safety. Their collective participation meaningfully informed and strengthened the workshop's outcomes.

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