

SA Tomorrow Survey to Inform Future of Bike Infrastructure, Culture

ALLISON BLAZOSKY on 31 October, 2015 at 00:04



I've been thinking about the most recent *Síclovia*, which reportedly attracted **70,000** people who wanted to experience streets outside of their car. Doing some quick math, that's very close to 5% of the **1.44 million** people living in San Antonio (almost one in every 20 residents) that converged on the same three miles of Broadway while it was closed for a few hours to motorized traffic.

It's an impressive number. And it takes numbers like this to build the case for changing how we think about our largest public space – our streets.

A **Bike Survey** released Oct. 28 by **SA Tomorrow** is asking how you roll, and the input it collects will give decision-makers, planners, engineers and advocates alike a better understanding of the frequency and reasons people bike (or opt not to) in the San Antonio area. I may have been one of the first people to complete the survey, but I am counting on not being the last because the **Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization** (MPO), like the City of San Antonio which released the Bike Survey, looks forward to the results of this data once the survey concludes on Dec. 2. Here's why:

The last statistically significant survey that was conducted by the MPO centered on **attitudes toward bicycling** in 2010. However, a lot has changed in our region in these last five years, including the arrival of **San Antonio BCycle**, the construction of 47 miles of the trails making up the **Howard W. Peak Greenway Trails System** and 15 miles of trails making up the extended San Antonio River Walk, and the founding of numerous bike clubs and shops. As a result, the number of people we see riding bikes on the streets and trails has compounded since 2010, both anecdotally and according to the limited **Census data** available. (You can actually watch **live bicycle and pedestrian count data** for two counting locations on the greenways, too, courtesy of **San Antonio Bikes**.)



A group of cyclists cruise down South Alamo Street towards Southtown on the Fourth of July, 2014. Photo by Scott Ball.

More recently, an online survey was conducted to help inform the MPO's Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation Plan (under development). While it provided helpful background information for that study, the survey was completed by less than 2,000 participants, so there are lots more people that can be heard from given additional opportunities like the SA Tomorrow Bike Survey.

As the MPO's bike and pedestrian transportation planner, I'm attuned to recent national reports that are consistently showing how quality infrastructure makes a marked difference in bike ridership. Specifically, bike lanes with some sort of physical barrier from traffic are tremendously effective at boosting bike ridership on the specific streets on which they're built, **shifting routes** of existing bike riders who appreciate the new comfortable space. It's also documented that protected bike lanes **boost safety for all users** of a street, a benefit everyone can get behind.

However, another finding underscores the importance of **connectivity** in general. Networks of comfortable cycling infrastructure are key to raising bike ridership citywide beyond single corridors. I'd be surprised if the SA Tomorrow Bike Survey doesn't corroborate this trend and indicate that local residents, whether they currently bike a little or a lot, are hankering to see protected bike lanes and connected routes, too.

The SA Tomorrow bike survey is no time to take lightly an opportunity to speak up for safe, connected infrastructure. The plan this survey is informing will be used for the next 25 years to communicate the City of San Antonio's transportation strategy, proposed multimodal improvements and prioritize projects, as stated on www.satransportationplan.com.



Cyclists ride past Lions Field. Photo by Scott Ball.

Since the MPO works very closely with the City of San Antonio and with other cities in our study area on promoting safe driving, biking and walking habits, I'm especially looking forward to seeing the responses residents give to questions about the most important aspects of drivers' and bicyclists' behavior that I can be addressing as I talk to the public. I'm also looking forward to seeing what improvements residents say would most boost their riding and what specific challenges keep them from riding more.



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Answers like these can guide the [MPO's Bicycle Mobility Advisory Committee](#), a unique group of public agency staff, representatives of bicycle clubs and organizations and citizens who meet on a monthly basis, to the most impactful work they can get behind.

The SA Tomorrow Bike Survey will be up through Dec. 2.

**Top image: Cyclists head north on Broadway Street. Photo by Scott Ball.*

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