PADDLING TRAIL
Welcome to the Mission Reach Paddling Trail. Have fun and prepare for a
toom in a natural condition with occasional paddling choices through natural
riffles. Please use the designated launch points. There are ever-changing,
dynamic systems with inherent dangers, so please remember the following
safety tips:

- Inflatable boats or watercraft, paddle boats and stand-up
  paddle boards are not allowed.
- Make sure your paddling
  and proceed at your own risk.
- Paddle with at least one other person.
- Know your limits of endurance and self rescue on rivers.
- Tell someone not paddling with you of your paddling plan
  and stick to your plan.
- Make sure your equipment (canoe or kayak) is in proper working order.
- Check weather and river conditions prior to paddling.
- Always wear a properly adjusted, suit/visor approved personal
  flotation device and bring a whistle or other sound producing device for
  use in emergency situations.
- Reduce injuries by wearing protective footwear and carrying
  drinking water, sunscreen and insect repellant.
- Park out your trash to keep the river clean.
- No glass containers.
- Carry a cell phone. Contact 911 for all emergencies and
  311 for all non-emergencies.
- Please do not feed the wildlife and keep your pets on a leash.

Caution: Do not proceed
if water covers trail.
# Pedestrian & Bicycle Recommendation
## For the Mission Trail Access Study

### Table of Contents

**Volume 1**
**Alamo Area Regional Summary Report**

1. Introduction ................................................................. 1-5
2. The Need for Bicycling & Walking .............................. 1-13
3. Planning Process ......................................................... 1-19
4. Summary of Recommendations ............................... 1-25

**Volume 2**
**San Antonio Pedestrian Study**

1. Introduction ................................................................. 2-5
   - Area One ................................................................. 2-16
   - Area Two ................................................................. 2-25
   - Area Three ............................................................... 2-30
   - Area Four ................................................................. 2-35
   - Area Five ................................................................. 2-42
   - Area Six ................................................................. 2-49
   - Area Seven .............................................................. 2-54
   - Area Eight ............................................................... 2-61
   - Area Nine ................................................................. 2-66
   - Area Ten ................................................................. 2-73

**Volume 3**
**Mission Trail Access Study**

1. Making Community Connections ................................ 3-5

**Volume 4**
**City of Boerne**

4.1 Introduction ............................................................. 4-5
4.2 Existing Conditions ................................................. 4-15
4.3 Recommendations .................................................. 4-25
4.4 Implementation ....................................................... 4-47

**Volume 5**
**City of New Braunfels**

5.1 Introduction ............................................................. 5-5
5.2 Existing Conditions ................................................. 5-17
5.3 Recommendations .................................................. 5-29
5.4 Implementation ....................................................... 5-61

**Volume 6**
**City of Seguin**

6.1 Introduction ............................................................. 6-5
6.2 Existing Conditions ................................................. 6-17
6.3 Recommendations .................................................. 6-27
6.4 Implementation ....................................................... 6-49

**Appendix A**
**Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Toolkit**

Introduction ................................................................. A-5
Active Transportation Facility Matrix ......................... A-7
Active Transportation Design Challenges ................... A-16
Network Support Facilities ......................................... A-21
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Introduction
San Antonio’s Missions are important historic and community landmarks. They attract nearly three million visitors a year and were granted World Heritage Site status in July 2015. Locally, the Missions are valuable community resources: places where people attend church, picnic, play, walk for exercise, enjoy the outdoors, and learn about shared culture and history. The National Park Service (NPS) sees an opportunity to enhance the experience of residents and visitors alike by improving walking and bicycling connections between the Mission sites and their surrounding communities.

The fifteen mile long San Antonio River Walk is the spine of the regional bicycling and walking system and it connects the four Missions in this study: Mission Concepción, Mission San Jose, Mission San Juan and Mission Espada. However, walking and biking connections between the River Walk, the Missions, and the adjacent neighborhoods are often missing or in poor condition. This study examines the walking and bicycling networks in and around those four Missions and issues recommendations to make the networks more connected and the historic sites more accessible by foot and bike.

The NPS and community partners are working together to enhance bicycle and pedestrian access to the Missions and related historic sites. Community efforts include the development of a trail system along the San Antonio River, expansion of the bike sharing system and roadway improvements connecting downtown with each mission.

Benefits of Walking and Bicycling for South San Antonio Missions
Bicycling and walking improvements, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, high-quality bike lanes, bicycle parking and trails, bring a host of benefits to the region: increasing community health, supporting the economy and improving quality of life, all while complementing the historic character of the Missions and their neighborhoods.

The following is a summary of the benefits of walking and bicycling for the historic Mission sites.

Quality of Life
Development patterns, policies and transportation improvements that promote walking and bicycling help reduce automobile dependency, parking demand and roadway congestion, and improve the community’s overall quality of life. In the South San Antonio Missions area, bicycling and walking improvements will connect residents and visitors to historic sites, churches and other cultural institutions. Trails, sidewalks and bike lanes take up less space and require less asphalt than roadway expansion and car parking. Therefore, they can help accommodate growth in visitors and residents while being more compatible with the historic character of the communities and their historic preservation policies. These improvements will make the Missions more accessible to those who cannot drive - seniors, children, and people with disabilities - or those who choose not to. Better bicycling and walking access can help increase the number of local visitors to each Mission site, and reduce the need to accommodate additional motor vehicles.

Health
Improving walking and bicycling routes in and around the Missions can reduce barriers to physical activity and help more people meet daily physical activity levels. The Mayo Clinic encourages walking regularly to prevent or manage conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes. The American Medical Association and
the Center for Disease Control recommend adults engage in at least 20 minutes a day of physical activity.\(^2\)

The NPS has launched the Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative to “reframe the role of parks and public lands as an emerging, powerful health prevention strategy. With this renewed focus on health, we hope to bring about lasting change in Americans’ lifestyle choices and their relationship with nature and the outdoors.”\(^3\) The recommendations in this study can encourage walking and bicycling and help more residents experience the outdoors and get the amount physical activity to make and keep them healthy.

“Our national parks have always been loved for their symbolism and scenery, but we aim to increase the awareness and recognition of their efficacy for health prevention, medicine and therapy.”\(^4\) - NPS Director Jon Jarvis

**Economic**

Expenditures on transportation and health care make up over 22 percent of annual average household expenditure in the United States.\(^5\) Walking and bicycling are inexpensive travel modes than help people save money. Eighty-seven percent of annual members in Washington D.C. said they saved money on weekly travel costs by using Capital Bikeshare. On average, this resulted in an $800 per year saving on personal transportation costs for these users.\(^5\) As bike share expands on NPS lands and helps connect the Missions in the area, more residents will be able to experience similar savings.

**Mission Site Planning**

The goal of this study was to identify opportunities to enhance bicycling and walking access between the Mission sites and the surrounding communities. Currently, pedestrian and bicycle access focuses on providing connections to and from surrounding parking areas, with less focus on direct access to and from neighboring communities. By filling gaps and making connections, the plan will create a more comprehensive transportation system for all travel modes and enhance transportation options for surrounding neighborhoods.

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Pedestrian access from the neighborhood to Mission Concepción through a parking lot

Through the planning process, the study team:
- Solicited community feedback through a public event and an interactive map
- Brought together NPS and City of San Antonio staff to identify:
  - Places where people will enter the Missions by foot and bike from the surrounding neighborhoods (access points)
  - Places within the Missions people visit (points of interest)
  - Desired bicycling and walking routes within Mission-adjacent neighborhoods (access routes)
- Produced specific recommendations for each Mission in the study and their surrounding neighborhoods
- Produced site plans for each of the Missions incorporating the recommendations

**Stakeholders**

To understand how visitors and local residents get to and from each Mission site, the study team provided an interactive online map in which members of the public indicated where they walk and bike in the area. The team also hosted an information booth at the March 2015 Ciclovia to solicit additional input in person.

A variety of stakeholders are involved in the planning, design and implementation of plans for the area. The NPS manages and protects the historic sites through an agreement with the Archdiocese, which owns the Missions themselves, while the majority of the transportation system is under the jurisdiction of the city, county or state. The NPS and City of San Antonio outreach and trail planning staff participated in a day-long stakeholder workshop to collaborate and share ideas.
Stakeholder Workshop

At the workshop, a dozen NPS and city agency staff used maps to identify access points the community would use to visit the Mission properties. These included street crossings to adjacent neighborhoods and links to the area’s trail systems. Next, they identified the points of interest within the Mission sites. These included the churches, visitor’s centers and historic Mission gates. The participants drew “desire lines” from each access point to each point of interest. Desire lines typically represent the shortest path between two points and the route people prefer to travel. This created a web of routes across the Mission sites. The routes were consolidated into paths preferred by pedestrians while preserving archeological features.

The process was repeated for each Mission site and the routes were refined and finalized after the workshop to create the site plans on the following pages. The following guiding principles for pedestrian and bicycle access were established as a basis for providing recommendations.

The routes should be:

• Safe – Pedestrians and bicyclists need safe connections from their homes to the Missions. This means creating safe street crossings and eliminating routes across parking lots, driveways or internal roads.
• Direct – All pathways should provide as direct a route as possible to and within the Mission sites.
• Attractive – The Missions are historic, beautiful and relaxing places. All routes should reinforce the serenity and enjoyment of the sites, while preserving and protecting natural and historic resources. Routes should not run along parking lots or driveways; if they must be near vehicle routes, they should be buffered by landscaping.
Neighborhood Access Planning
The study also focused on creating neighborhood access routes within the adjacent neighborhoods for up to three miles for bicyclists and up to one mile for pedestrians. These tend to be typical distances that people bicycling and people walking are willing to travel to their destination.

To determine the best routes, the study team examined the existing street network. Streets adjacent to the Missions are typically classified as arterial or neighborhood streets. Arterial streets are designed to move vehicles directly and swiftly to their destinations. They typically have high speed limits and high traffic volumes. Without sidewalks and high-quality bike lanes, arterial streets are often unpleasant and unsafe for people walking and biking.

Neighborhood streets, in contrast, serve individual homes and are designed as low speed and typically carry low volumes of traffic. Neighborhood streets are typically safe and enjoyable for riding a bicycle and, with sidewalks, are safe and enjoyable for walking.

Arterial Streets
As arterial streets often offer direct routes, the network of arterials surrounding the Missions should be redesigned to include safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This includes reducing the speed limit and performing lane and road diets where warranted by traffic volumes. Six to eight foot wide sidewalks should be installed with six foot landscaped buffers. Bicycle facilities, with separation from vehicle traffic, should be installed.

The figures to the right show a typical arterial street, S. Flores Street, which is adjacent to all of the Missions. It has four lanes for vehicles and very narrow sidewalks, where the usable space is narrowed by light posts, signs and other objects. These cross sections are examples of how the street can be reconfigured to provide wide bicycle facilities, on-street parking and two vehicle lanes. Over time, the pedestrian area should be enhanced with wide sidewalks with a line of trees buffering them from traffic.

On many arterial streets near the Mission sites, the amount of traffic most likely does not warrant more than two lanes. This study recommends that nearby arterial streets implement road diets to decrease the number of through lanes and provide comfortable bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
Neighborhood Streets

Some neighborhood streets provide a direct route to the Missions. Not all neighborhood streets have sidewalks and some existing sidewalks are not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Based on community feedback, the study team learned that many sidewalks are used to park vehicles. This study recommends that ADA-compliant sidewalks be installed on neighborhood streets that currently do not have sidewalks. Parking on sidewalks should be phased out through education, enforcement and new streetscape design.

The following two issues frequently occur in the City of San Antonio and neighborhoods next to the Missions:

- Crosswalks and signals: Neighborhood streets often cross arterials without marked crosswalks or pedestrian signals.
- Offset intersections: Neighborhood streets often come to an intersection and do not continue directly through on the other side. Offset intersections create difficulties in navigation and conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicles.

Specific designs for safe crossings must be developed for neighborhood streets that cross arterial streets. Marked crosswalks and pedestrian refuge islands should be installed at intersections with arterials. Marked crosswalks help inform drivers that a pedestrian may cross at this location and drivers are expected to stop. Pedestrian refuge islands create a safe place for pedestrians and bicyclists at the mid-point of the roadway before crossing. For bicyclists, it may be necessary to extend the refuge island to allow bicyclists to be able to travel through the offset intersections.

Example of offset intersections along Florest Street

Example of pedestrian and bicycle refuge island

General Recommendations:

- Where traffic volumes allow, decrease the number of lanes on arterial streets and provide comfortable bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Enhance pedestrian areas along arterial roads with wide sidewalks and a tree-lined buffer
- Install accessible sidewalks (4 feet or greater) on neighborhood streets that do not have sidewalks
- Phase-out sidewalk parking on neighborhood streets through education, enforcement and new streetscape design
- Provide marked crosswalks, pedestrian islands and pedestrian signals where neighborhood streets cross arterial streets
Mission specific recommendations

The Missions attract international, national, and local visitors to the historic sites and active churches. The Missions boast of beautifully restored churches, the remnants of robust farming activities, historic acequias, surrounded by the original walls that protected the Missions. The Missions today connect to the River Walk Trail, providing residents with safe pedestrian and bicycle access to downtown San Antonio and numerous other amenities along the route.

The following section describes each Mission and provides specific recommendations to improve bicycling and walking access within the site and to and from adjacent neighborhoods. Maps illustrate the recommendations for each site.

Mission Concepción

Dedicated in 1755, Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña was built on a strong bedrock foundation. The Mission buildings have needed little restoration and along with rooms of preserved frescos are a regional attraction. The church building hosts regular services for local residents.

The Mission grounds are flanked by residential neighborhoods, the Bexar County Juvenile Detention complex, St. PJ’s Children’s Home, and Concepción Park, which connects to the River Walk Trail. Comfortable bicycle and pedestrian facilities will help adjacent neighbors, juvenile court staff, River Walk users and others access the Mission grounds for educational programing, physical activity, church services, and the enjoyment of the site’s historic and natural elements.

Recommendations focus on creating safe, direct and attractive connections from neighborhoods and the River Walk Trail to the Mission buildings, as well as enhancing the existing linkages and landscaping along the edge of the Mission grounds.

Recommendations:

1. Create a bicycle connection between the River Walk Trail and East Theo Avenue. Currently the River Walk Trail connection to the Mission narrows and becomes a pedestrian-only facility. There are bicycle lanes on the parallel East Theo Avenue, but there is no connection between the Trail and the bicycle lanes. Enhancing this connection with curb ramps, crosswalks and wayfinding will allow experienced bicyclists to ride to Mission Concepción.

2. Widen the existing multi-use trail from Mission Concepción to the River Walk Trail. While the trail connecting Mission Concepción to the River Walk Trail provides excellent connectivity for people walking, bicycles are not allowed. To provide comfortable connections for novice bicyclists, the existing trail should be widened and bicycles should be allowed. Enhance access to the trail along Theo Parkway. Currently a 10-foot wide multi-use trail provides comfortable connectivity between Mission Concepción and the Concepción Swimming Pool along Theo Parkway. However, an existing wire fence along the trail currently acts as a barrier for pedestrian access. Provide breaks in the fence every 300 feet to provide comfortable access points to the existing trail.

Additional recommendations are provided on the Mission site plans for Mission Concepción on page 3-12.
Mission Trail Access Study - Making Community Connections

Existing Facilities
- Trail
- Bike Lane
- Shared Roadway
- Schools
- Mission Concepción

Proposed Access Improvements
- Proposed Trail Connections
- Arterial Street Connections
- Neighborhood Street Connections
- Mission Specific Recommendation

Mission Concepción

Three miles from Mission site is highlighted above

0.5 mi
Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Study

- **Mission Concepción**

  - **B-cycle Station**
  - **Bicycle Parking**
  - **Existing Path/Sidewalk**
  - **Proposed Path/Sidewalk**

  **Remove cable at specific locations to allow neighborhood connectivity.**
  **Sidewalk with buffer and street trees along entire western side of property to create safe north-south pedestrian connections.**
  **Minor connection via soft-surface trail following historic compound wall. This can also be used as an exercise loop.**
  **Pedestrian connections from northern and eastern neighborhoods. The mission grounds can provide a place of respite for staff at the juvenile courts.**
  **Adjacent streets with sidewalks and street trees creating safe connections from the neighborhood.**
  **Community connection from Riverwalk Trail to the Mission and Visitor’s Center. Gateway area includes bike parking and B-cycle station.**

Mission Concepción

Scale: 200 ft
Mission San Jose

Known as the “Queen of the Missions”, this is the largest of the San Antonio Missions and was almost fully restored to its original design in the 1930s. The mission is surrounded by a complex of stone walls which protected the Mission and its parishioners. Although the site includes four entrances in each corner of the protective wall, NPS currently only provides access from the northeast and southeastern entrances which are closer to the Mission’s visitor center and main parking lot.

Mission San Jose is in close proximity to the River Walk Trail in addition to the local Mission Library. However, there are gaps in the walking and bicycling network that make it difficult to access these community resources. Additionally, the mission is located in an urban area of the City of San Antonio, surrounded by commercial and residential districts which could benefit from increased access to the site. Existing roadways, such as Roosevelt Avenue to the west and Military Drive to the south, act as barriers to biking and walking from nearby neighborhoods. The recommendations below focus on creating more comfortable connections to the Mission:

1. Provide pedestrian access to the Mission from each of the four entrances. Despite the fact that the Mission wall includes access points at each corner of the wall, only the northeast and southeast gates (those close to the main parking lot and visitor center) are open regularly, making it more difficult for people walking or bicycling to access the site. Open gates to visitors from the four available entrances to provide contiguous access to the site.

2. Provide a direct sidewalk and trail connection to the neighborhood library and playground to the north of the Mission site. Although in close proximity to the Mission Library, the current connection is circuitous and discourages walking or biking. Build a direct path to the library to shorten the walking and bicycling distance.

3. Install mid-block crossings and pedestrian islands at Roosevelt Avenue and Congress Avenue. Roosevelt Avenue, just west of the Mission site is a major street that includes four 12-foot lanes and a speed limit of 40 mph. Provide pedestrian islands and mid-block crossings to increase the number of safe crossings.

4. Enhance E. Pyron Avenue to the east of the Mission. This historic street connects directly to the River Walk Trail and could be enhanced with specialized paving, sidewalks separated from the roadway by a canopy of trees, and bicycle lanes.

5. Create an off-road connection between the Mission Park Pavilions, the River Walk Trail and Mission San Jose. A narrow but very pleasant trail exists in the woods northeast of the Mission connecting the Mission to Padre Drive. Another trail exists between the Mission Park Pavilions and Padre Drive. However, the two trails do not connect to each other. Provide a trail and marked crosswalk along Padre Drive to create a continuous connection from the Mission Park Pavilions to the Mission.

Additional recommendations are provided on the Mission site plans for Mission San Jose on page 3-15.
Mission San José

Three miles from Mission site is highlighted above

Existing Facilities
- Trail
- Bike Lane
- Shared Roadway
- Schools
- Mission San José

Proposed Access Improvements
- Proposed Trail Connections
- Arterial Street Connections
- Neighborhood Street Connections
- Mission Specific Recommendation

Mission Specific Recommendation

1

0.5 mi
Community connection highlighting historic Mission road.

Pathway at signalized intersection to connect western neighborhoods to visitor’s center and Mission compound.

Direct connection to neighborhood library and playground.

Sidewalks with buffers and street trees to establish connection with eastern neighborhoods.

Pedestrian plaza highlighting historic Mission road. Vehicles may use area for special events only.

Mission San José

Mission Trail Access Study - Making Community Connections

3-15
Originally founded in 1716, Mission San Juan Capistrano was a successful farming community located on the San Antonio River. Currently, the adjacent area is predominately rural with residential neighborhoods located 1-3 miles away. However, this will change in the near future as the former Brooks Air Force Base, which closed in 2002, is redeveloped into the mixed-use community, Brooks City Base, with housing, shops, employment centers, and parks. While the Mission can be easily accessed by motor vehicle, there is limited connectivity for people walking or biking due to the existence of busy roadways, active railroad tracks and a lack of safe crossings for people within the surrounding neighborhoods.

Recommendations focus on creating attractive and accessible connections from existing neighborhoods, the future Brooks City Base redevelopment, and the River Walk Trail to the Mission site.

Recommendations:

1. Repair bridge on Ashley Road to the west of the Mission. Ashley Road is the most direct connection to neighborhoods to the west. The bridge, which was washed out, has severed a connection between the community and the Mission.

2. Connect Brooks City Base to the Mission and River Walk Trail. Review potential connections including to the trail plans within Brooks City Base and to the River Walk Trail such as at Military Road.

3. Complete the installation of sidewalks and curb ramps on S. Presa Street. A few private properties include a sidewalk, but most of Presa Street does not include sidewalks. Constructing sidewalks will help increase the number of people accessing the Mission from the neighborhoods to the northeast of the Mission site as well as providing safe access to bus stops on Presa Street.

4. Signalize intersection at Graf Road and Presa Street. Install a traffic signal and high visibility crosswalk markings at the intersection of Graf Road and Presa Street to provide a safe place to cross for residents wishing to visit the Mission from the east.

5. Extend existing sidewalk on Mission Road to Acequia Road. This will enhance the pedestrian connection from the Mission Road Ministries to the Mission site.

Additional recommendations are provided on the Mission site plans for Mission San Juan on page 3-18.
Mission San Juan

Three miles from Mission site is highlighted above
Add connection to residents via Graf Road

Install curb extensions to slow vehicles across crosswalks

Connection to Pooley RV site

Mission San Juan

Existing Path/Sidewalk

Proposed Path/Sidewalk

B-cycle Station

Bicycle Parking
Mission San Francisco de la Espada was established in 1690 as the first Mission in Texas though it had to be rebuilt and ultimately relocated to its present location. Mission Espada is predominately surrounded by farmland, although there are residential neighborhoods located within three miles of the Mission.

Recommendations focus on creating better connections from the adjacent neighborhoods to pathways on the Mission property as well as creating a loop pathway around the Mission site.

Proposed focus areas and projects include:

1. Create a connection from the River Walk Trail to the neighborhood of McCreless Meadows. Although the River Walk Trail is within 300 feet of Shane Road, the main roadway into the neighborhood, there is no connection between the River Walk Trail and Shane Road. People who walk or bicycle must currently use Villamain Road, which does not have sidewalks. Connect the River Walk Trail and Shane Road.

2. Enhance E. Chavaneaux Road to accommodate people walking and bicycling from neighborhoods to the west of Mission Espada. Install six-foot sidewalks. Increase tree coverage and lighting.

3. Provide a comfortable bicycle and pedestrian connection to the River Walk Trail from De Sague Street. This street serves as a direct connection to the neighborhood closest to the Mission. Connect this short street to the River Walk Trail to give residents access to the Trail and Mission while avoiding busy Espada Road.

4. Create connections for people who walk and bicycle along Espada Road. At intersections with the Mission site, add crosswalks and connect the interior trail system to these crosswalks. Enhance the shoulder along Espada Road where feasible with designations for pedestrians and bicyclists and ultimately install a physical barrier such as bollards or street trees between area designated for vehicles and the area designated for people walking and bicycling.

5. Continue the River Walk Trail southwards. Continue the River Walk to create a connection with a trail along the Medina River, as planned.

Additional recommendations are provided on the Mission site plans for Mission Espada on page 3-21.
Design entrance to create safe and separated access for pedestrians.

Create connection to residents via Desague Street.

Establish trail connection at location with best visibility.

Create connection to residents on Espada Road.
References


