

Virtual Town Hall
Bicycle Safety Study for the Golden Gate Bridge
October 6, 2021
Question and Answer List



Please note: There were 129 entries in the question and answer dialog during the Town Hall Meeting. The entries were a mix of questions and comments. We did our best to address all of the questions during the meeting, but we may have missed some. The purpose of this document is to categorize and summarize the questions asked and provide responses from the District. All comments received through the Town Hall meeting will be included in the comments summary provided to the District Board of Directors for their consideration in this matter.

The Safety Study

Q. Are there any new use counts since 2015?

A. We have not performed additional sidewalk traffic counts since 2015. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated shelter-in-place orders were instituted while we were working on the Study. Bridge traffic and visitation declined precipitously and has not since returned to normal. We plan to perform new traffic surveys once we feel we are approaching the “new normal.”

Q. Does the planning work here suggest any changes to the form or information collected by Bridge Patrol Officers related to collisions?

A. Yes – we are including more information in incident reports such as electric vs. traditional bicycle and have tasked our Patrol Officers with gathering as much detail as possible.

Q. Why was only signage discussed? Was there specific budget limit or speed of implementation that was set as a maximum?

A. Many strategies beyond signage have been considered and there is no specific budget limitation for this work. The goal of the study was to focus on the most effective near-term strategies, implement, and evaluate those before looking at more aggressive mitigations that might involve major project work and/or construction

The Safety Study (continued)

Q. This data wouldn't include wind that has changed since 2019. How can we use old data on something that has only recently been changed in the last 2 years? I would expect wind accidents to be much higher in the last 2 years.

A. You are correct that that only the tail end of the 10-year data set included the changed wind conditions on the west sidewalk. We will continue to evaluate bicycle incidents and do have some mitigation strategies for the wind conditions included in the slate of recommendations.

Q. How is the crash data collected? Does the bridge patrol have to respond/reported to for it to be recorded? Does the crash data set include only the reported crashes?

A. That is correct. The crash data set only includes incidents where Bridge Patrol responds and renders aid. One of the valuable suggestions to come through this public outreach is to develop a self-reporting tool so that we have a more complete accounting of safety incidents on the sidewalks. We have developed and deployed a new reporting tool and it can be accessed here (Report a Safety Incident):

[Bikes & Pedestrians - Visiting the Bridge | Golden Gate](#)

Q. What is the vintage of the crash data?

A. The crash data included all reported bicycle incidents between January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2019.

Q. Did you differentiate between same direction maneuver around vs head on?

A. Yes, when that information was available in the incident reports, it was noted in the data set for differentiation.

Q. Is there any data on the type of cyclist in crashes - commuters versus tourists/ local versus non-local for example?

A. We do gather data on whether bicycles involved in crashes are riding rental bikes or privately-owned bikes (see slide #16 in the presentation) – that serves as loose proxy for local vs non-local. We do not (currently) gather information that would indicate whether a victim was commuting or riding for recreational purposes.

The Safety Study (continued)

Q. How and when were the crash data collected? Did it coincide with the new windier west side railing?

A. The crash data set includes any incidents where Bridge Patrol responds and renders aid. Only the tail end of the 10-year data set included the changed wind conditions on the west sidewalk. We will continue to evaluate bicycle incidents and do have some mitigation strategies for the wind conditions on the slate of recommendations.

Q. Per the Bridge District's own figures, crossing the bridge by bike you are 42 times as likely to be injured as if you are crossing it in a car. Why does the safety study not include any *goals* for reducing this substantial disparity?

A. At this time, the stated goal of this study is to minimize conflicts and reduce crash frequency to the extent possible. Going forward, we will evaluate the effectiveness of these measures and develop more specific goals that will be helpful as we work together to make the Bridge sidewalks safer for all users.

Q. I am interested in seeing how, where, and why the most severe crashes occurred. The safety study does not disaggregate those from the rest of reported crashes. For example, was Light Pole 26 also the location of the most severe crashes? Or just the greatest number of crashes? Were the most severe crashes solo, bike/bike, or bike/pedestrian?

A. At this time, we can only use whether or not a victim was transported for offsite medical care as a proxy for accident severity. The only information we receive regarding severity of injuries is the Patrol Officer's observations while creating a report, and those are subjective. We do not receive any reports on a victim's condition once they are transported from the scene.

Q. It seems like the underlying assumption here is that the issue with the bridge is that bicyclists are uneducated about the rules and that is causing accidents. Is that correct?

A. We tried very hard not to presuppose any causative factors and examine the information as objectively as possible. Given the constrained physical conditions on the Bridge sidewalks, this effort focuses on limiting speeds to reduce the most severe collisions and measures to increase education and awareness of the hazards present while biking the Bridge.

The Safety Study (continued)

Q. Also curious, was adding signage/guidance around bike behavior beyond speed limit considered? i.e. 'stay right when not passing' or 'announce when passing'?

A. Those signage strategies did not come up during the study but have been suggested in comments during the outreach process. We will be evaluating these suggestions and will continue to make education part of the overall safety system. Please see the following fact sheet: <https://www.goldengate.org/assets/1/6/staysafe.pdf>

The Town Hall Presentation

Q. Why do the crash types and causes not add up to 100%?

A. The list on slide #16 was meant to be an illustration of the most common crash types, not a detailed accounting of all crash types.

Q. I don't see anyone else's questions and the chat is disabled. Why are you silencing the group? I hope this isn't intentional.

A. Due to large number of registrations for the meeting (118), the webinar format was selected for the purposes of keeping the meeting focused on the presentation and not on the Q&A or chat dialogs.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Q. Why aren't any structural changes being considered?

A. The goal was to focus on the most effective near-term strategies and then implement and evaluate those before looking at more intensive mitigations that might involve major project work and/or construction.

Facilities and Infrastructure (continued)

Q. If there are so many users of bike facilities that they are risking collision, and the severity of collision is high, then why not accommodate more space to bike facilities? Why wasn't relocating public space to create a protected bike lane (or two) on the Bridge considered?

A. The Bridge is generally at capacity for all users during busy traffic hours and we do not have any extra or unused space to allocate to people biking. All we can do is attempt to optimize the existing space available.

Q. Why can't crews park their vehicles in a driving lane, seeing as 75%+ of the bridge width is given to private cars?

A. Having crews operate scooters in the traffic lanes would create unnecessary safety risks, introduce challenges to maintenance crews moving equipment to and from the work areas, and impede the flow of traffic during busy periods.

Q. What are barriers to separation of northbound and southbound traffic? At least for a defined period of time? Perhaps 1-2 hours/day?

A. Physical barriers between opposing traffic flows on the sidewalks is something that could be studied. The implementation of such a measure would involve major project work and construction and therefore is beyond the scope of what is being contemplated in this study.

Q. Are speed bumps an option?

A. We have discussed strategies such as speed bumps or speed tables, but have been advised against those measures as they can present more hazards for people biking than they resolve.

Q. Can the signage be as bright, clear, and reflective as possible?

A. Yes – all signage will be reflective and UV resistant in conformance with CA MUTCD standards.

Facilities and Infrastructure (continued)

Q. Could you elaborate what would count as a structural change that would not be considered as part of this?

A. The goal was to focus on the most effective near-term strategies, implement, and evaluate those before looking at more aggressive mitigations that might involve major project work and/or construction.

Q. What about painting dividing lines on the sidewalk?

A. The recommendations do include adding more painted lines for delineation of space.

Q. What about adding padding to hard surfaces?

A. Our goal is to pad objects that are directly in the path of travel, such as security bollards, and we will look for more opportunities to add padding going forward.

Q. What about adding more traction to slippery parts? Who is responsible for maintaining this?

A. Bridge Maintenance forces (Paint Department) maintain the non-skid coatings on the expansion joint cover plates and manhole covers. We just renewed non-skid coatings on the expansion joint covers and we will be inspecting and renewing any non-skid coatings on manhole covers shortly.

Q. One issue for me on the west side is the sharp 90 degree turn on & off the bridge. Is there a plan to make that less sharp by a new access from the CA Coast Trail?

A. We are aware of the issues created by the sharp turn at the southwest bicycle gate, however there are no easy or readily implementable solutions to realign that section with the Battery Trail.

Sidewalk Hours

Q. Once the big retrofit is done, can the west sidewalk be opened to cyclists more hours?

A. We need to reserve the west sidewalk during working hours on Monday through Friday so that Bridge maintenance work can be performed unimpeded. We are currently opening the west sidewalk to bicycles as much as possible during daylight hours, so there is no change in sidewalk hours planned.

Q. The crash/collision data makes it clear that there is insufficient space for all of the people who want to walk and roll on the Bridge, and that we need more space for people on foot/wheels. Why wasn't increasing hours and space for bikes considered, for example by opening both sides 24/7 or having bikes allowed on both sides 24/7?

A. The Bridge is open to cyclists 24/7. We must reserve the west sidewalk for our work crews to accomplish Bridge maintenance projects unimpeded during M-F working hours. Otherwise, the west sidewalk is open to cyclists during daylight hours after 3:30pm and all day on weekends. That is the best we can do to optimize the limited resource at this time.

Q. Does it make sense to evaluate maintenance/work hours with potentially minimizing work shifts during the lowest cycling traffic?

A. Bridge maintenance is a hazardous undertaking as it is. We need to perform the major work during daylight hours, whenever possible, so as not to introduce additional risk and hazards for those performing the work.

Q. Why do you move cyclists to west side from 3:30 to 6:30 on weekdays?

A. Once our Bridge Maintenance crews are clear of the west sidewalk at 3:30pm during weekdays, we open it to bicyclists so that they have the advantage, and increased safety, of a bike-only path for their trip across the Bridge. The west sidewalk is also open to cyclists all day on weekends for the same reason.

Wind Retrofit

Q. Were the loud whining sounds generated by the wind going through the new railings addressed?

A. Yes – a solution for mitigating the new sound created by the west side railing is in wind tunnel testing currently and hopefully the modifications will be ready for deployment in the very near future.

Q. If wind continues to increase as a factor in west side crashes, is there the possibility of swapping sides for peds and bikes? Possibly only during high winds?

A. The current slate of proposals includes establishing protocols to open the east sidewalk to cyclists during high wind events. The east sidewalk will remain the pedestrian side because that is the most desirable side for visitors and has the easiest access for pedestrians, particularly those with mobility impairments.

Q. The original west side railing was fine. Since it recognized that the new railing has issues why not revert to the way it was?

A. The new west side railing was installed as an important safety feature to ensure the structural integrity of the Bridge during high wind events. It cannot be reversed.

Speed Limits

Q. The west side isn't a mixed use sidewalk, but instead is specifically for bikes only. Why are both sides the same speed limit despite the west side not being mixed use?

A. A different (higher) speed limit was considered for the west sidewalk but was not moved forward because it is not truly a dedicated bike lane due to the fact that construction workers and scooters are often present during bicycle hours. The west sidewalk also presents with myriad other potential hazards for people biking, including narrow stretches, limited lines of sight in many areas, and variable wind conditions.

Construction Equipment and Materials

Q. Totally understand the access needed to the west side for maintenance crews but would it be possible for less stuff to be semi-permanently stored there? Have you considered limiting the construction equipment storage on the bicycle path?

A. We always task our own crews with leaving the sidewalks as uncluttered as possible. We ask the same of third-party contractors, but they are allowed under the terms of their contracts to store materials and equipment on the sidewalks as long as they leave a minimum of 6 feet of free clearance between their items and the safety railing. We patrol and check on that regularly, but if you observe an area where there are items encroaching on the 6 feet clearance, please report that to the Sergeants Office at (415) 923-2220 and we will address the issue.

Enforcement

Q. Please explain why any enforcement is not considered as the threshold safety recommendation?

A. We do our best at enforcing all the rules and regulations on the Bridge, but there are over three miles of sidewalks and it is always a challenge to keep eyes on the entire span at all times. We will keep this issue in mind as we move forward.

Q. How will the speed limits be enforced?

A. Our goal is, if maximum speeds are established, that awareness and education of the speed limit will be effective in calming the speeds on the sidewalks such that it becomes the norm not to operate with excessive speed on the Bridge. If we do have issues with unsafe speeds, it will be a citable offense under the California Vehicle Code and the California Highway Patrol would be the agency with jurisdiction.

Other Questions

Q. Can you expand on the thinking around Class 3 electric bicycle access? Many long distance commuters, myself included, use them, but they are not necessarily ridden any faster than a standard bike over the bridge.

A. Our preferred course of action is to allow all three types of pedal assisted e-bikes to use the Bridge sidewalks. We understand that the type 3 is advantageous for many riders and do not want to exclude them.

Q. Have you presented and included Sausalito Bike and Pedestrian Commission input?

A. We have interacted with members of the Sausalito Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee individually, but not with the entire committee in any official capacity. We will reach out to the Sausalito PBAC Committee to see if they would like a formal presentation or some other form of engagement.

Q. Use of flaggers during current construction on east sidewalk works, why not on the west sidewalk while workers move on and off the Bridge?

A. The west sidewalk is closed to cyclists during working hours for our maintenance crews, so flaggers are not required in that situation. We will monitor closely and ensure that contractor crews are flagging properly if they are on the west sidewalk during bicycle hours.

Q. What percentage of bikes on the Bridge are rental bikes?

A. We do not have information regarding what percentage of people biking the Bridge overall are using rental bikes versus privately-owned bikes. It would be good information to have, but would be difficult to determine. We will consider strategies to gather that information when we next perform bicycle and pedestrian traffic counts.