



Santa Cruz Active Transportation Plan Update: Phase 1 Engagement Summary

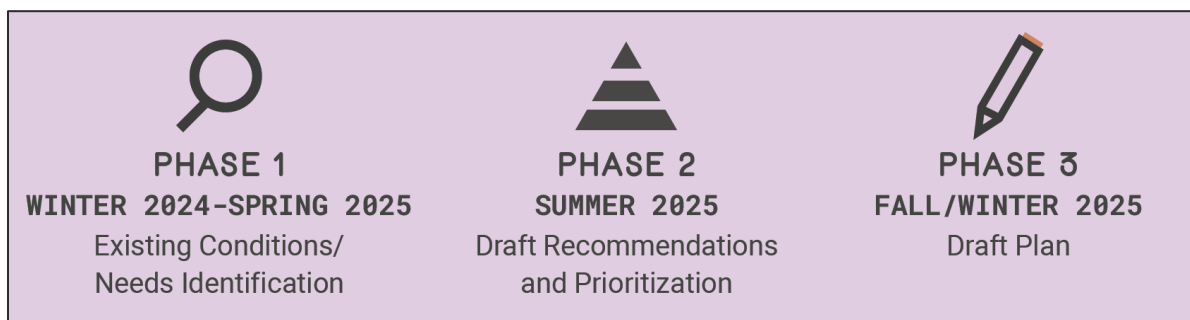
Goals

The goals of the Santa Cruz Active Transportation Plan (ATP) Update outreach and engagement process are to:

- Inform the community about the purpose and process of an ATP.
- Engage and build trust with a diverse array of community members to gather input on the plan, with a focus on underserved groups including the unhoused population, English language learners, low-income groups, racial minorities, people with disabilities, youth, and the elderly.
- Collaborate with local agencies and organizations.
- Collect community input on challenges and opportunities walking and bicycling in the city, and suggestions for how the City can improve conditions and better connect people to key destinations via active modes.
- Receive feedback on draft recommendations, project prioritization, and the draft plan.

Phasing

Outreach and engagement for the Santa Cruz ATP Update is taking place over the course of a year. The process is divided into three phases, each with distinct goals, and targeted strategies and materials. The project webpage was launched at the start of Phase 1 and will continue to be updated throughout the duration of the project with upcoming events and opportunities for digital input.



Phase 1 By the Numbers

- **9 pop-up tabling events** across the city at a diverse range of events, including food distribution, library story times, and trail pop-ups.
 - The project team spoke with approximately **129** people at these events.
- **9 one-on-one interviews with principals** of Santa Cruz City Schools to hear their top active transportation concerns and review potential solutions.
- **6 focus group meetings with target populations.** Focus groups included Bike Advocates, UCSC Affiliates, Business Owners, Unhoused Service Providers, and Pedestrians and Transit Users, and Teens. There were **34** total focus group participants.
- **1 tabling event** at a Public Works Open House where approximately **15** people were engaged.
- **1 Technical Advisory Committee Meeting** hosted by the project team wherein key stakeholders were introduced to the project.
- **102 Responses to the online survey.**
- **167 map comments.**
 - **74** related to crossing
 - **55** related to biking
 - **38** related to walking

Summary of Phase 1 Engagement Techniques



Map comments at the Westside Rail Trail Pop-Up on March 5th, 2025



Preparing for engagement at the Downtown Library Storytime on March 6th, 2025

Pop-Up Events: The project team conducted six pop-up events in early March. These included:

- A trailside pop-up at Santa Cruz Bible Church food distribution event
- A pop-up at Nueva Vista Beach Flats food distribution event
- A downtown library pop-up at a Minecraft STEAM workshop
- A trailside pop-up on the Westside Rail Trail near Fair Avenue
- A downtown library pop-up during toddler storytime
- A pop-up during a senior walking group outing through Arana Gulch
- A UCSC pop-up at a Slug Bike Life e-bike demo event
- A downtown library pop-up during the Housing Matters drop-in support hours

Project staff were able to hear directly from members of target populations of diverse ages. Geographically specific comments were added to a printed map of the city, and general comments were added to a blank board. Staff also distributed project flyers and directed people to the project webpage, survey, and interactive online map. Bilingual staff were in attendance to ensure all community members could share their perspectives.



Westside Rail Trail Pop-up on March 5th, 2025



Pop-up at the Santa Cruz Bible Church Food Distribution on March 4th, 2025

Focus Groups: To dive deeper into specific issues and opportunities, the project team facilitated six one-hour topical focus groups. These included: Bike Advocates, UCSC Affiliates, Business Owners, Unhoused Service Providers, Pedestrians and Transit Users, and Teens. After introductions and a project overview, most of each focus group was dedicated to open discussion about participants' top challenges and priorities for active transportation. The groups represented at each focus group meeting are listed in Appendix A.

Interviews with Principals: To learn about the top transportation and safety concerns faced by students, the team conducted a 30-minute interview with each of the nine principals of Santa Cruz

City Schools. During the interviews, the team reviewed the relevant recommendations from the 2015 Santa Cruz City Schools Complete Streets Master Plan and shared with the principal which improvements have been completed since then and which are still needed. The team also asked principals to share top safety concerns at school arrival and dismissal times as well as key destinations that students come from and go to before and after school. Principals were invited to share how the City could best support their concerns through infrastructure and programmatic initiatives. Appendix B lists all the principals who participated.

Social Media Outreach: Posts and stories were shared on the social media pages of the City of Santa Cruz and Ecology Action encouraging people to visit the project webpage and add comments to the online interactive online map.

All outreach materials were distributed in both English and Spanish. Outreach materials are included in Appendix C.

Digital Survey and Interactive Online Map: The project team produced a community survey and interactive online map comment tool that were embedded in the project webpage and open for the entirety of March and April 2025. The brief survey asked respondents to share basic demographic information as well as their primary mode of transportation and factors that influence their travel choices. The interactive online map allowed respondents to comment on specific streets and intersections, organized by biking, walking, and crossing issues. The team promoted the survey and interactive online map via tabling and social media posts. The survey and interactive online map were available in both English and Spanish. In total, 102 people completed the digital survey and 167 comments were received. A full summary of the survey and online map results are provided in Appendix D.

Additional Outreach: The project team presented the project goals and answered questions at the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Committee's Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee meeting and at the City of Santa Cruz Public Works Open House.



Pop-up at the Santa Cruz Bible Church Food Distribution on March 4th, 2025



Pop-up at a Senior Walking Group outing through Arana Gulch on March 6th, 2025

Key Findings

Key findings from Phase 1 engagement include:

Pedestrian Improvements

- Maintenance and accessibility of crossings

Bike Improvements

- Make neighborhood routes safe and slow
- Higher volume roads need more separation and protection

E-bike Usage

- Concerns with speed differential on shared use paths
- Desire for education programs for newer and/or younger riders

- Residents generally enjoy walking and biking around the city and appreciate the city's natural beauty. However, lack of **ADA-compliant sidewalks and curb ramps**, particularly in residential neighborhoods is a challenge for pedestrians, and while the bike network is robust, **bikeway maintenance** needs more attention.
- The **Westside Rail Trail is enjoyed by a wide array of users**, including bike commuters, parents with strollers, students riding to school, and tourists.
- **Arterial roads** like Soquel Avenue, Water Street, and Ocean Street were repeatedly mentioned as feeling unsafe for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- **Access to services and the Coral Street shelter** is unsafe for those who rely on active modes, with regular fatalities at the Highway 1 & River Street intersection and high traffic volumes on Coral Street near Costco.
- Business owners shared that they would **like more bike racks and low-stress pedestrian access** to their business.
- Bicycle advocates requested more **uniform design standards** for new road widths and turning radii.
- Pedestrian advocates expressed a need for **pedestrian crossing improvements** such as uniform curb cuts, accessible pedestrian signal audio that announces street name, and citywide standardization of leading pedestrian interval.
- Concerns around **bike theft** were repeatedly cited as a barrier to bike usage, particularly among the unhoused population.
- **Maintenance of existing streets**, sidewalks, and bike lanes is a high priority for road users of all modes.
- Community members shared that **more streetlighting**, especially around schools and along the Riverwalk, would make them feel safer getting around at night.
- Beach Flats residents reported **distracted driving and drivers failing to yield to pedestrians** especially during tourist seasons.
- Cyclists and pedestrians requested **better wayfinding signage** and formalization of unpaved shortcuts and neighborhood cut throughs.
- Across all groups, there is a desire for more **traffic calming measures on arterials and collectors** such as visual narrowing, protected crossings and bike lanes, and no right turn on red.
- There is general support for programmatic initiatives like GO Santa Cruz rewards and Bike Month/Biketober.
- The **Riverwalk** is a scenic and direct multi-use trail through the city, but residents cited personal safety concerns and conflicts with e-bikes.
- Beach Flats residents and UCSC affiliates expressed interest in **making e-bikes more accessible**, including through B-Cycle discounts, lending libraries, secure storage options, rebate programs, and guidance on how to choose, purchase, and maintain e-bikes.

- UCSC students shared that even with heavy traffic and high parking permit prices, driving to campus is still the most convenient option due to **bus route limitations and barriers to e-bike access**. Many students would like to see improved bus stop access, protected bike lanes, and calmed traffic on Western Drive, Bay Street and High Street.
- **E-bike use among youth** has become a priority issue for school communities and neighbors. School administrators would like to see robust e-bike safety education programming.

Appendix A: Focus Group Participants

Bike Advocates	
Number of participants	Groups represented
10	Bike Santa Cruz County
	Current E-Bikes / Santa Cruz Bike Party
	Community Traffic Safety Coalition
	Santa Cruz Mountain Trail Stewardship
	Complete Streets Collaborative
	The Bike Church
	Santa Cruz County Cycling Club
	B-Cycle
UCSC	
Number of participants	Groups represented
7	Physical Planning, Development, and Operations
	Slug Bike Life
	UCSC Bike Co-op
	Transportation and Parking Services
	Undergraduate Students
Service Providers for Unhoused People	
Number of participants	Groups represented
4	City of Santa Cruz Homeless Outreach Team
	Housing Matters
	Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency
Business Owners	
Note: Some participants provided input via email in lieu of meeting attendance.	
Number of participants	Groups represented
6	Sante Adarius, Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing

	Downtown Association
	The Jury Room, Brady's Yacht Club, Rush Inn
	Linda's Seabreeze Cafe
	Home / Work
	Pacific Edge Climbing Gym
Pedestrians and Transit Users	
Number of participants	Groups represented
9	Pedestrian and Transit Advocates
	Santa Cruz Rollers
	Skateboarder
	Santa Cruz Parks Planner
	Santa Cruz Metro Advisory Board and Disability Advocate

Appendix B: Principals Interviewed

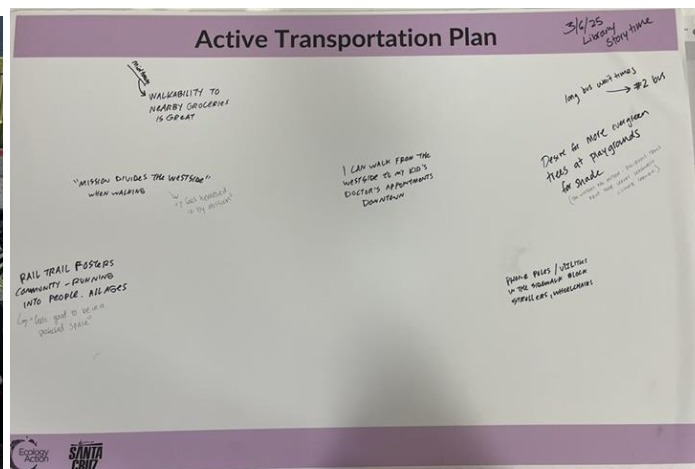
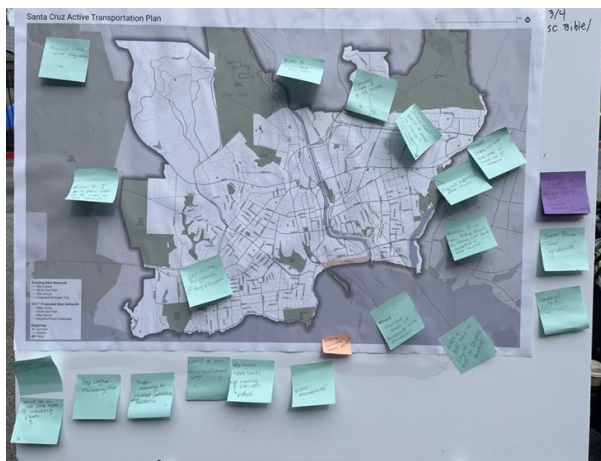
Name	School
Amariah Hernandez	Harbor High
Amelia Von Gerer	Branciforte Small Schools
Amy Spiers	Gault Elementary
Casey Denning	Santa Cruz High
Debbi Puente	Branciforte Middle
Derek Kendall	Mission Hill Middle
Katherine Norton	Westlake Elementary
Renee Golder	Bay View Elementary
Thien Hua	Delavega Elementary

Appendix C: In-Person Outreach Materials

Bilingual flyers with a QR code to project webpage:



Pop-up boards for collecting on-the-spot comments:



Appendix D: Summary of Digital Survey and Interactive Online Map

A community survey was available via the project website from March 2025 through April 2025. The survey garnered input from 277 respondents and asked about how people get around the city; an interactive map component prompted respondents to identify specific locations where they experience challenges walking, biking, or crossing the street.

Respondent Demographics

Most respondents (21%) were between the ages of 35 and 44 (Figure 1) and predominantly identified as white (82%; Figure 2), skewing the responses older and whiter than overall city demographics. Gender representation was nearly balanced, with an almost equal distribution of female and male respondents (Figure 3), in alignment with overall city demographics.

Figure 1: What is your age?

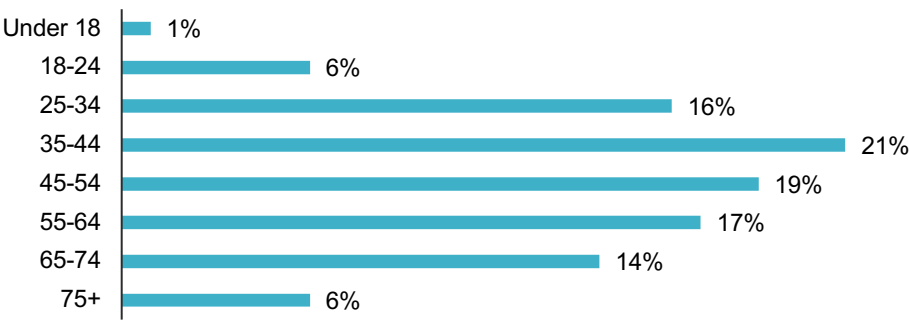


Figure 2: What is your race / ethnicity? Please select all that apply.

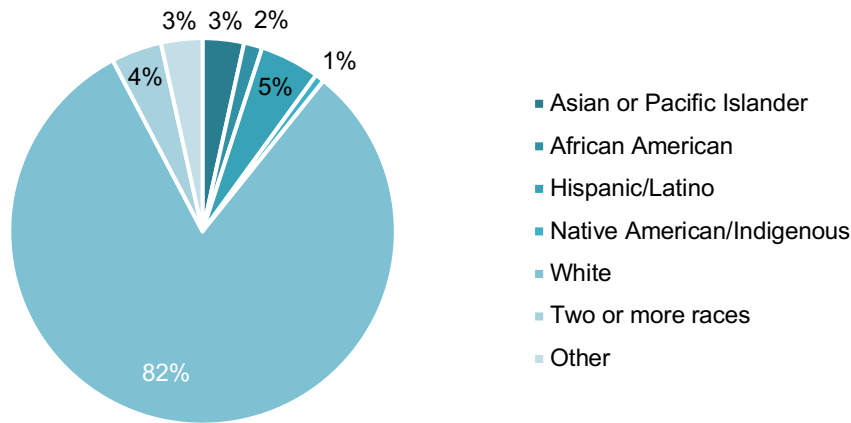
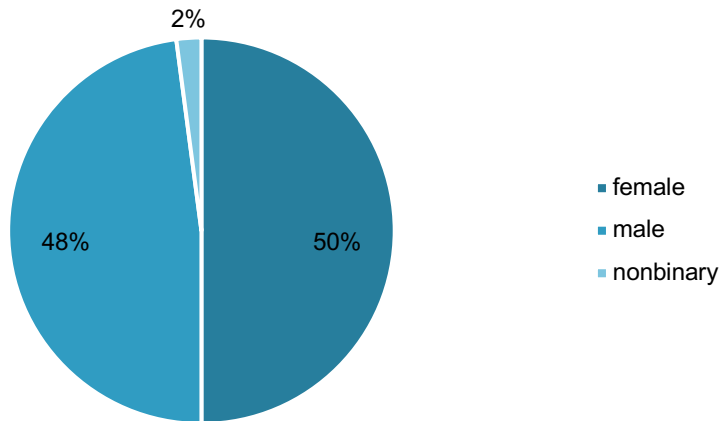
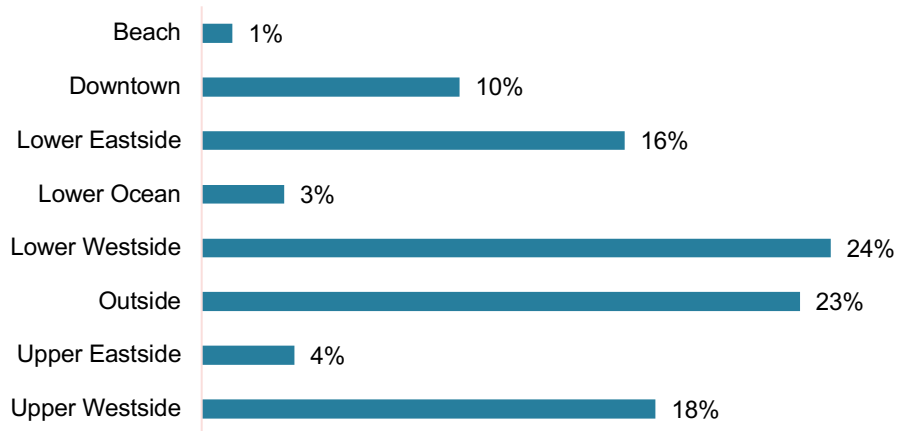


Figure 3: What is your gender? Please select one.



Geographically, most participants reported living in the Lower Westside neighborhood (24%), with notable representation from areas outside of Santa Cruz (23%), and Upper Westside (18%) (Figure 4).

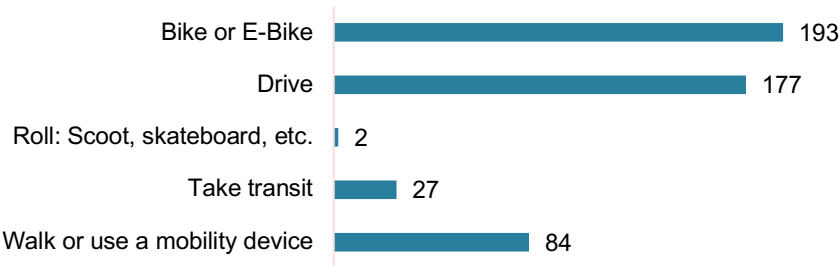
Figure 4: Where do you live?



Travel Choices

Respondents answered two questions about their primary modes of transportation around Santa Cruz and the reasons why they opt for certain transportation modes.

Figure 5: How do you usually travel within Santa Cruz? Please select up to two.

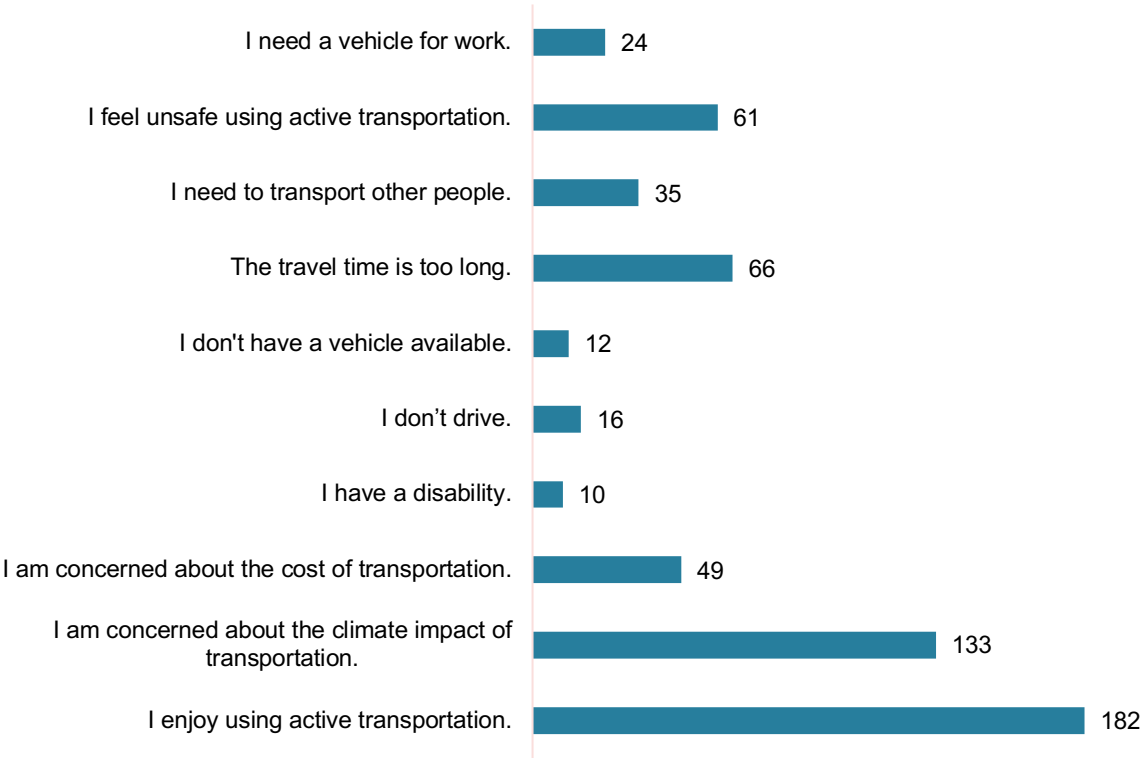


Bicycling Outpaces Driving as Primary Travel Mode: A notable 193 respondents (just under half) identified biking or e-biking as one of two primary modes of transportation, surpassing the number of respondents who primarily drive (177 individuals). Walking falls in the middle, with 84 respondents indicating it as their primary mode of transportation. Only 27 participants reported using transit as one of their primary modes of transportation and only two reported rolling via scooter, skateboard, etc. (

Figure 5)

Figure 6 highlights the primary motivations and barriers influencing active transportation choices among survey respondents. The data reveals a strong preference for active transportation, driven by enjoyment and environmental awareness, while also shedding light on key obstacles such as safety concerns and travel time.

Figure 6: What are the main factors that influence your travel choices? Please select up to three.



- **Strong Enthusiasm for Active Transportation:** Most participants (182 respondents) use active transportation simply because they enjoy doing so.
- **High Awareness of Transportation’s Environmental Impact:** Awareness of transportation’s role in contributing to climate change is strong among survey participants, with 133 individuals (the second most selected answer) citing this concern as the reason they use active transportation. This aligns with the high rate of active transportation use and underscores the commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship in Santa Cruz.
- **Key Barriers to Active Transportation:** The two most cited obstacles to using active transportation were feeling unsafe (61 responses) and long travel times (66 responses). Addressing these concerns will be critical to increasing the viability and appeal of non-motorized travel options.

Location-Specific Feedback

Figures 7-10 show feedback received for specific challenging locations throughout the city for those using active modes. Some locations received more than one comment, represented with progressively larger dots. Overall, respondents provided 74 comments about crossing the street,

55 comments about bicycling, and 38 comments about walking. Feedback was consistent with input received at in-person events, including:

- **Arterial roads feel unsafe for all modes.** Mission Street received the most comments on the online interactive map regarding challenges walking, biking, and especially crossing the street. Respondents said marked crossings are infrequent and drivers ignore pedestrians in crosswalks and the flashing lights of the RRFBs. Ocean Street was cited on the interactive map for biking and crossing issues, especially northwest of the junction with Highway 17 where highway off-ramps contribute to fast vehicle traffic and limit the visibility of active modes. Water Street was cited as difficult to cross for pedestrians and bicyclists, and Soquel Avenue was cited by many as unsafe for biking due to the narrow bike lane located directly between moving vehicle traffic and parked cars.
- **Vehicles do not yield to pedestrians and bicyclists at street crossings along the Rail Trail.** It's unclear who has the right-of-way and some of the crossings have limited visibility for both drivers and trail users.
- **The Pacific Avenue/Beach Avenue traffic circle at the Wharf is crowded, leading to conflicts between modes.** Many people descend on this location, especially in summer, and the pedestrians on the narrow sidewalks spill into the bike lanes, causing bicyclists to compete with drivers in the congested streets.
- **Pacific Avenue downtown could be even more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly if closed to vehicle traffic.** Respondents cited many conflicts between modes along this pedestrian-heavy commercial corridor.
- **Merging onto the Rail Trail at East Cliff Drive is a challenge.** Here, bicyclists must merge onto the sidewalk to access the Rail Trail, competing with pedestrians for space.
- **The West Cliff shared-use path is too narrow for the volume of users, particularly when mixing bicyclists with pedestrians.** The path should be made wider and bicycle traffic should be separated from pedestrian traffic.

Beyond the common challenge of crossing arterials as an active transportation user, these comments highlight that active transportation is very popular in Santa Cruz to the extent that finding dedicated space for all modes is necessary to minimize speed differential conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

Figure 7: All Location-Specific Comments (167 total)

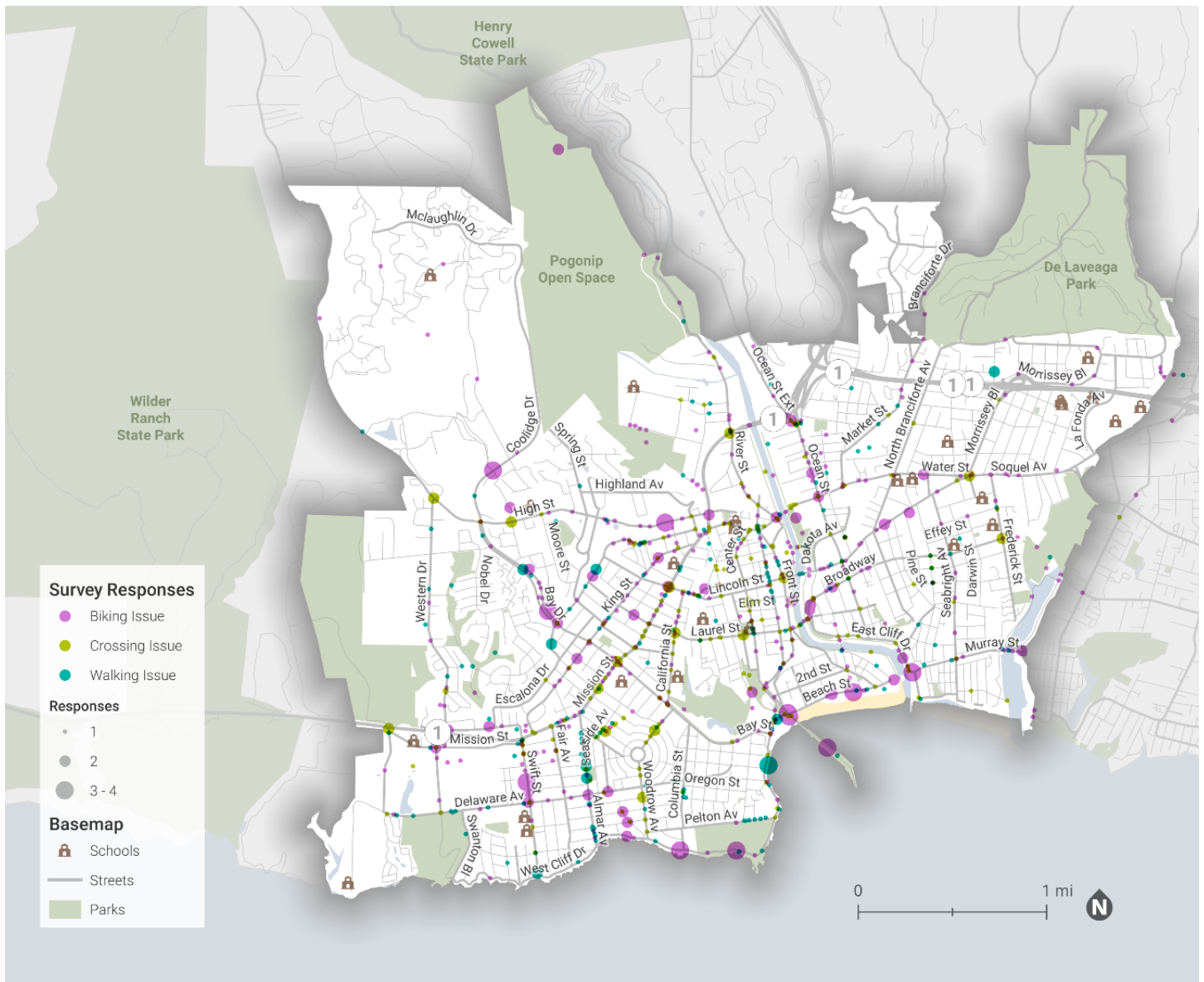


Figure 8: Location-Specific Bicycling Issues (55 total comments)



Figure 9: Location-Specific Walking Issues (38 total comments)



Figure 10: Location-Specific Crossing Issues (74 total comments)

