



**CITY OF PALO ALTO
CITY COUNCIL
Special Meeting
Monday, March 03, 2025
Council Chambers & Hybrid
5:30 PM**

Agenda Item

2. Review Draft Safe Streets For All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan; CEQA status – not a project.
Staff Presentation



City Council Staff Report

From: City Manager

Report Type: STUDY SESSION

Lead Department: Transportation

Meeting Date: March 3, 2025

Report #:2409-3522

TITLE

Review Draft Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan; CEQA status – not a project.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and provide feedback on the Draft Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan and Resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the draft Safe Streets for All (“SS4A”) Safety Action Plan and requests feedback on the plan and associated resolution. The Safe System Approach is described below, including future tradeoff considerations that come from the shift to the new roadway safety approach.

BACKGROUND

In late 2023, the City of Palo Alto and its consultant, Fehr & Peers, began the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan. Council received two prior informational reports about the SS4A Safety Action Plan; the first introduced the plan and provided background on the Safe System Approach while the second provided an overview of the collision analysis and stakeholder engagement.¹

The primary goal of this planning effort is to identify proactive, citywide opportunities across the Safe System elements (safe users, safe speeds, safe roads, safe vehicles, and post-crash care) to improve safety for all road users in support of the Vision Zero goal of reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries by 2035, 2040, or another target year to be adopted by the Council.

¹ City Council, November 27, 2023; Agenda Item #18, SR #2309-2039, <https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/api/compilemeetingattachmenthistory/historyattachment/?historyId=36025c95-52b1-4da0-bc8b-fad9df86f7e8> and City Council, April 29, 2024; Agenda Item #3, SR #2404-2839, <https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/api/compilemeetingattachmenthistory/historyattachment/?historyId=79d7c1d2-b1a1-4eb9-acca-039fab914f74>

This Plan complies with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)'s SS4A requirements for a safety action plan² and will make Palo Alto eligible for implementation funding from the annual \$1 billion Safe Streets for All federal funding program as well as other state grants that require such a plan.

ANALYSIS

Safe System Approach

The Safe System Approach is the USDOT's recommended framework to reach zero fatalities and serious injuries on US roadways.³ The major tenants of the Safe System Approach are – death and serious injury is unacceptable, humans make mistakes, humans are vulnerable, responsibility is shared, safety is proactive, and redundancy is crucial. The Safe System Approach highlights the need for the commitment and leadership by City leaders, City staff, and the community to align policies and create a physical environment that accommodates the reality that humans make mistakes and crashes happen, but none have to lead to a death or serious injury. Communities following the Safe System Approach are also advised to adopt the FHWA Safe System Roadway Design Hierarchy, which focuses on managing speeds to community context and then separating users in space and time.⁴ FHWA has also provided alignment tools for adopting communities to use to assess how projects and policies should be adjusted to be consistent with the Safe System framework.⁵ This Plan reflects these recommended practices.



Source: FHWA.

² US Department of Transportation, SS4A Action Plan Components, https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-06/SS4A_Action_Plan_Components.pdf

³ US Department of Transportation, National Roadway Safety Strategy, <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-02/USDOT-National-Roadway-Safety-Strategy.pdf>

⁴ US Department of Transportation & Federal Highway Administration, Safe System Roadway Design Hierarchy, https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2024-01/Safe_System_Roadway_Design_Hierarchy.pdf

⁵ Federal Highway Administration, Safe System Project-Based Alignment Framework, <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths/safe-system-project-based-alignment-framework>, and Federal Highway Administration, Safe System Policy-Based Alignment Framework, <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths/safe-system-policy-based-alignment-framework>

Tradeoff Considerations

Following the Safe System Approach and prioritizing multimodal safety and accessibility in Palo Alto represents a paradigm shift in how transportation decisions will be made in the City. The policies, programs, and procedures recommended in this Plan are more proactive and systemic in nature, and the tradeoff decisions associated with project prioritization and design will reflect the City's commitment to reducing safety risk factors in the transportation system. Program level strategies include:

- Developing a citywide speed management approach and prioritizing interventions to reduce speed in locations with vulnerable road users
 - This could streamline project implementation and focus community engagement on speed reduction treatments and non-safety based decisions.
 - This could lead to additional delay for single occupant vehicles traveling in Palo Alto due to traffic calming strategies applied.
- Developing default tools for separating users in space and time based on the volume, speed, and configuration of the roadway
 - This could streamline project implementation and focus community engagement on speed reduction treatments and non-safety based decisions.
 - This could lead to a reallocation of vehicle travel lanes and/or on-street parking to active transportation facilities.
- Prioritizing safety in all roadway projects planned, funded, and built in the city, including routine maintenance efforts
 - This could lead to auditing and eliminating or re-envisioning projects that add new safety risk to the system.
- Considering safety upstream, with a focus on land use planning, accessibility to key services, transportation demand management, and partnerships with transit providers
 - The City's Housing Element and transit services within the City will be seen as safety focus areas for staff, following a public health-based, population-scale approach.⁶

When these efforts are collaborative and proactive, and especially when they lean on emerging technologies and clear goals and performance metrics, they will allow staff to identify challenges and look for win-win solutions. In other communities, challenges arising late in the process have included concerns regarding emergency vehicles and evacuation, as well as ample and transparent access to project and planning processes and tradeoff decision-making bases. Additionally, communities have faced challenges aligning efforts with the Safe System Approach when they have commitment statements in a Safety Plan but have not accompanied this with sufficient efforts to institutionalize the commitment and reduce barriers to adoption. This staff

⁶ Thinking & Acting Differently for Vision Zero: Applying the Health Impact Pyramid to Roadway Safety, <https://visionzeronetwork.org/applying-the-health-impact-pyramid-to-roadway-safety/>

report, in particular, seeks to provide the transparency on how this Plan will shift staff priorities, focus areas, and the decision-making processes. The public review and community engagement efforts for this draft Plan offer the opportunity to influence the tradeoff process that the final Plan will direct staff to follow.

Draft Safety Action Plan Public Review

The [Draft Safety Action Plan](#) was published on the City's website on December 13, 2024. Staff distributed information about the Draft Plan through the City's project website and citywide communication channels. Public comments will be accepted via the project website through February 14, 2025.⁷

Next Steps

The Palo Alto Safety Action Plan will return to Council for adoption in Spring 2025. For consistency with Federal funding requirements from the SS4A Self-Certification Eligibility Worksheet⁸, staff intend to recommend a resolution that contains a policy that commits to eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries by a specific date. The draft resolution can be found on page 3 of the draft plan.

When the project was first brought to the City/School Transportation Safety Committee, Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee, and the Planning and Transportation Commission, collectively referred to here as BCCs (board, committees, and commissions) and shared with Council via informational reports, the zero-goal year was identified as 2030. Discussions with stakeholders and City staff identified that more time is needed to align internal processes and protocols and implement safety projects. This starts with more systematically addressing key risk factors and barriers to safety that exist in Palo Alto and fortifying the City's commitment to make design, maintenance, and operation decisions in alignment with the Safe System Approach. With the policy, planning, design, and implementation needed to create a roadway system that is self-enforcing and proactively reduces speeds, staff recommends that the BCCs and Council identify a zero-goal year of 2035 or 2040 with the final Plan adoption.

Once feedback is consolidated from the community, BCCs and Council, staff and the City's consultants will update the Draft Plan and resolution and bring them back to City Council for final review and adoption.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

On June 19, 2023, to fund the development of the Safety Action Plan, Council approved CMR 2305-1525, the funding agreement with FHWA and related budget amendments to the Fiscal

⁷ Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan website,
<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Transportation/Transportation-Projects/Safety-Action-Plan>

⁸ Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Self-Certification Eligibility Worksheet,
<https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-02/SS4A-FY24-Self-Certification-Worksheet.pdf>

Year 2024 Adopted Capital Budget for the Transportation and Parking Improvements Project (PL-12000) to increase both revenue and expense appropriation by \$160,000 to reflect the grant revenue and project cost. As explained in CMR 2305-1525, an additional \$40,000 in project cost, which is the 20% City match portion required in the funding agreement, will be absorbed by existing appropriation within the same project (PL-12000) as a part of the FY2024 Adopted Capital Budget, with no additional budgetary action required. To date, there has been no indication that federal funding for the Safe Streets and Roads for All program will be reduced.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement for Plan Development

Chapter 2 of the draft plan details the community engagement conducted. Since Fall 2023, engagement opportunities included an online survey, an interactive web-based map, and tables at Bike Palo Alto and the May Fete Fair. For each phase of outreach, the project team met with various boards, committees, and commissions (BCCs), including the City/School Transportation Safety Committee (CSTSC), the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PABAC), and the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC). In addition, the Human Relations Commission (HRC) received a presentation on the draft plan at their January 9, 2025, meeting. As noted in the Background section, informational reports sharing interim deliverables and summarizing committee feedback were provided to Council for each phase of the project. Committee feedback on the Draft Safety Action Plan can be found in Attachment B.

Staff have noted a few consistent comments about omissions in the plan and will make the following changes to the Draft Safety Action Plan:

- Safe Routes to School (SRTS) education and encouragement programs will be detailed further in the plan.
- The Safe System Pyramid in the plan will be modified to reflect Palo Alto's SRTS work more accurately.
- The City's forthcoming San Antonio Area Plan will be included in the plan.

Safety Action Plan Task Force

Ongoing stakeholder engagement is required for the implementation of the Safety Action Plan. Rather than create a new body to oversee plan implementation, staff propose to use existing BCCs staffed by the Office of Transportation: the City/School Transportation Safety Committee, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee, and the Planning and Transportation Commission. Plan progress and collision data would be shared with the three bodies that would make recommendations to the City Council about Plan activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This study session is not a project as defined by CEQA because it does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment. CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Palo Alto Safety Action Plan

Attachment B: Summary of BCC Feedback

APPROVED BY

Lily Lim-Tsao, Interim Chief Transportation Official

Attachment A

The Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan can be viewed at this link:

https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/transportation/projects/ss4a-safety-action-plan/palo-alto_public-draft-safety-action-plan-121624.pdf

Attachment B

Summary of Standing Committee Feedback on the Draft SS4A Safety Action Plan

Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (January 7)

- Comments around goal year
 - o 2040 goal is unrealistic.
 - o 2035 goal is hard but feasible.
 - o Plan goal should align with Caltrans' 2050 target year with a 20% reduction every 5 years.
 - o Zero is impossible, goal should be a reduction of a certain percentage.
- The safety focus areas are appropriate.
- Include a reference to San Antonio Road's forthcoming Area Plan
- The Plan needs to be a joint plan of OOT, PW, and PD.
- How will PD enforce speed laws?
- The systemic analysis, construction management plan, and other proactive programs are appreciated.
- Support was expressed for speed reduction and countermeasures toolbox.
- Zoning changes are not consistent with place-making in City. Housing will be added to San Antonio Rd and El Camino Real (ECR) which are on the High Injury Network. How can we make it easier to live without a car for those future residents, some of whom will be low-income?
- Request for more bicycle safety education for adults and children.

Human Relations Commission (January 9)

- Support for 2035 target year
- School safety
 - o Identify key intersections near schools.
 - o Concerns were expressed around students biking to school.
 - o Prioritize traffic calming near schools.
 - o Concerns were expressed about biking near ECR as parking is confusing near an intersection, and it's unclear who has the right of way

City/School Transportation Safety Committee (January 23)

- Daylighting and pedestrian safety: How is City responding to AB 413?
- Storytelling is needed around SRTS education program
 - o *Note: An update to Safe System Pyramid was made prior to this meeting (but after Draft Plan publishing) to remove education and change it to Awareness Measures. This update will be reflected in the Final Draft.*

Planning and Transportation Commission (January 29)

- Comments around goal year
 - o 2040: Allows City to collaborate – It will take a lot of resources (time and funds) to be consistent with SSA and implement infrastructure.
 - o 2035 or sooner: Death and fatalities are unacceptable. Urgency is needed. Most commissioners requested 2035.
 - o Assume that all the City's projects are working towards zero deaths and fatalities – What does the different in goal years actually mean?
 - Biggest change is focus on creating resources for safety-related projects, plans, and policies
 - City's projects are currently more reactive, policies are conflicting and need to be rectified. Policies need to be cleaned up regularly
- There was understanding that VMT reduction is a safety strategy: Look at both local and regional VMT. City land use choices reduce VMT.
- High Injury Network (HIN): Alma and Middlefield look to have a similar number of collisions, why was the entirety of Alma not included?
 - o *Note: Designation was based on scoring of collision types and where the collisions occurred. Portions of Alma near the downtown are included as part of the HIN.*
- Include reference to San Antonio Road's forthcoming Area Plan.
- Identify how the City will implement the plan and allocate funding for monitoring
- Data collection: The plan uses historical data, but police reports are received weekly. How can the community receive timely data?
- There are too many references to FHWA that will not resonate with public.
- Education and encouragement need to be detailed further in the Safety Action Plan
- PTC requests OOT to engage more regularly to champion changes requested in the Safety Action Plan
- Safe System Pyramid and funding figures are difficult to understand.

- Appreciates emphasis on speed management. City will need to consider how this affects parallel routes.
- Concern that other priorities besides safety are not ignored, like education.
- Support was expressed for Impact Review Updates, Rapid Response Team, and Quick-Build Program.
- The tone of the plan is not action-oriented. Add more action-oriented content to the front/main part of the document.
- Plan should include more about Palo Alto's track record in getting people out of cars.
- Guidelines are needed for other departments.
- Need more police to enforce traffic laws.
- Fix the equity map. The shades of blue are not distinguishable. Page 46.



Palo Alto **Safe Streets & Roads for All**

City Council

March 3, 2025

www.cityofpaloalto.org

Agenda

- Project Timeline & Next Steps
- Key Elements & Tonight's Purpose
- Overview of Draft Safety Action Plan
- Feedback on Quick-Build Program & Resolution



Project Timeline & Next Steps

Date	Activity
January 7	Draft Plan at Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee
January 9	Draft Plan at Human Relations Commission
January 23	Draft Plan at City/School Transportation Safety Committee
January 29	Draft Plan at Planning and Transportation Commission
March 3	Draft Plan at Council Study Session
March 15	Public Comment Deadline
May 13 (Tent.)	Final Plan & Resolution to Council Policy & Services Committee
June 2 (Tent.)	Final Plan & Resolution to Council



Draft Safety Action Plan Key Elements & Tonight's Purpose

- This Safety Action Plan is...
 - A key to unlocking federal, state, and regional funding
 - A roadmap to reach zero fatalities, focused on the next five years
 - An acknowledgement of the City's commitment to a change in protocols and processes related to funding and policies (via Resolution)
 - An opportunity for City staff to use tools like Quick Build projects to quickly implement safety needs with the ability to make changes to design over time
- Purpose: Resolution & Quick-Build Program Feedback



The Next Five Years

- Create a **citywide speed management plan**
- Review the **Citywide TIF and County TIA Guidelines for Safe System/VMT alignment**
- Collaborate with neighboring cities, the County, VTA, other transit providers, and Caltrans to **improve first-last mile connections to key routes and improve transit infrastructure** along major transit routes
- **Update Public Works Standard Drawings and Specifications** to align with Safe System principles
- Collaborate with Santa Clara County Public Health Department and the City of San Jose to partner in **acquisition of trauma center data sharing**
- Develop **user safety guidance for e-bikes and e-scooters** that travel in the City
- Enhance the **culture of safety with decision makers and City staff**



How Do the SAP and BPTP Update Overlap?

- Common Data Inputs
 - SWITRS Crash Data (2018-2022)
 - Community input from the Bike Palo Alto Event
 - Online survey responses
 - Interactive webmap
 - Internal Stakeholder Working Group



How is the SAP Different from the BPTP Update?

Safety Action Plan

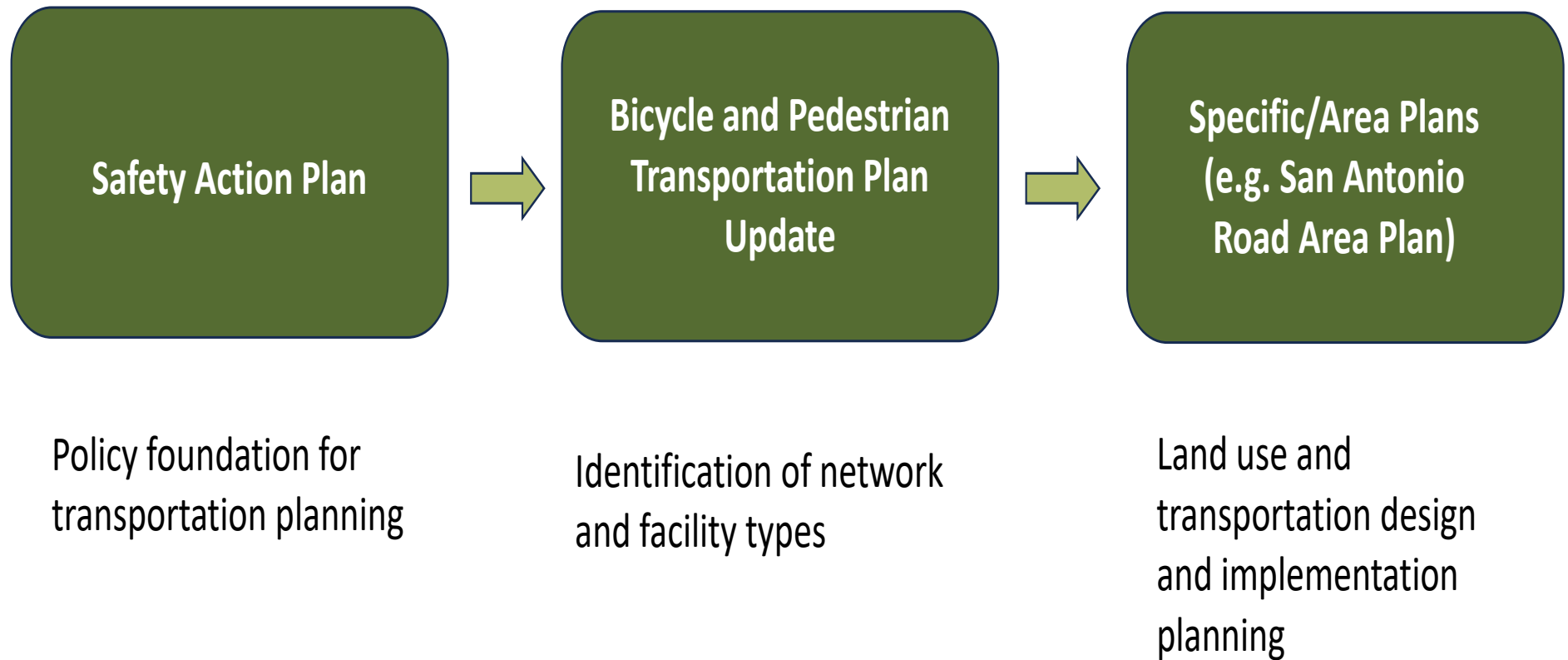
- Safety for all modes of travel
- Takes a safety lens to existing plans with proposed projects
- Sets the City up to institutionalize a new safety framework

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update

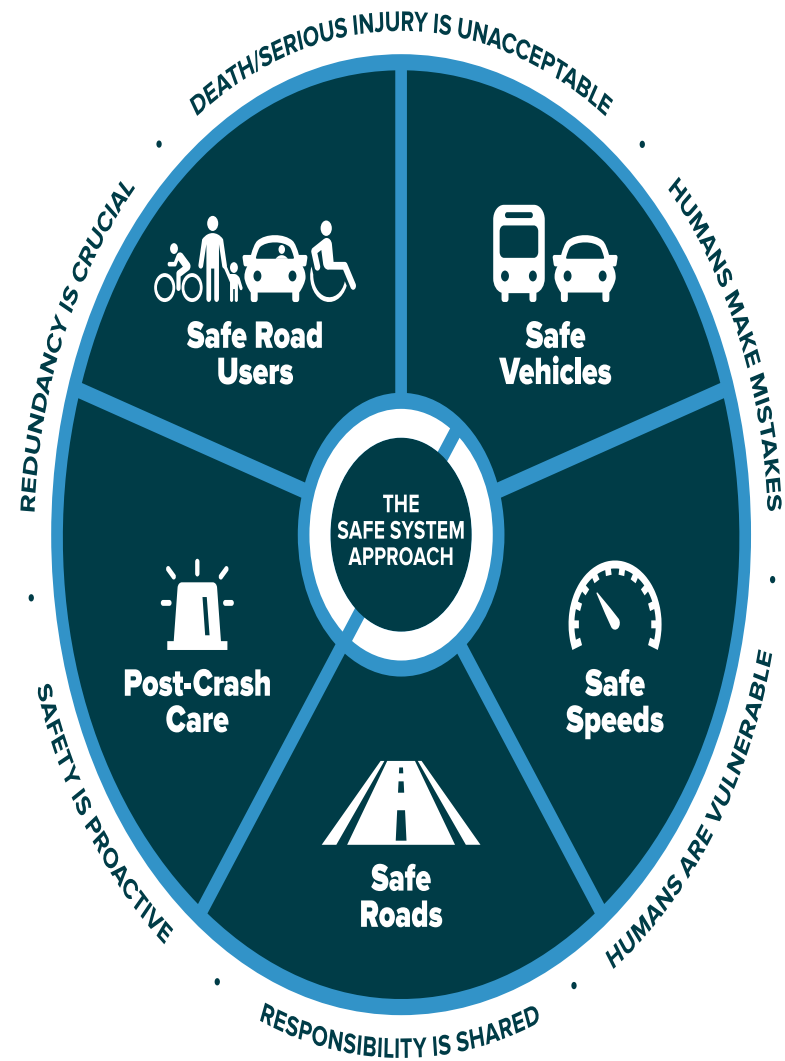
- Safety focus on bicyclists and pedestrians
- Creates new bike/ped projects
- Builds off the policy framework identified in the SAP



What is the Relationship of SAP to Other Plans?



The Safe System Approach



Source: Fehr & Peers for FHWA



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The Safe System Approach

Aims to eliminate fatal and serious injuries for all road users by:



Accommodating Human Mistakes



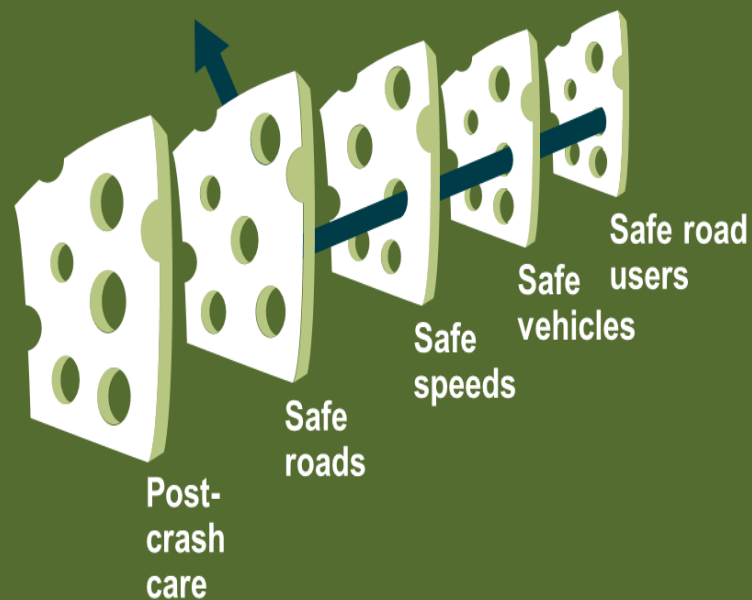
Keeping Impacts On The Human Body At Tolerable Levels



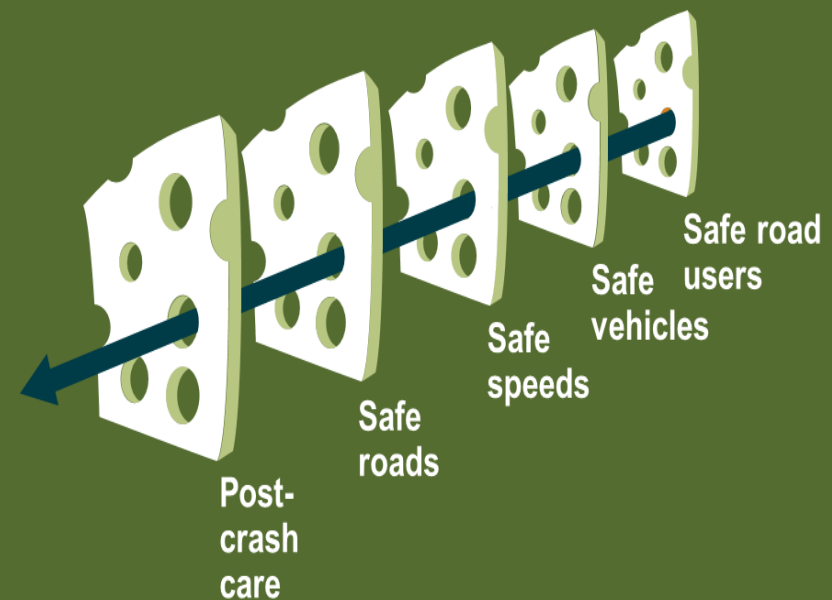
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The Safe System Approach

The “Swiss Cheese Model” of redundancy creates layers of protection



Death and serious injuries only happen when all layers fail



Source: FHWA



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The Safe System Approach

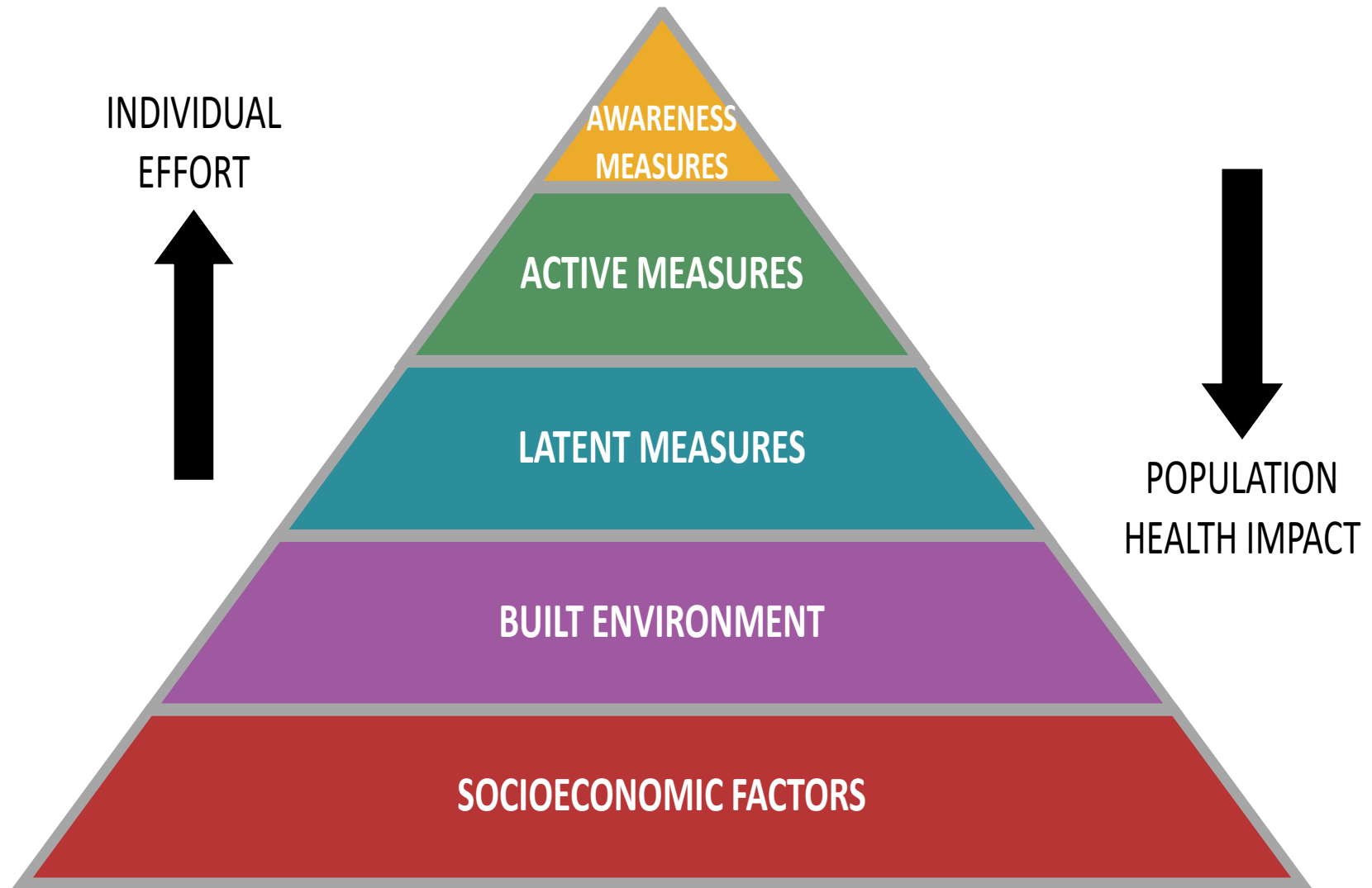
Traditional Approach

Safe System Approach

Prevent crashes	→	Prevent death and serious injuries
Improve human behavior	→	Design for human mistakes/limitations
Control speeding	→	Reduce system kinetic energy
Individuals are responsible	→	Share responsibility
React based on crash history	→	Proactively identify and address risks



The Public Health Impact Pyramid



As informed by Ederer, et. al.: <https://visionzeronetwork.org/applying-the-health-impact-pyramid-to-roadway-safety/>



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The Public Health Impact Pyramid

To operationalize health equity in Vision Zero, it will require us as practitioners and advocates to:



Value all people, communities, and their mobility needs equally: There are no invisible, undervalued, or underrepresented communities in infrastructure decisions and investments.



Recognize and rectify transportation decisions that have exacerbated disparities: Removing infrastructure elements that increase air pollution, noise pollution, chronic stress and create barriers to freedom of movement and public transportation, and retrofitting existing infrastructure with crosswalks, enhancing public transportation accessibility, and creating safer biking and walking routes.



Provide investments in safety policies, practices & infrastructure according to need and risk: Allocating investments and resources equitably, or according to need, rather than distributing resources equally across communities or according to requests or complaints.



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Source: Vision Zero Network <https://visionzeronetwork.org/applying-the-health-impact-pyramid-to-roadway-safety/>

What Does A Safety Action Plan Include?



Strategic Planning
Vision Statement and Goals



Partnerships
Develop internal partnerships



Engagement
Invite discussion with key stakeholders



Discussion of Existing Efforts



Systematic and Data-Driven Analysis



Strategies for Engineering, Education, and Enforcement



Strategies for Evaluation and Implementation
(e.g. funding sources)



High-Injury Network (HIN) Identification



Project Prioritization or Location-Specific Engineering Recommendations





High-Injury Network

High Injury Network

Collisions (2018-2022)

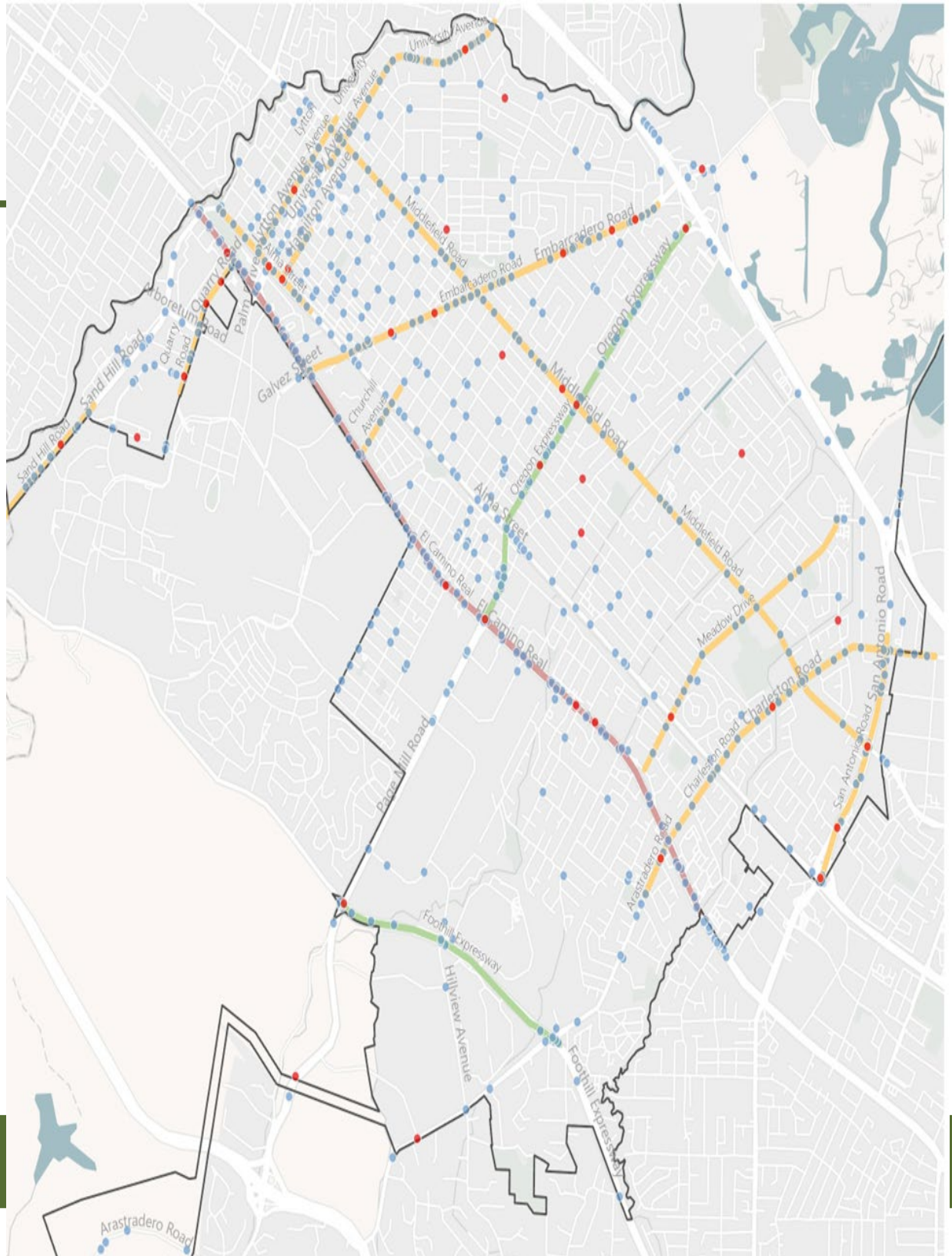
- Injury Collision
- KSI Collision

High-Injury Network

- Caltrans
- City
- County



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Community Engagement

Community Engagement

- Online survey (October to December 2023)
 - 766 respondents
- Bike Palo Alto (October 2023)
- May Fete (May 2024)
- Internal Stakeholder Working Group
- Council & Committee Meetings



Community Feedback: Key Themes

- General enthusiasm for bike lanes
- Concerns around speeding motorists
- Need for enhanced intersection treatments
- Need for more bike lanes along school routes
- Need for additional connections to key destinations





Safety Focus Areas

**Residential
Arterials**

13% of KSIs

**Alcohol
Involved**

15% of KSIs

**Pedestrians On
Arterials at Night**

9% of KSIs

**Pedestrians On Major
Downtown Streets**

6% of KSIs

**90° Angle Collisions
with Bicyclists (All Ages)**

13% of KSIs

**Walk & Roll Bike Routes
Crossing Higher Stress
Streets**

4% of KSIs

**Children Riding
Bicycles**

6% of KSIs

KSI: Severe Injury or Fatal Collisions



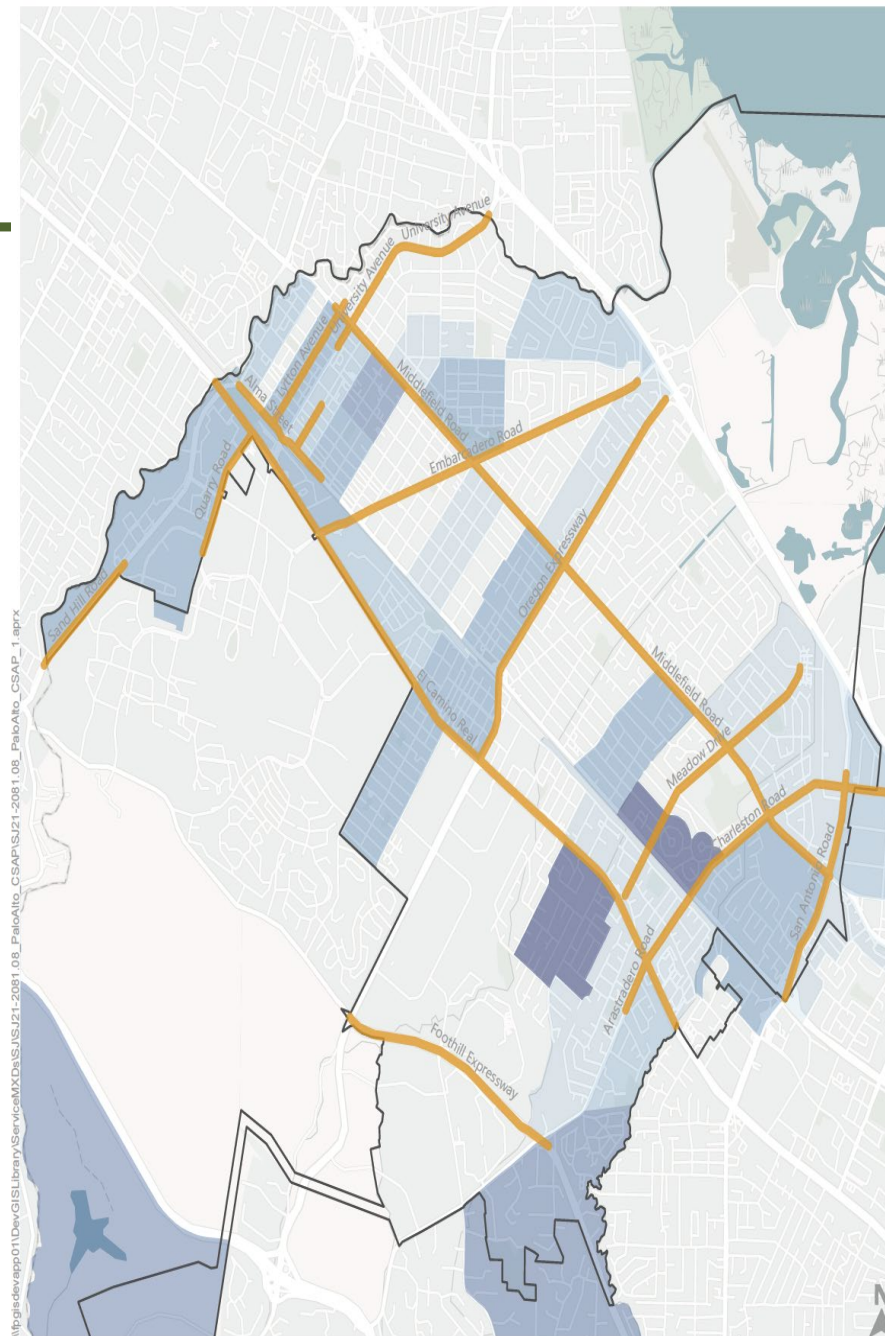
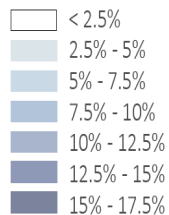
Equity Considerations

Population Below the Federal Poverty Line in Palo Alto

- Census blocks where 10-20% of the population lives below the poverty line
 - Downtown
 - Alma St/East Meadow Dr/Charleston Rd
 - Parts of Stanford
 - Southeast corner of the City

High-Injury Network

Percentage of Population Below Federal Poverty Line

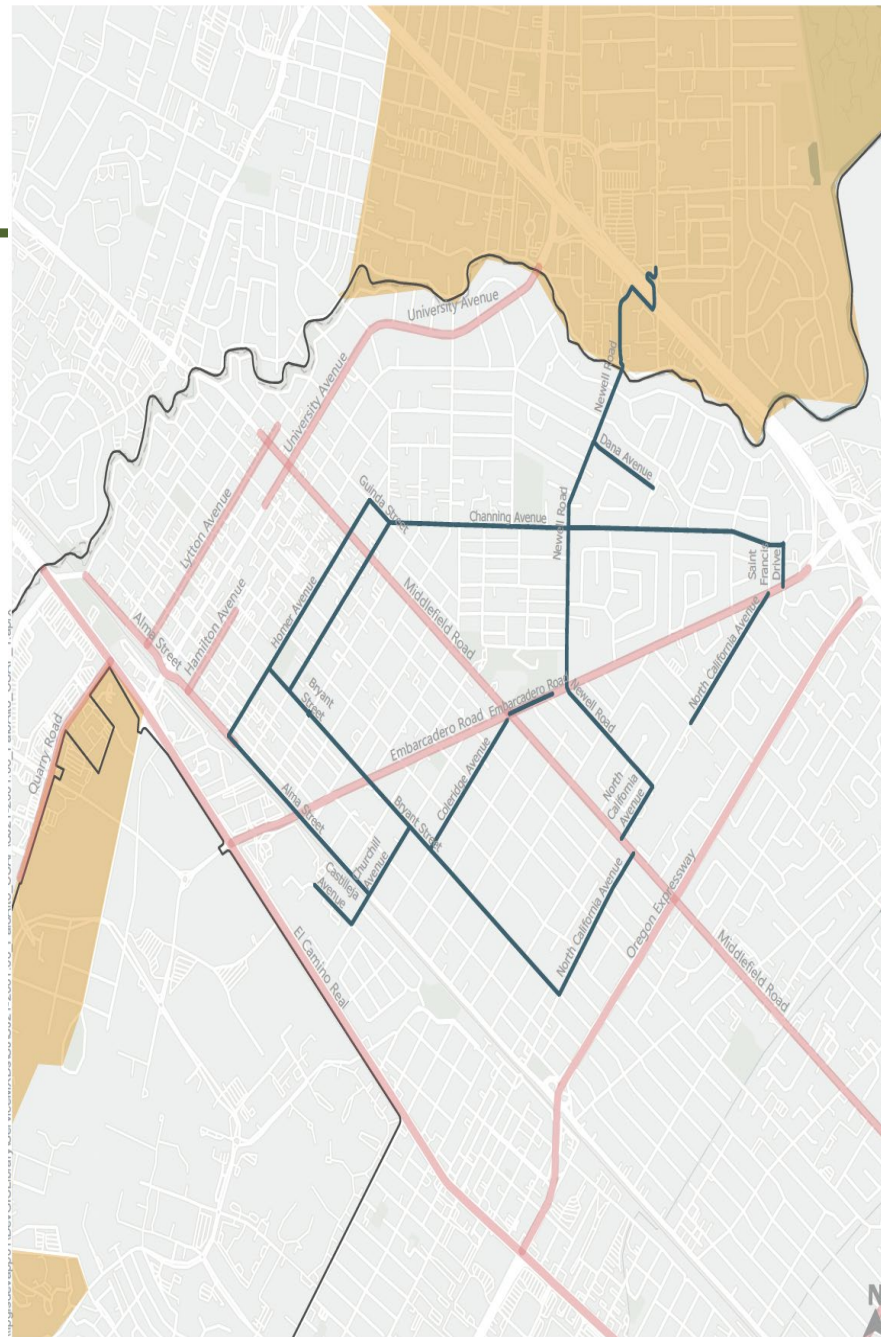
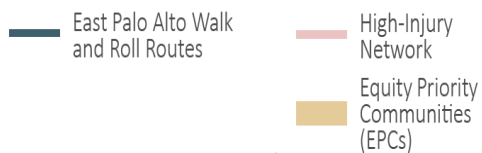


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Equity Considerations

East Palo Alto Walk and Roll Routes

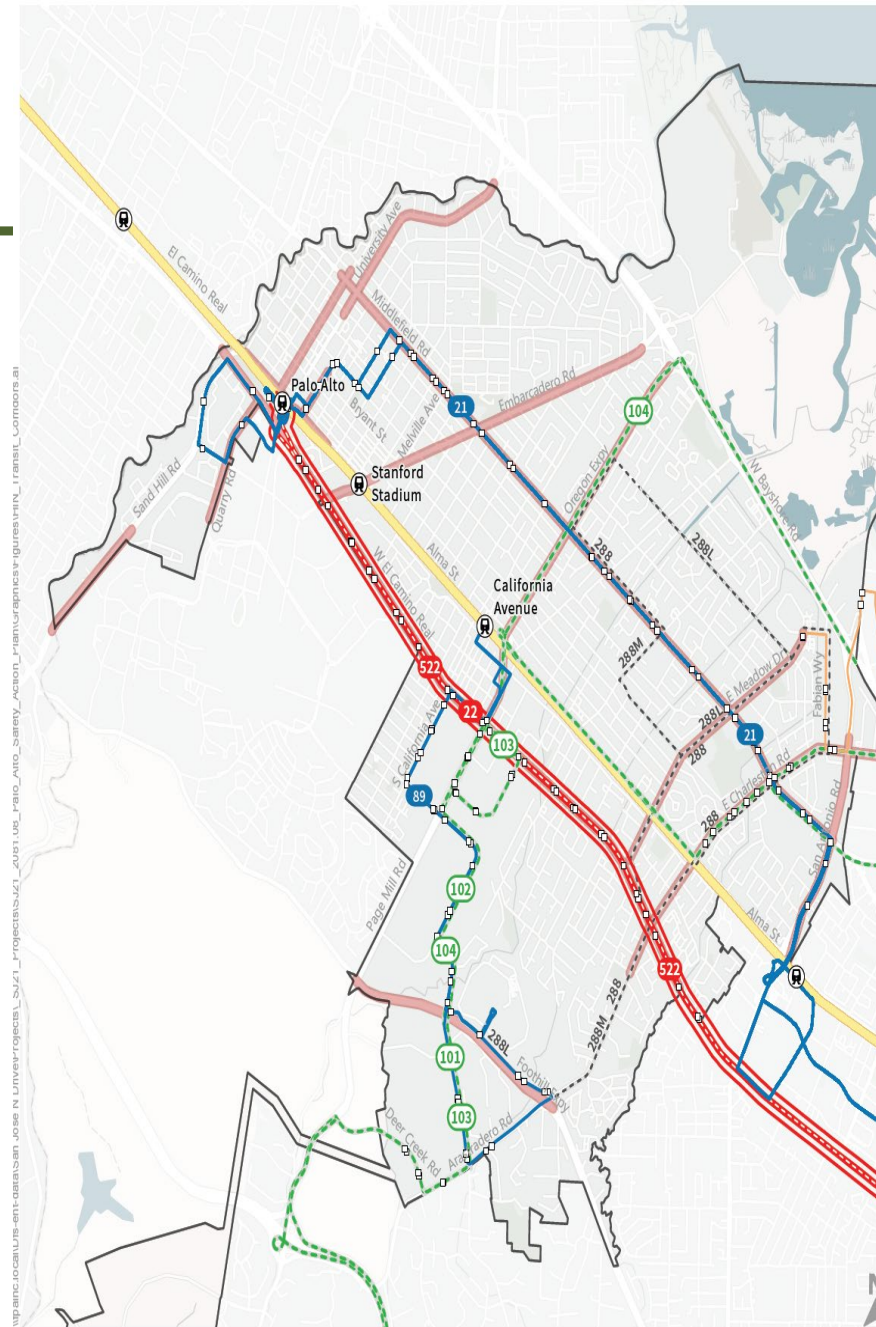
- Highlights connectivity of Walk & Roll Routes to adjacent EPCs
 - Parts of Stanford
 - East Palo Alto



Equity Considerations

Transit Corridors in Palo Alto

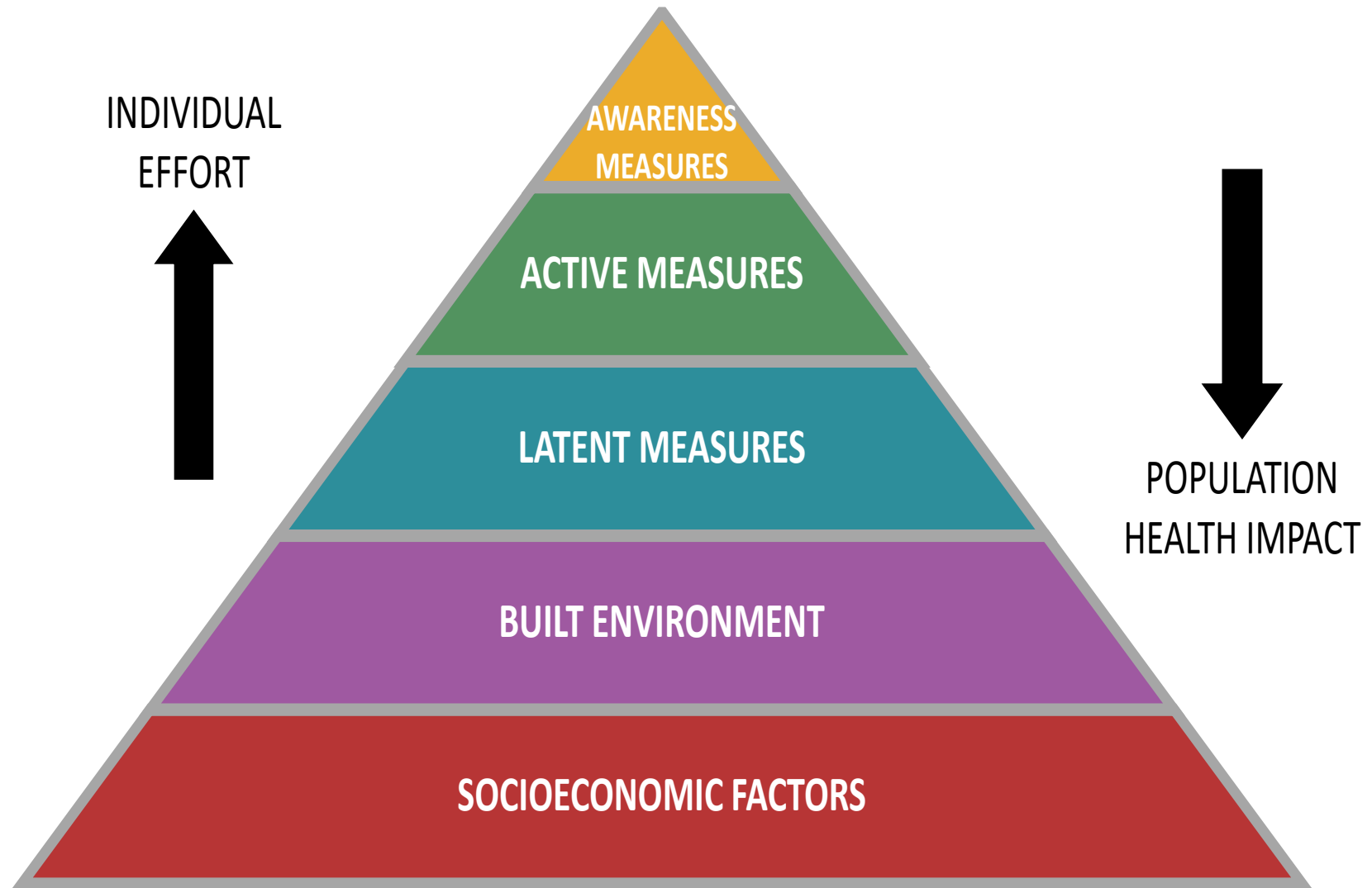
- Prioritizes the need for first/last mile access to transit stops and key destinations





Safety As A Public Health Concern

The Public Health Impact Pyramid



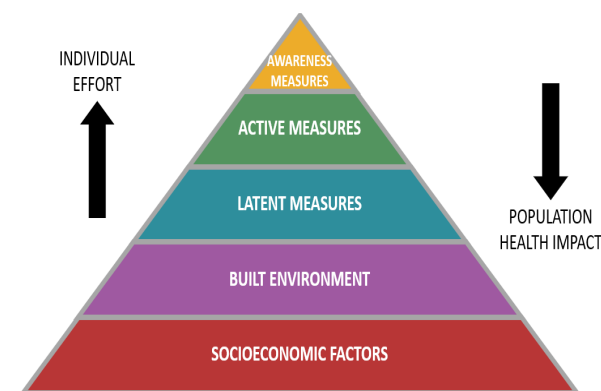
As informed by Ederer, et. al.: <https://visionzeronetwork.org/applying-the-health-impact-pyramid-to-roadway-safety/>



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The Public Health Impact Pyramid In Action – Palo Alto SRTS

- Variety of mode choice options to get to school
- Investment in Walk & Roll Routes citywide
- Speed management – 20 MPH in school zones
- BPTP Update prioritized project list
- Signal timing upgrades, all-pedestrian phases, LPIs
- Bike rodeos & core education programs
- Helmet distribution
- Passive signage or child safety alert figurines



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As informed by Ederer, et. al.: <https://visionzeronetwork.org/applying-the-health-impact-pyramid-to-roadway-safety/>



Reaching Zero Death & Serious Injuries

For Your Feedback

■ Quick Build Program

- Serves goal to immediately implement safety needs
- Requires minor construction activities but are built to be durable, low to moderate in material cost, and last from one to five years



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Mission/Geneva Safety Project
Source: SFMTA

Grimmer Elementary School Traffic Safety Assessment
Source: City of Fremont

For Your Feedback

■ Resolution Tradeoffs

- Vehicle delay may increase to prioritize speed reduction and safety
- Reallocation of vehicle travel lanes and/or on-street parking may occur to install active transportation facilities
- Land use planning, zoning, and partnerships with transit providers will be seen as safety focus areas, to ensure reliable and frequent transportation options to key destinations



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Thank you!

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