



MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 2, 2026

TO: Oona Smith, Senior Regional Planner, Humboldt County Association of Governments
Netra Khatri, City Engineer, City of Arcata

FROM: Dan Burden, Josh Meyer, and Sarah Bowman, Victor Dover, Blue Zones Project Team

SUBJECT: Humboldt Multimodal and Vibrant Neighborhoods Planning: **Arcata Walk/Bike Audit Recommendations—Valley East Boulevard, Valley West Boulevard, and Giuntoli Lane**

INTRODUCTION

Arcata was selected to participate in the *Humboldt Multimodal and Vibrant Neighborhoods Planning Project*. The project was funded by a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant awarded to the Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) in partnership with local jurisdictions that committed grant matching funds. This document summarizes the findings of a one-day field visit by Arcata City staff, elected officials, residents, and the Blue Zones team of Dan Burden, Victor Dover and Josh Meyer. The goal is to create safe and comfortable walking and bicycling routes for residents and visitors and ultimately improve safety for all modes of travel. The process, outcomes and recommended improvements are summarized in the report below.

A walking audit is a special lens for seeing, and developing an understanding of, what is working and what is not to achieve a more livable, walkable, multimodal, and healthy neighborhood. While the walking audit reveals several bold initiatives underway in a community, it also shows what is not being done. In many cases, an engineering study must follow the recommendations of an assessment. Not all the needed data is available to the evaluators. For example, where an Edge Lane Road or a raised crossing may be an ideal solution to reduce speeds, increase courtesy among drivers, and increase walking, an additional study is often appropriate. A temporary pop-up demonstration, or another short-term solution, can often be beneficial.

WALKING, BICYCLING AND DRIVING ROUTE ASSESSMENT

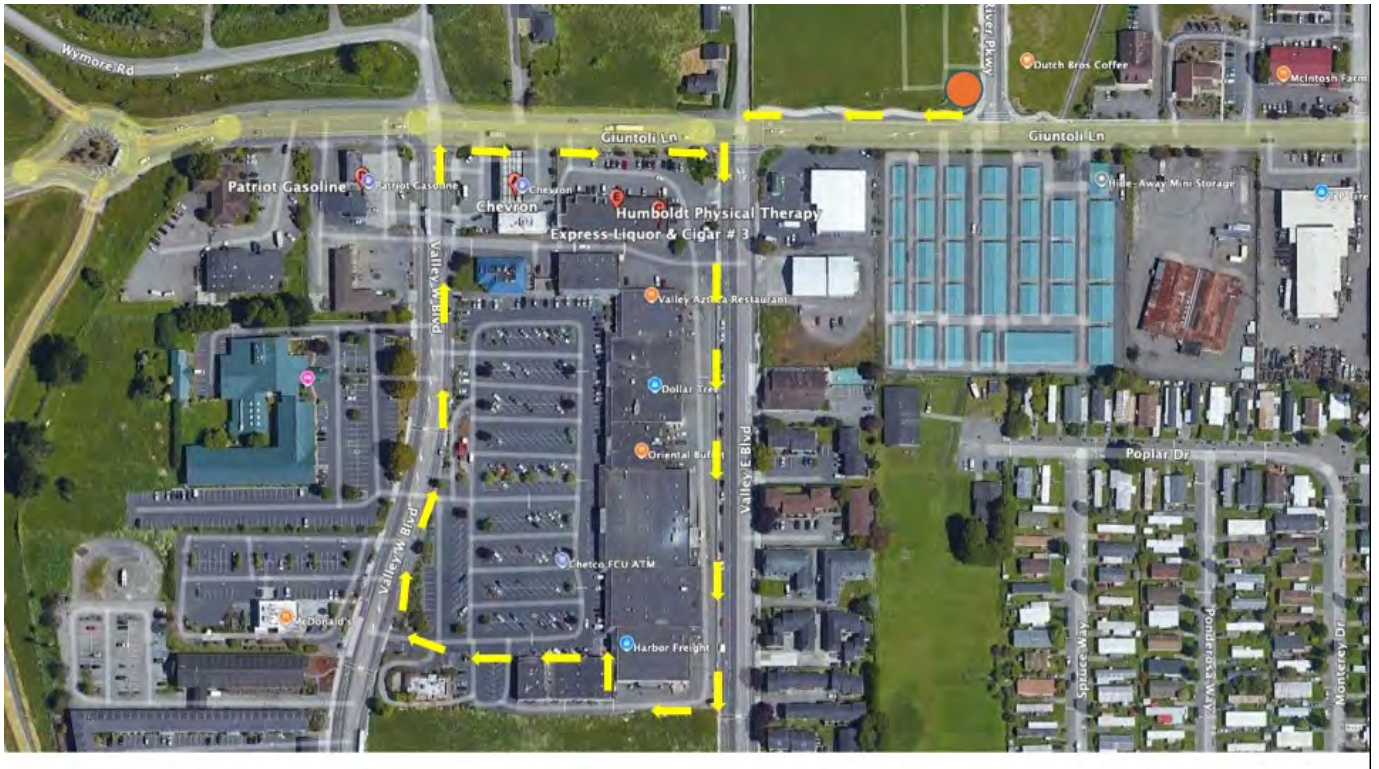
On December 2, 2025, Blue Zones team met with City of Arcata staff and Council members, Humboldt County Association of Governments and community members to conduct a two-hour circular walking audit event. Approximately 20 people participated in the walk and discussions, including representatives of the visually impaired community and several bicyclists.

The assessment began with an overview meeting at the TSC Tractor Supply Company parking lot on Mad River Parkway. A guided walk followed through portions of Valley East Boulevard, Valley West Boulevard, Giuntoli Lane, and nearby shopping district. Activities included:

- Field assessments of infrastructure conditions on Valley West and Valley East boulevards, and Giuntoli Lane, including the aging strip center and adjacent hotels on Valley West Boulevard
- Observations of the morning arrival of workers and shoppers
- Observations of newer infill housing on Valley West Boulevard
- Observations of midblock crossings on both boulevards

The event concluded with a “Talk Story” summary conversation, during which participants shared observations and documented challenges related to walking and bicycling conditions in the area.

Image: Map of Walking Audit Route



The Blue Zones team reviewed and distilled findings, and prepared the following preliminary recommendations based on observations and analyses of traffic operations and infrastructure conditions. This included discussions with Arcata Building & Engineering Department staff.

- Retain or consider reduction of posted and target speed on all three corridors
- Narrow lanes on all three corridors
- Add high-visibility striping at midblock crosswalks
- Add or widen buffered bike lanes on all three corridors
- Provide curb extensions and consider raised crosswalks at key locations



- Add pedestrian-scale lighting at key locations
- Encourage pedestrian connectivity improvements through the Valley West Shopping Center

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Giuntoli Lane is a 3-lane suburban roadway, 40-feet wide, with bike lanes and mostly attached sidewalks on each side. The posted speed is 35 mph. All-way stop controls at the intersections with Valley West and Valley East boulevards keep speeds moderate. There are numerous driveways to adjacent commercial properties.

The intersection of Giuntoli Lane and Valley West Boulevard has crosswalks marked on one of the four legs. The intersection with Valley East Boulevard has crosswalks marked on two of three legs. With high-mounted Cobra Head lighting focused on roadway illumination, nighttime visibility for pedestrians is reduced.

Valley East Boulevard is a 60-foot-wide suburban roadway, with two 13-foot-wide travel lanes, buffered bike lanes and attached sidewalks on both sides. On-street parking is available on both sides. The posted speed is 25 mph. Sidewalks on the shopping center side are narrow (4 feet) and difficult to navigate.

Valley West Boulevard is also 60-feet-wide, with a center turn lane, two 12-foot travel lanes, buffered bike lanes and 5-foot attached sidewalks on both sides. Frequent driveways along the 1/3-mile stretch between Giuntoli Lane and Valley East Boulevard create multiple conflict points for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. On-street parking is available on the shopping center side. The posted speed is 25 mph.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are summarized in the table below.

Recommendations	Proposed Time Frame
Giuntoli Lane	
Reduce the posted and target speed from 35 mph to 30 mph. Narrow travel lanes and Two-Way-Left-Turn Lane to 10 feet and provide buffered bike lanes.	6-12 months
Provide new pedestrian scale street lighting on the strip center side of the road. Consider marking the crosswalk on the east leg of the intersection with Valley West Boulevard/Wymore Road. Consider a raised midblock crossing at the trail between Dutch Brothers Coffee and Arcata Animal Hospital or intersection with Mad River Parkway to improve pedestrian connectivity and slow down traffic.	1-2 years
Consider installing a single-lane roundabout at each of the Valley Boulevard intersections.	1-3 years
Valley West Boulevard	



Retain the posted and target speed at 25 mph. Remark all travel and turn lanes to 10-foot width and widen buffers.	6-12 months
Provide high-visibility latitudinal striping and curb extensions on all crosswalks without stop controls. Consider installing Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons and raised crosswalks to support motorists yielding and slowing speeds.	1-2 years
Provide new pedestrian-scale street lighting to better connect hotels, new housing and residential neighborhoods with the shopping center.	1-2 years
Valley East Boulevard	
Retain the posted and target speed at 25 mph. Remark all travel and turn lanes to 10-foot width and widen bike lane buffers.	6-12 months
Provide high-visibility transverse striping and curb extensions on all crosswalks without stop controls. Consider installing Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons and raised crosswalks to support yielding and slow speeds.	1-2 years
Shopping and Hotel Area	
Work with property owners to provide one or more painted and/or paved pedestrian paths connecting sidewalks and building fronts through the shopping center's parking areas.	1-2 years
Work with shopping center owner to install high-visibility striping and raised crossings near parking lot entrances.	
Once interest is shown by the owner or a new owner of the shopping center, this commercial strip could be converted into a true mixed-use village following a traditional short block land use pattern.	3-5 years

We extend our sincere gratitude to Oona Smith, HCAOG Senior Regional Planner, and Netra Khatri, Arcata City Engineer, for their valuable insights and active participation in developing these recommendations. Their expertise and contributions will continue to be instrumental in advancing outcomes from this walking audit.

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APPENDIX A – Background Materials

Additional materials and deliverables regarding the *Humboldt Multimodal and Vibrant Neighborhoods Planning Project* can be accessed at: www.hcaog.net/programs-projects/bike-walk-roll, under “Highlights.” Specific to the Walking/Biking Audits, this webpage provides photos, workshop presentations (slides and video recording),



and a “Humboldt Toolkit & Walking Audits Reports,” which includes photos that illustrate examples of the traffic-calming measures that are recommended in this technical memo.

APPENDIX B – Additional Resources

There are many high-quality resources available to support multimodal transportation needs assessments. They can help identify improvements and help develop projects, policies, and programs that enhance mobility options, improve safety, and strengthen connected communities.

Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Resources

- [A Systematic Safety Study of Pedestrians in Tribal Areas](#)
- [Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks](#)
- [Local and Rural Road Safety Program](#), USDOT Federal Highway Administration
 - Includes [link](#) to page with training, tools, guidance and countermeasures for local practitioners.
- [Narrow Lanes Save Lives: A Way to Make to Make Our Communities Safer and Healthier](#)
 - Extensive study showing that narrower lanes can reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities.
 - Includes policy recommendations for lane width reductions.
- [City Limits: Setting Safe Speed Limits on Urban Streets](#)
 - See also: [City Limits: Quick Guide on Conducting a Safe Speed Study and Using the Risk Matrix](#)
- [California AB 1014](#)
 - Modifies the traditional 85th percentile rule by allowing Caltrans and local authorities to set speed limits lower than prevailing traffic speeds.
- [Improving Intersections for Pedestrians and Bicyclists: Information Guide](#), USDOT Federal Highway Administration
 - 2022 resource informing the state of the practice on intersection planning and design to help eliminate fatalities and serious injuries while also making roads better places for walking and bicycling.
 - Supplements FHWA’s series of intersection informational guides and makes direct connections to other FHWA bikeway and pedestrian facility selection guides.
- Edge Lane Roads:
 - <https://www.edgelaneroads.com/>
 - [Safety Considerations for All Road Users on Edge Lane Roads](#)
 - <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/db68f2a2260c4efaa827d77bc84f1a3c>
 - <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/designing-bikeways-for-all-ages-and-abilities/bikeways-on-low-speed-low-volume-streets/advisory-bike-lanes/>
- Street Lighting:
 - [Street Light Motion Sensors](#)
 - [FHWA Roadway Lighting Resources](#)
- [Active Transportation Resource Center](#) (ATRC)
 - Webinars, trainings, events, resource library, and projects and programs to support active transportation initiatives.



- [Active Transportation Programs Design Guide](#), Washington State Department of Transportation
 - Helpful reference published in 2024 with engineering standards and preferred treatments to create safer, connected and low-traffic stress environments.
- UC Berkeley Safe Transportation Research and Education Center (SafeTREC) [Transportation Injury Mapping System \(TIMS\)](#):
 - Features the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Mapping tool that provides pedestrian and bicycle crash maps within ½- mile radius of public schools in California.
 - Also features the ATP Maps & Summary Data mapping tool that provides pedestrian and bicycle facility hot spots within specified project and/or community limits.
- [Street Story: A Platform for Community Engagement](#):
 - A community engagement platform provided by UC Berkeley SafeTREC in English and Spanish that allows residents, community groups, and agencies to collect information about transportation crashes, near misses, general hazards, and safe locations to travel. The tool is free to use, anonymous, and publicly accessible.
- [SafeTREC Complete Streets Safety Assessments](#):
 - SafeTREC provides free technical assistance to communities across California, creating safe spaces for people to walk and bike. Specific eligibility varies by program and includes cities and public schools/colleges with a population greater than 2,500, all counties, and all Federally Recognized Tribes.
 - The Complete Streets Safety Assessments home page also includes several on-line and downloadable resources:
 - [California Safe Speeds Toolkit \(2023\)](#)
 - [Complete Streets and their effect on increasing safety for all road-users \(2018\)](#)
 - [A Technical Guide for Conducting Traffic Safety Assessments for California Communities \(2015\)](#)
 - [A Technical Guide for Conducting Pedestrian Safety Assessments for California Communities \(2013\)](#)
 - [A Technical Guide for Conducting Bicycle Safety Assessments for California Communities \(2014\)](#)
- [Active Transportation Resource Center](#) (ATRC) Resource Library [Evaluation and Data Tools Page](#):
 - Includes tools and resources for data collection and analysis to assist with active transportation needs assessments and identifying options for improvements.

Tools and Resources for Walking and Bicycling Audits

- [California Center for Physical Activity Walk to School Walkability Checklist](#)
- [AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit](#) (available in English and Spanish)
- [AARP and League of American Bicyclists Bike Audit Tool Kit](#) (available in English and Spanish)
- SRTS National Partnership [Let's Go For A Walk: A Toolkit for Planning and Conducting a Walk Audit](#)
- Active Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) Resource Library [Walk and Bike Audits Page](#) and Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) [Audit Tools](#) Page:



- Includes additional guides, tools and checklists for planning and conducting audits to gather information about street conditions, engage community members, and inform planning and traffic safety projects.

Tools and Resources for Pop-up Demonstrations and Quick-build Projects

- [Planning for the Future: Quick-Build Pedestrian Improvements in Indian Country](#)
- [Quick-Build Projects for Small Towns, Rural and Suburban Contexts](#)
- AARP [The Pop-Up Placemaking Toolkit](#)
- Team Better Block [Recipes](#) for temporary installations and longer duration quick build projects.
- Transportation for America [State of the Art Transportation Planning: A Do-it-Yourself Toolkit](#)
- Tactical Urbanist [Guides](#) web site and downloadable resources for planning, design, implementation and materials for art, bike lanes, crosswalks, parklets, transit stops, enhanced public spaces, open streets and more.
- People for Bikes [Quick Builds for Better Streets: A New Project Delivery Model for U.S. Cities](#)
- California Bicycle Coalition [Quick Build Guide: How to Build Safer Streets Quickly and Affordably.](#)
- Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) [Demonstration Project Implementation Guide](#)
 - See also MnDot Demonstration Project Engagement and Evaluation Toolkit which can be downloaded from link to the home page above.
- Washington Department of Transportation [Active Transportation Programs Quick Build Guide](#)