

City wants more hiking and biking, less traffic

BY JEREMY T. GERLACH : JULY 28, 2015

As San Antonio's streets prepare for an estimated influx of 1.1 million people over the next 25 years, city officials have said they are

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Photo By Edward A. Ornelas /San Antonio Express-News

A cyclist rides with traffic in early July on Madison Street, in the Southtown neighborhood.

counting on alternate forms of transit to alleviate the strain.

About 325,000 residents — out of about 2 million living in Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe and Kendall counties — cycle at least once a month, according to a recent survey by the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, a federal agency created to provide guidance with transportation planning.

MPO officials said the city also has a bit of a reputation for multimodal accidents.

According to San Antonio police data relayed by MPO planning supervisor Leroy Alloway, 54 pedestrians were killed in San Antonio in 2014, and in an average day the city has about 124 vehicle crashes, two pedestrian accidents and one cycle-involved collision.

South Side resident Ben Esparza, 31, bikes to work downtown from his home along Southwest Military Drive, mostly using Roosevelt and South Flores streets. He sees a lot of traffic on his route, but also a lot of poorly marked lanes.

“We need more protected bike lanes, but also just more basic things ... on the streets,” Esparza said. “Markings alone (could) probably help cut down on some of the accidents and (traffic) we’ve got down here.”

Experiences like Esparza’s are what city officials are looking for to help them develop safer roadways for all types of traffic.

Terry Bellamy is the assistant director for San Antonio’s Transportation & Capital Improvements, and is part of the city’s SA Tomorrow team.

SA Tomorrow is developing the city’s **Multimodal Transportation Plan**, which largely focuses on making traffic easier to navigate for area residents who use both cars and alternate forms of transportation.

The group will host open houses across the city to get community input.

Upcoming open houses are scheduled for: Wednesday, July 29, at Central Library, 600 Soledad; Thursday, July 30, at Brookhollow Branch Library, 530 Heimer; Monday, Aug. 3, at Great Northwest Branch Library, 9050 Wellwood, and Tuesday, Aug. 4, at Pan American Branch Library, 1122 W. Pyron Ave. All open houses will take place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4-6 p.m.

A live online webinar will be held on Aug. 11.

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Bellamy said he wants to make sure residents who don't own automobiles are aware of the "dedicated trail system" the city and county have been developing over the past decade, which includes hike and bike trails that go from the western edge of Loop 410 to the greenways and river trails east of the city.

"Just like any other major city, we're trying to figure out the next step," Bellamy added. "We're not going to do everything at one time ... but we're trying to evolve."

"Automobiles (aren't) going away, so we're still going to see growth in the amount of (area motor vehicles)," Bellamy said. "But at the same time we're going to see growth in both pedestrian and bicycle usage — we've got to develop (capacity for) both simultaneously."

An updated map of hiking and biking trails is available at <https://gis.sanantonio.gov/OEP/Bike/index.html>.

jgerlach@express-news.net