



617 W 7th Street, Suite 1103 Los Angeles, CA 90017 (213) 489-7443 www.altaplanning.com

To: Nayan Amin and Ian Lin, TJKM

From: Sam Corbett and Aaron Fraint, Alta Planning + Design

Date: April 10, 2020

Re: Mountain View Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress

Introduction

This memo catalogs the process of creating a Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (BLTS) assessment for the City of Mountain View. This includes the acquisition of source data, the methodology to classify stress levels, as well as a discussion of the results, which are also graphically displayed in the attached set of maps. The methodology described in this document is adapted from the Mineta Transportation Institute's *Low Stress Bicycling and Network Connectivity* (2012)¹, and has been adjusted to reflect the data available within Mountain View.

Background

BLTS is a numeric value assigned to each segment and intersection of a road network, aiming to approximate the level of stress experienced by bicyclists. BLTS is calculated directly from available street network data, considering the following built environment parameters:

- Street Segments
 - Number of through travel lanes
 - Posted speed limit
 - Class of bicycle facility (if any)
- Intersections
 - o BLTS of intersecting segments
 - o Presence of traffic signal
 - o Presence of crossing island at least 6 feet in width

The BLTS analysis is conducted twice:

- the first includes all existing and approved bicycle facilities identified in the Capital Improvement Plan
- the second also includes all planned bicycle infrastructure improvements

¹ https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/1005-low-stress-bicycling-network-connectivity.pdf

Data Inputs

A line feature class named "Road_Centerlines" was used as the source of roadway feature geometry and attributes reflecting posted speed limits. A second feature class, named "Pavement_Marking_Lines" was used to identify roadways with lane lines, and a manual process was employed to interpolate the number of through travel lanes for motor vehicles to the roadway geometries. A similar process was used to interpolate bicycle facility data from "Street Bike Network" and "BikeNetwork2019".

A GIS layer representing intersection points within Mountain View was created by transforming each line segment into its constituent start- and end-points. Using a "Signals" feature class, all signalized intersections were flagged using spatial analysis, and all non-signalized intersections with a crossing island in the median were flagged using a manual interpolation process from the "Street_Curbs" feature class.

The final set of data attributes used as inputs into this analysis were created through Tasks 2A & 2B in the Mountain View Comprehensive Modal Plan. This consisted of tagging roadway features where projects have already been approved (as identified in the Capital Improvement Plan), and where projects have been planned in the Mountain View Bicycle Transportation Plan (2015), the Santa Clara Countywide Bicycle Plan (2018), and the Caltrans D4 Bicycle Plan (2018). Attributes from these plans were combined to identify the approved and/or planned designs (if any) for each street segment in Mountain View. Additionally, new on- and off-street roadway geometries were merged into the GIS layer where brand-new facilities are planned.

Definition of LTS Values

BLTS values have a range between 1 and 4, with lower numbers signifying lower traffic stress levels. These BLTS values are defined as follows:

- BLTS 1: roadway is comfortable for all ages and abilities
- BLTS 1.5: roadway is comfortable for people of most ages and abilities, but does not feature a bicycle facility
- BLTS 2: roadway is comfortable for interested but concerned cyclists
- BLTS 3: roadway is comfortable for enthused and confident cyclists
- BLTS 4: roadway is comfortable for strong and fearless cyclists

Methodology

Segment-Based Methodology

The process for defining segment-specific BLTS consists of assigning initial values based upon the combination of speed limit and roadway width (defined by number of travel lanes). This initial classification is adapted from the Mineta Transportation Institute report, and is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Segment BLTS

Street Width 2 lanes 2 - 3 lanes 4 - 5 lanes 6 + lanes without centerline with centerline <= 25 mph 1.5 2 3 4 **Speed Limit** 2 3 4 30 mph 4 >= 35 mph 4 4 4 4

Where bicycle facilities exist, the BLTS is updated as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - BLTS Adjustment for Bike Facilities

Bicycle Facility Class	BLTS
Class 1 Trail	1
Class 2 Bike Lane	See tables below
Class 3 Bike Route on initial LTS 1.5	1
Class 3 Bike Route on initial LTS 2+	Keep base LTS
Class 4 Protected Bike Lane	1

These adjustments on Class 1 and 4 facilities account for the physical separation inherent to these designs, and the associated reduction in stress for bicyclists. The adjustment to Class 3 facilities on roads with an initial LTS of 1.5 accounts for the fact that Class 3 bicycle routes reduce stress on residential streets, but do not substantially reduce stress on wider, faster streets. Where Class 2 bicycle lanes exist, the BLTS value will be calculated as shown in Table 3 on the following page.

Table 3 - Class II Bike Lane BLTS

Street Width

		Less than 4 lanes	4 or more lanes
	<= 25 mph	1	3
Speed Limit	30 mph	2	3
Speed	35 mph	3	3
	>= 40 mph	4	4

Intersection-Based Methodology

A bicyclist's experience of stress at an intersection is impacted both by the street they're travelling along as well as the street that they must cross. As a result, the preliminary intersection BLTS is calculated as the worst BLTS of all intersecting street segments. For example, an intersection of BLTS 4 and BLTS 2 streets will be coded as BLTS 4.

The Mineta Transportation Institute identifies unsignalized intersections as a specific factor that can increase stress, particularly where the intersecting roadways feature higher speed limits, greater numbers of travel lanes, or both. Their classification is identified in the following two tables, and will be applied to all unsignalized intersections in Mountain View.

Where unsignalized intersections feature a median refuge that is at least 6 feet wide, the values in Table 4 will be used:

Table 4 - Unsignalized Intersections with Median (6'+ wide)

		Street width		
		2 - 3 lanes	4 - 5 lanes	6 + lanes
Limit	<= 30 mph	1.5	2	3
Speed	>= 35 mph	2	3	4

Where unsignalized intersections do not have a median refuge 6 feet or wider, the values in Table 5 on the following page will be used.

Table 5 - Unsignalized Intersections without Median

		Street Width		
		2 - 3 lanes	4 - 5 lanes	6 + lanes
Limit	<= 30 mph	2	3	4
Speed	>= 35 mph	3	4	4

The final intersection-level BLTS values will be identified as follows:

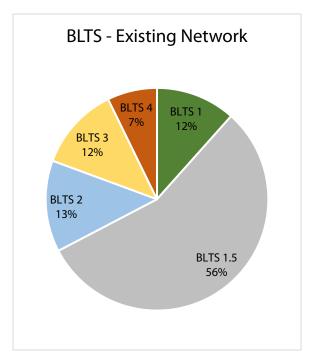
- Signalized intersections will use the worst BLTS of the intersecting segments
- Unsignalized intersections will take whichever value provides a worse BLTS score:
 - o Unsignalized BLTS as identified in Tables 4 and 5
 - Worst BLTS of intersecting segments

BLTS: Existing and Approved Projects

The initial BLTS analysis considers the stress levels of the existing street network in Mountain View. Additionally, it also incorporated a review of all bicycle-related projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan. Any approved projects that are expected to be completed in the near future are considered to be "existing".

The results are summarized in the graph at right, which shows that the BLTS 1.5 classification is the most common condition, representing 56% of all centerline miles in Mountain View.

These results are also visualized spatially in a series of maps. Maps 1 and 2 on the following pages provide a citywide view of the Existing/Approved and Planned BLTS results, using line

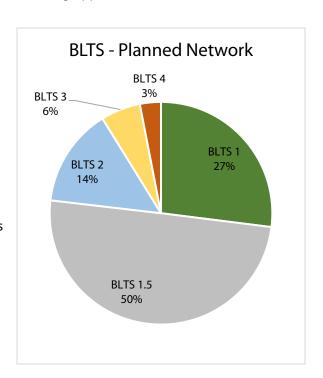


color to illustrate each BLTS level. A detailed zoomed-in view by quadrant can be found at the end of the document. Map 7 identifies the extents of the four quadrants, Maps 8 – 11 identify existing, approved, and planned bicycle facilities,² and Maps 12 – 15 show the BLTS results for the existing/approved network.

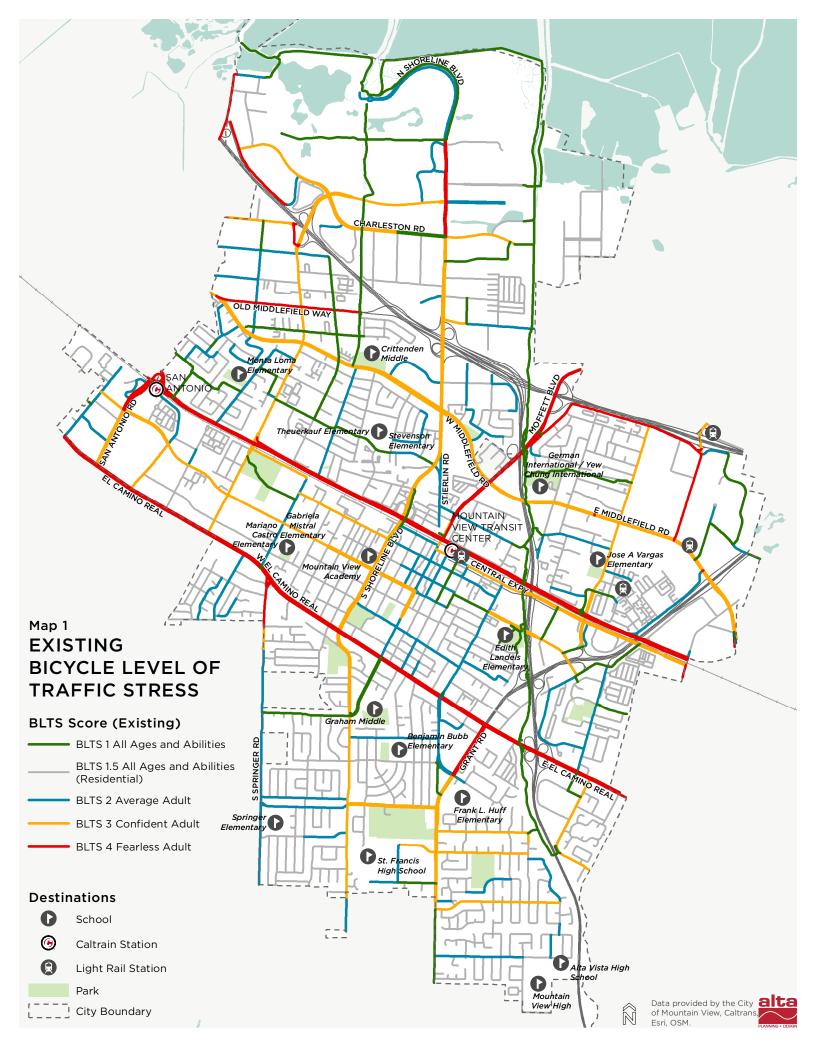
BLTS: Planned Projects

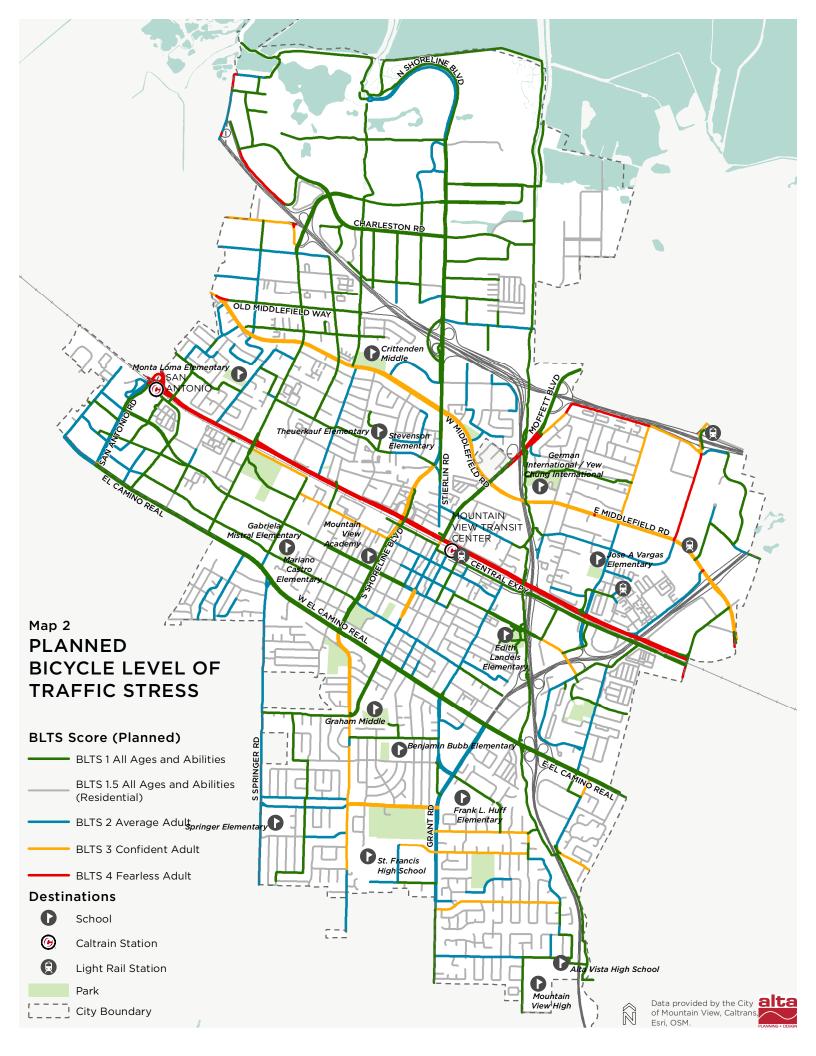
The second BLTS analysis assumes that all planned projects have been implemented, and the results are shown in Maps 16 – 19 using the same symbol styles as the Existing/Approved BLTS maps.

The graph at right summarizes the centerline mileage of the planned network, and it shows that the major change between the two scenarios is the proportion of BLTS 1 streets – it increases in the planned network to 27% of all centerline miles (from 12% in the existing/approved network).



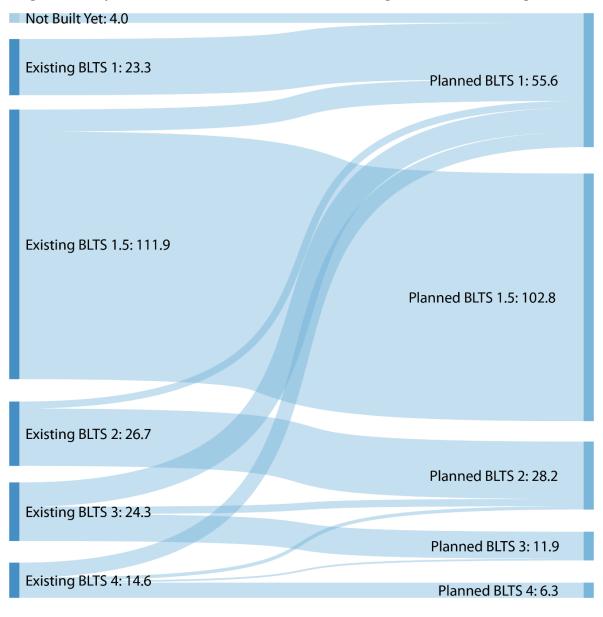
² Existing/approved facilities are shown with a thin line, while planned facilities are shown with a thick underline. In both cases, the facilities feature the same colors (class 1 is dark green, class 2 is blue, class 3 is purple, and class 4 is bright green), but the planned facility colors use a lighter shade than the existing/approved facilities.





To better understand the nuance in the change between the existing/approved and the planned scenarios, the Sankey diagram on the follow page identifies the change in mileage between the BLTS classes across scenarios. It shows that BLTS 1 accounted for 23.3 centerline miles in the existing scenario, and in the planned scenario accounts for 55.6 centerline miles. In addition to 4 miles of brand-new low-stress facilities, much of the growth is attributable to improved stress levels from streets that had been classified as BLTS 4, 3, or 1.5 in the existing scenario.

Change in BLTS by Centerline Miles between Scenarios: Existing (left) and Planned (right)



Low Stress Network Comparison

The existing and planned networks were analyzed to identify "islands" of low-stress connectivity. These islands are characterized as contiguous low-stress road segments (BLTS of 1, 1.5, or 2). The issue with the low-stress islands is that bicyclists traveling between them encounter higher-stress conditions which expose them to greater risks and may even preclude them from making the trip by bicycle. The process of identifying low-stress islands consisted of:

- Filtering the roadway network to only include low-stress segments (BLTS 1, 1.5, or 2)
- Removal of portions of low-stress segments within 100' of high-stress intersections (BLTS 3 or 4)
- Clustering of the remaining segments, buffering by 300′, and filtering the resulting polygons to those that have an area greater than or equal to one-tenth of a square mile (0.1 sq. mi.).

A citywide summary of the existing and planned low-stress islands can be seen in Maps 3 and 4 respectively (pages 12 and 13). A detailed quadrant view of the existing network's low-stress islands can be seen in Maps 20 - 23, and the planned network's low-stress islands can be seen in Maps 24 - 27.

Key findings include:

- In the existing network, there are 26 distinct low-stress islands. The average size is 0.33 sq. mi. and the largest island is comprised of the roadways connected to Steven's Creek Trail, covering 2.63 sq. mi. However, it should be noted that some of these connections require circuitous routing around high-stress or impermeable barriers such as Middlefield Road and Caltrain tracks.
- In the planned network, the number of distinct low-stress islands decreases to 11 as many existing low-stress islands are connected into a single island in the planned network via new or improved bicycle facilities. The average size grows to 0.89 sq. mi. and the largest island will span 6.92 sq. mi., as new low-stress bicycle facilities connect to the Steven's Creek island.
- In the planned network, there are a few key streets that are preventing a citywide low-stress network from forming. These streets include Miramonte Ave / Shoreline Blvd, Rengstorff Ave, and Middlefield Rd
- Many of the smaller islands in the existing network are merged together in the planned network by the Class 4 improvement to El Camino Real

All Ages and Abilities Comparison

In 2017, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) published <u>Designing For All Ages & Abilities: Contextual Guidance for High-Comfort Bicycle Facilities</u>.³ This document uses motor vehicle speeds, the number of motor vehicle travel lanes, traffic volumes, and other operational considerations to identify the ideal bicycle facility design that would feel safe for users of all ages and abilities (AAA).

To better understand the existing and planned bicycle networks in Mountain View, each bicycle facility was graded with a value that reflects whether or not the combination of bicycle facility class, posted speed limit, and number of travel lanes meets NACTO's thresholds for an all ages and abilities facility. Since volume and operational data were

https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NACTO_Designing-for-All-Ages-Abilities.pdf

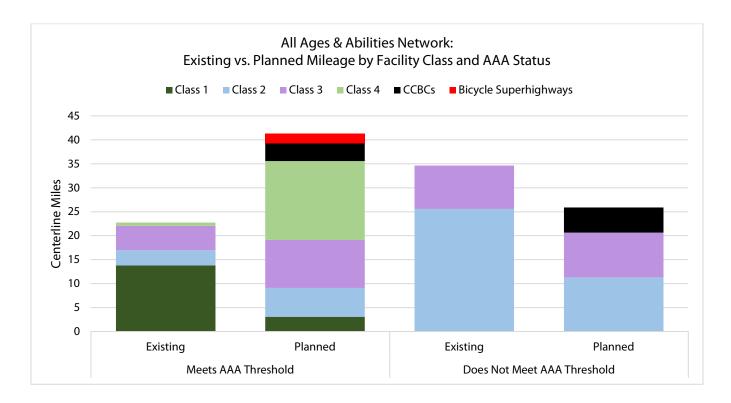
not provided as inputs to this analysis, the table has been adapted (as shown on the following page) to pair bicycle facilities with motor vehicle speeds and lane counts.

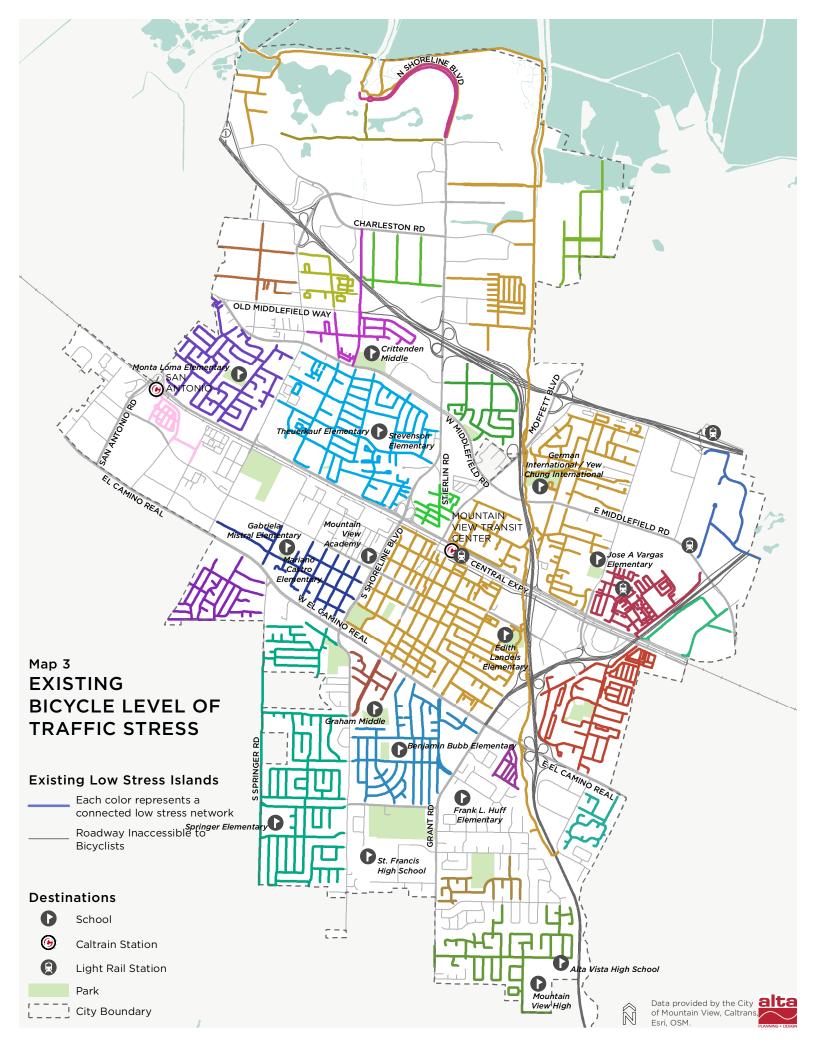
Thresholds for classifying a bicycle facility as "All Ages & Abilities"

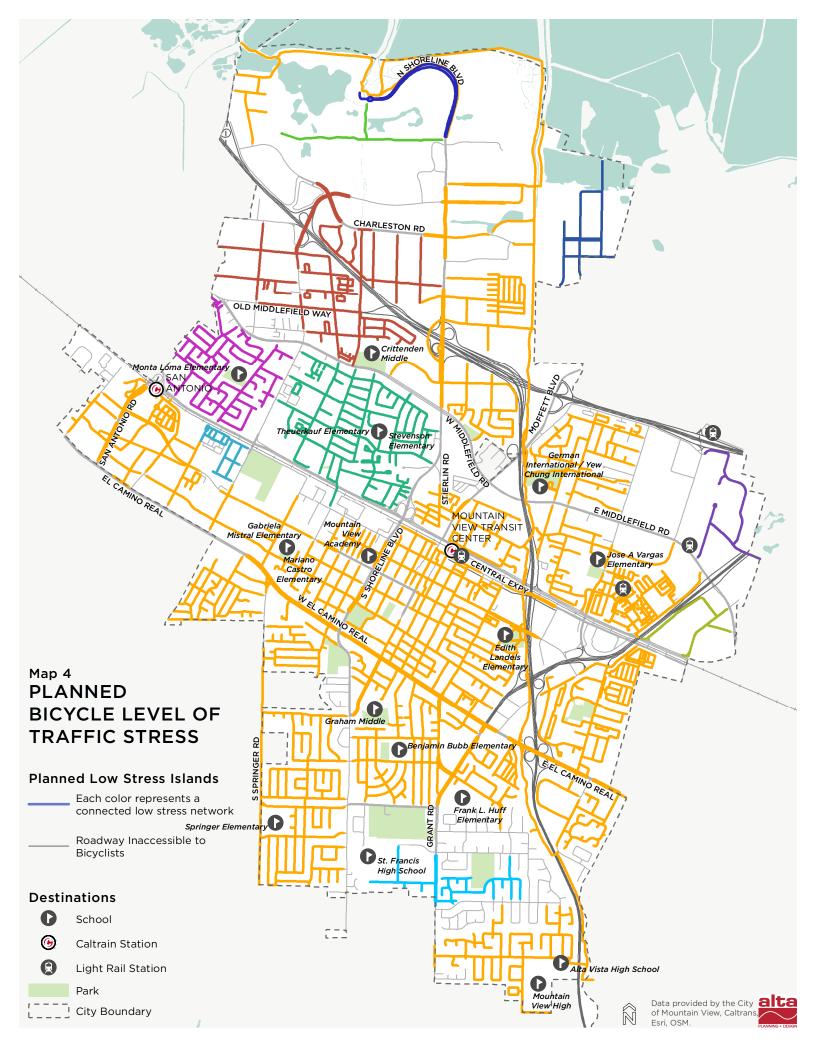
Bicycle Facility	Posted Speed Limit	Motor Vehicle Lanes	
Class 1	Any	Any	
Class 4	Any	Any	
Class 2	<= 25 MPH	1 lane in each direction (or less)	
Class 3	<= 25 MPH	No centerline	

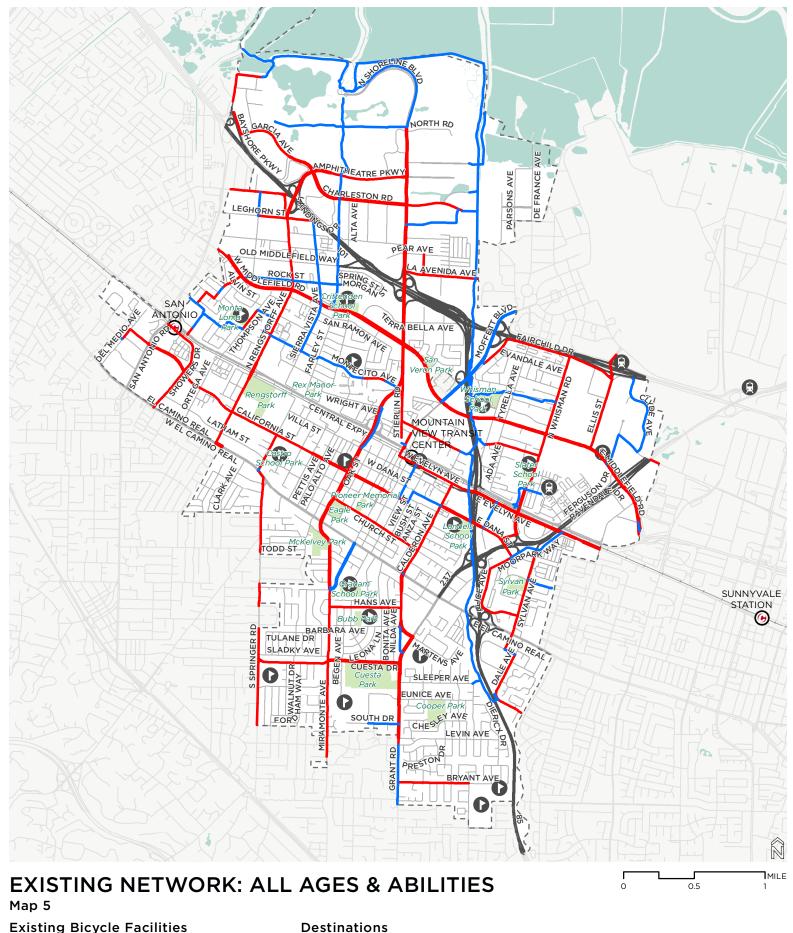
In the planned network, there are two bicycle facility typologies that are not described in "Class" terminology. Both come from the Caltrans D4 Bicycle Plan, and are "Cross County Bicycle Corridors" (CCBCs) and "Bicycle Superhighways". CCBCs are described as a flexible context-sensitive design that achieves a BLTS of 2 or better. As a result, for the purposes of the AAA analysis these features were considered as Class 2 bicycle lanes. Similarly, bicycle superhighways are described as low-stress separated facilities, and as a result these features were considered to be Class 4 facilities.

Maps 5 and 6 show the existing/approved and planned bicycle networks (respectively), and each bicycle facility is classified as meeting NACTO's AAA threshold (in blue) or not meeting the threshold (in red). The graph below compares the mileage of AAA networks between the existing and planned scenarios. It clearly demonstrates the growth in mileage of the AAA network, from 22 miles in the existing network to 41 miles in the planned network.









Existing Bicycle Facilities

Meets AAA Threshold (21.9 Miles)

Does Not Meet AAA Threshold (36.5 Miles)

School

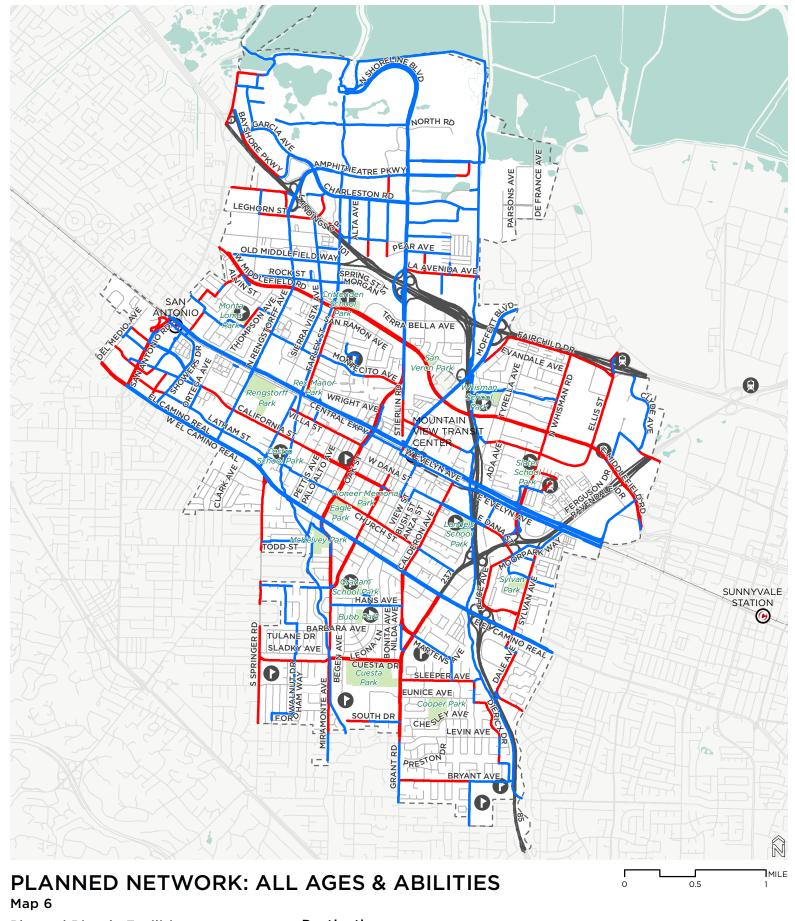


Caltrain Station



_ City Boundary

Light Rail Station



Planned Bicycle Facilities

Meets AAA Threshold (60.2 Miles)

Does Not Meet AAA Threshold (31.8 Miles)

Destinations

School



Park

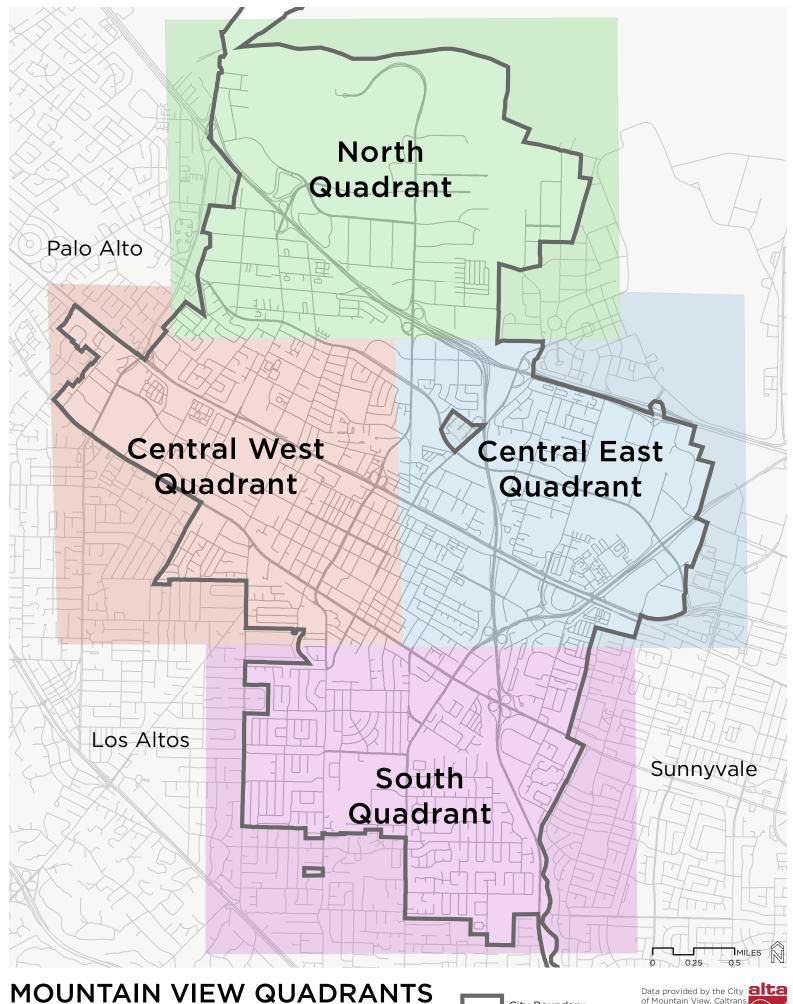
Caltrain Station

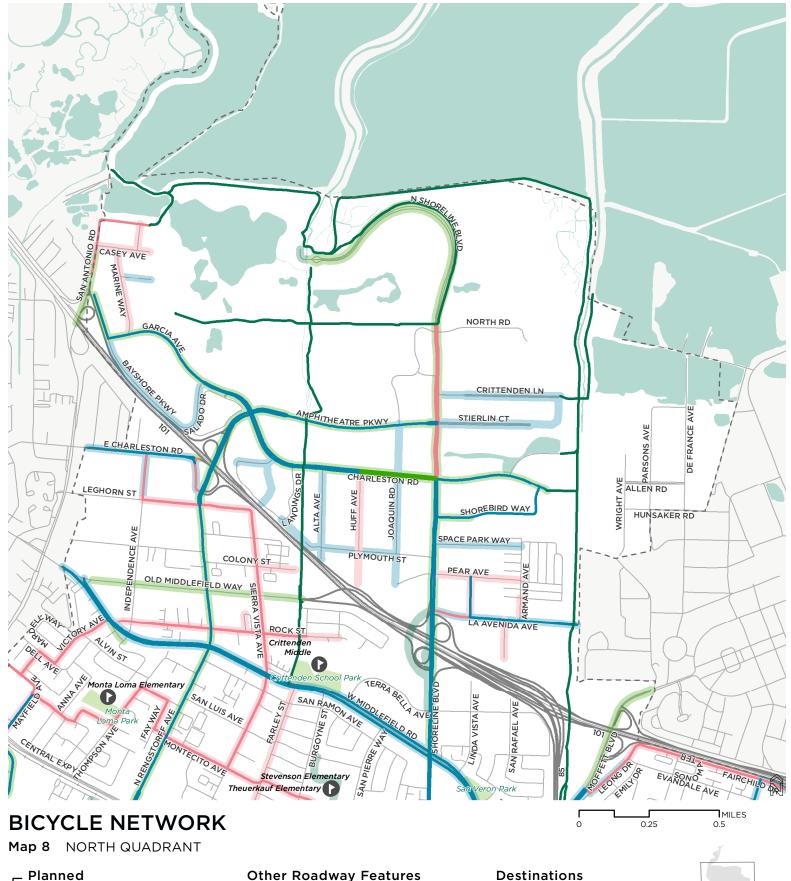


A Light Rail Station

Maps

Map 1.	(p. 7) Existing/Approved LTS – Citywide Overview	
Map 2.	(p. 8) Planned LTS – Citywide Overview	
Map 3.	(p. 12) Existing/Approved Low Stress Islands – Citywide Overview	
Map 4.	(p. 13) Planned Low Stress Islands – Citywide Overview	
Map 5.	(p. 14) Existing All Ages & Abilities Network – citywide	
Map 6.	(p. 15) Planned All Ages & Abilities Network - citywide	
 Мар 7.	(p. 17) Citywide overview of the quadrant boundaries	
 Map 8.	(p. 18) Existing & Planned Bike Network – North quadrant	
Map 9.	(p. 19) Existing & Planned Bike Network – Central West quadrant	
Map 10.	(p. 20) Existing & Planned Bike Network – Central East quadrant	
Map 11.	(p. 21) Existing & Planned Bike Network – South quadrant	
Map 12.	(p. 22) Existing BLTS – North quadrant	
Map 13.	(p. 23) Existing BLTS – Central West quadrant	
Map 14.	(p. 24) Existing BLTS – Central East quadrant	
Map 15.	(p. 25) Existing BLTS – South quadrant	
Map 16.	(p. 26) Planned BLTS – North quadrant	
Map 17.	(p. 27) Planned BLTS – Central West quadrant	
Map 18.	(p. 28) Planned BLTS – Central East quadrant	
Map 19.	(p. 29) Planned BLTS – South quadrant	
Map 20.	(p. 30) Existing Low-Stress Islands – North quadrant	
Map 21.	(p. 31) Existing Low-Stress Islands – Central West quadrant	
Map 22.	(p. 32) Existing Low-Stress Islands – Central East quadrant	
Map 23.	(p. 33) Existing Low-Stress Islands – South quadrant	
 Map 24.	(p. 34) Planned Low-Stress Islands – North quadrant	
Map 25.	(p. 35) Planned Low-Stress Islands – Central West quadrant	
Map 26.	(p. 36) Planned Low-Stress Islands – Central East quadrant	
Map 27.	(p. 37) Planned Low-Stress Islands – South quadrant	





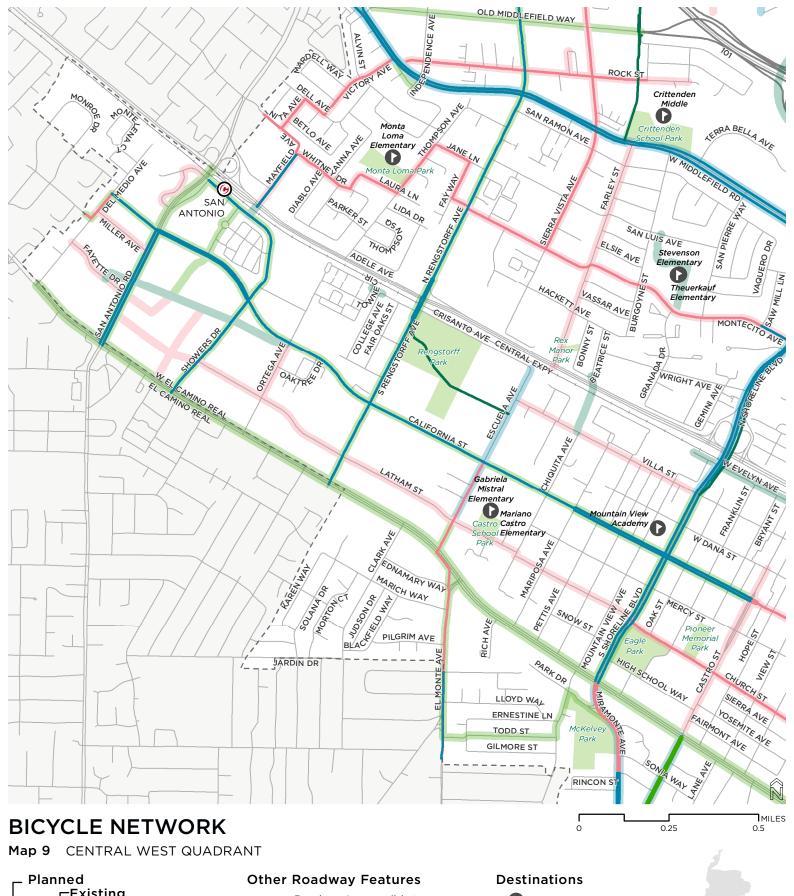


Other Roadway Features

Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

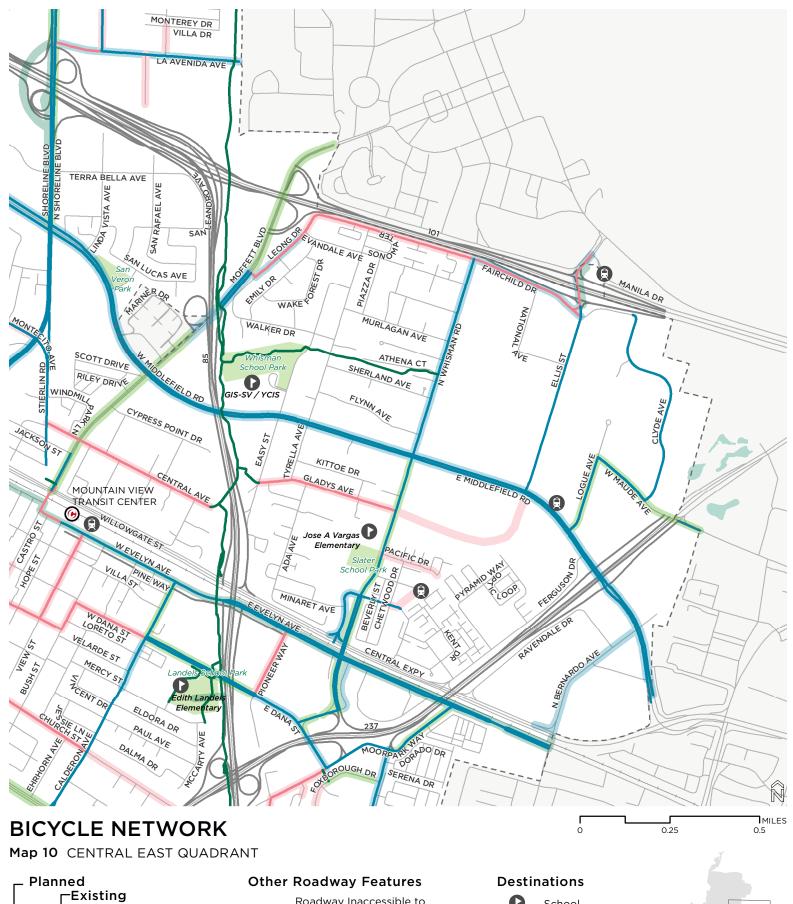
Destinations School Caltrain Station Light Rail Station Park Data provided by the City alta [____] City Boundary

of Mountain View, Caltrans

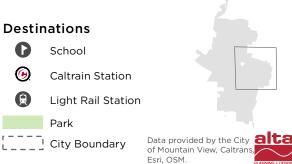


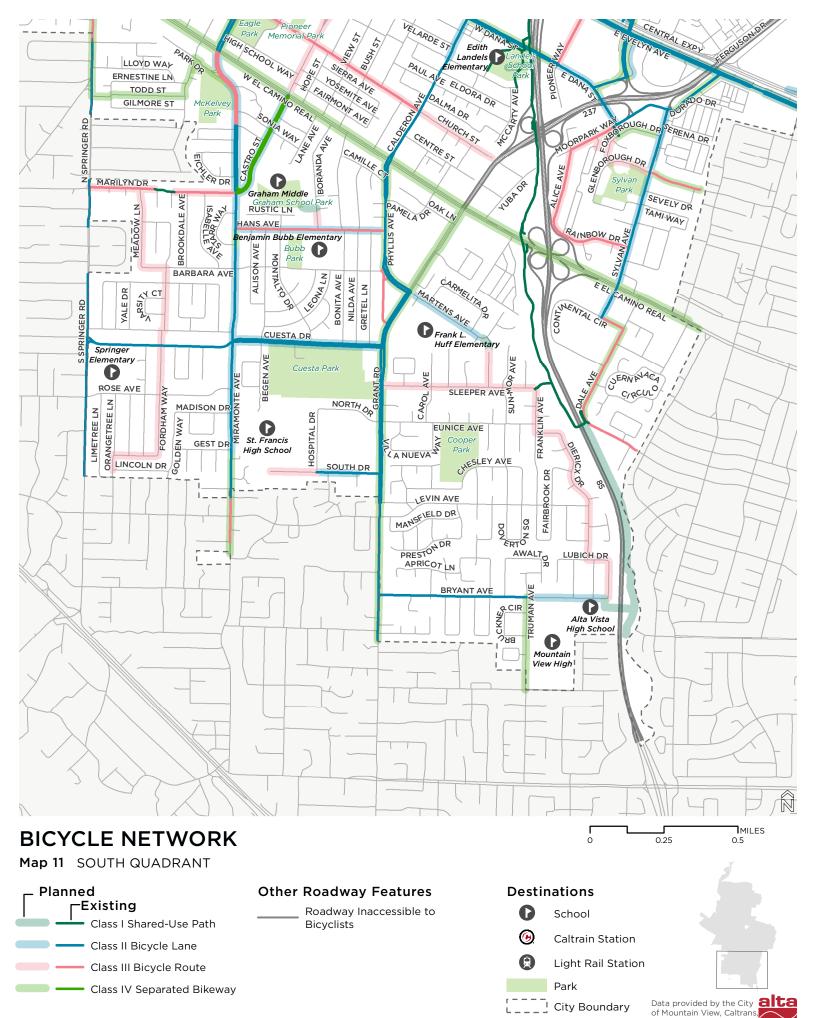


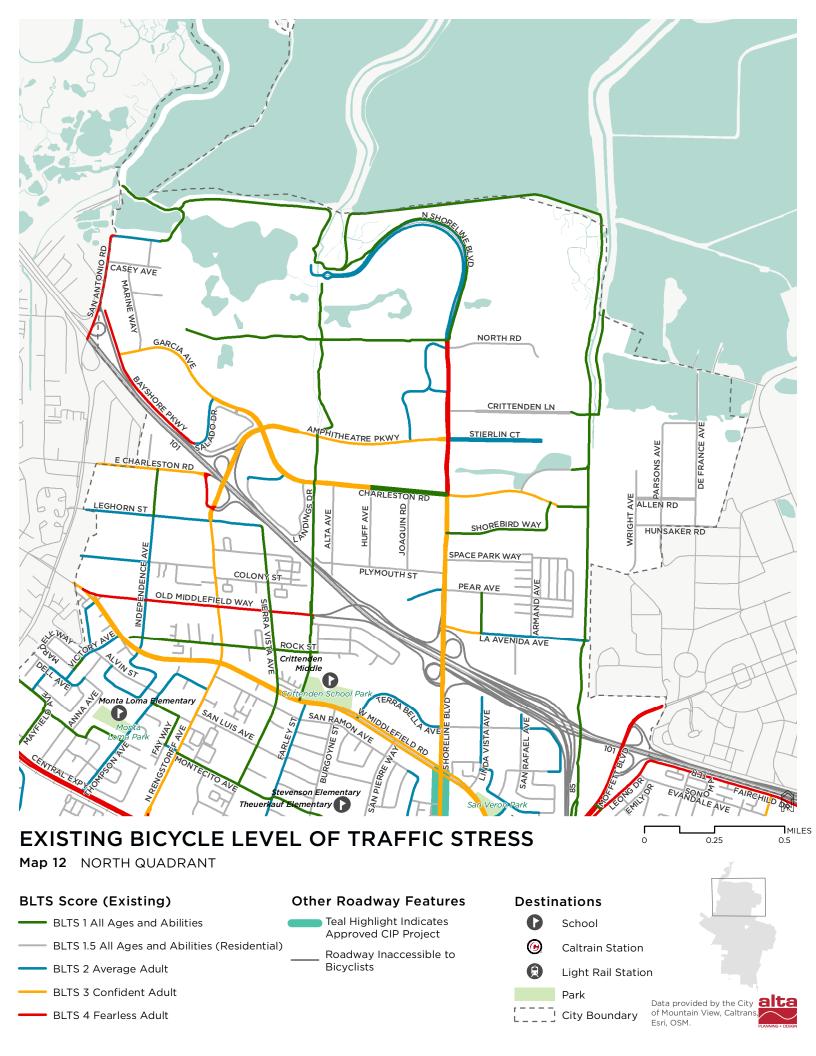
Destinations School Caltrain Station Light Rail Station Park City Boundary Data provided by the City of Mountain View, Caltrans

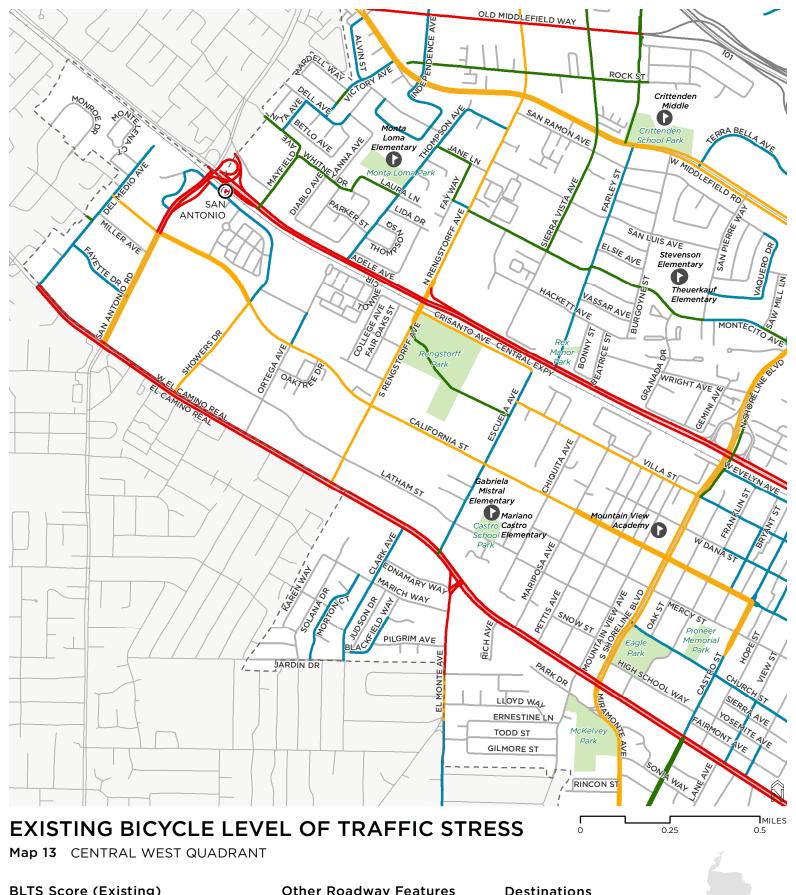




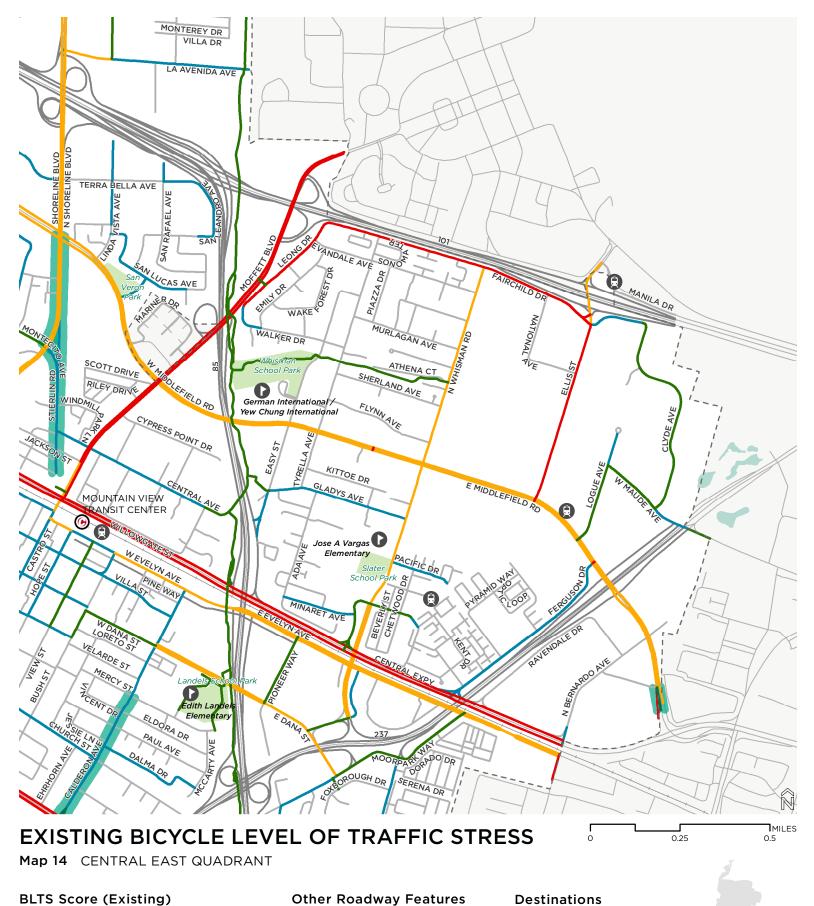








BLTS Score (Existing) Other Roadway Features **Destinations** Teal Highlight Indicates BLTS 1 All Ages and Abilities School Approved CIP Project BLTS 1.5 All Ages and Abilities (Residential) Caltrain Station Roadway Inaccessible to **Bicyclists** BLTS 2 Average Adult Light Rail Station **BLTS 3 Confident Adult** Park Data provided by the City BLTS 4 Fearless Adult L City Boundary of Mountain View, Caltrans Esri, OSM.



BLTS 1 All Ages and Abilities BLTS 1.5 All Ages and Abilities (Residential) BLTS 2 Average Adult

BLTS 3 Confident Adult

BLTS 4 Fearless Adult

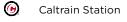
Other Roadway Features



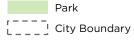
Roadway Inaccessible to **Bicyclists**

Destinations

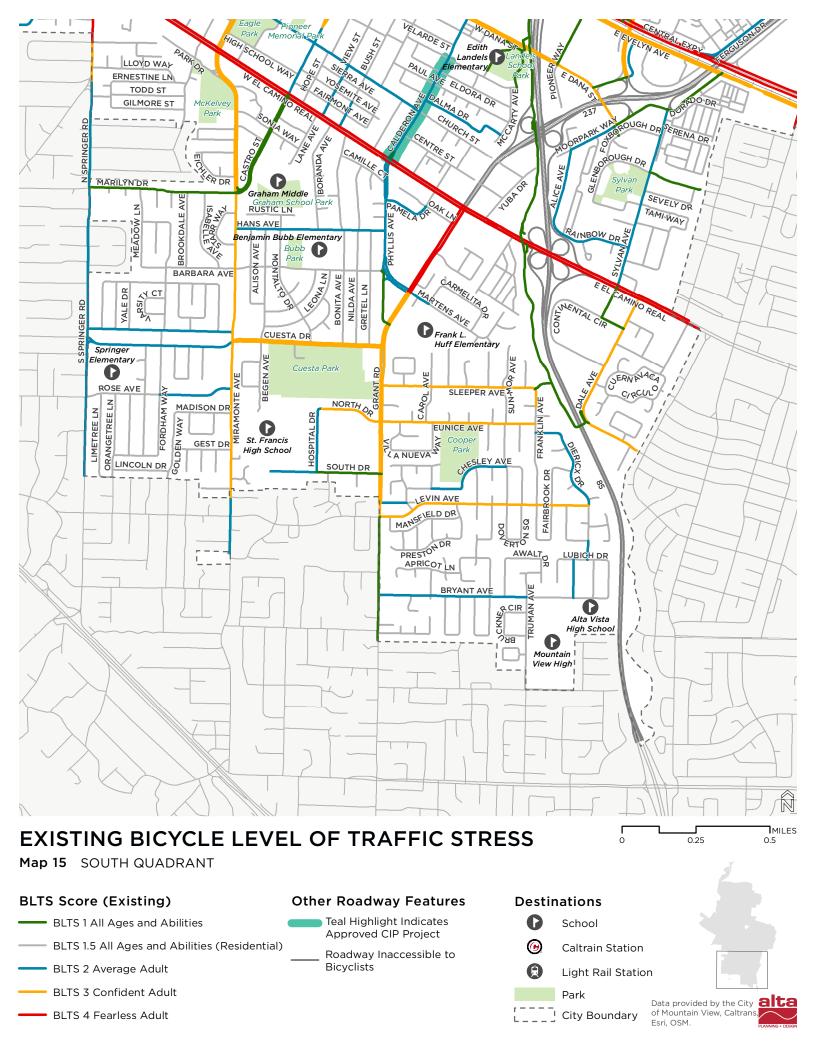


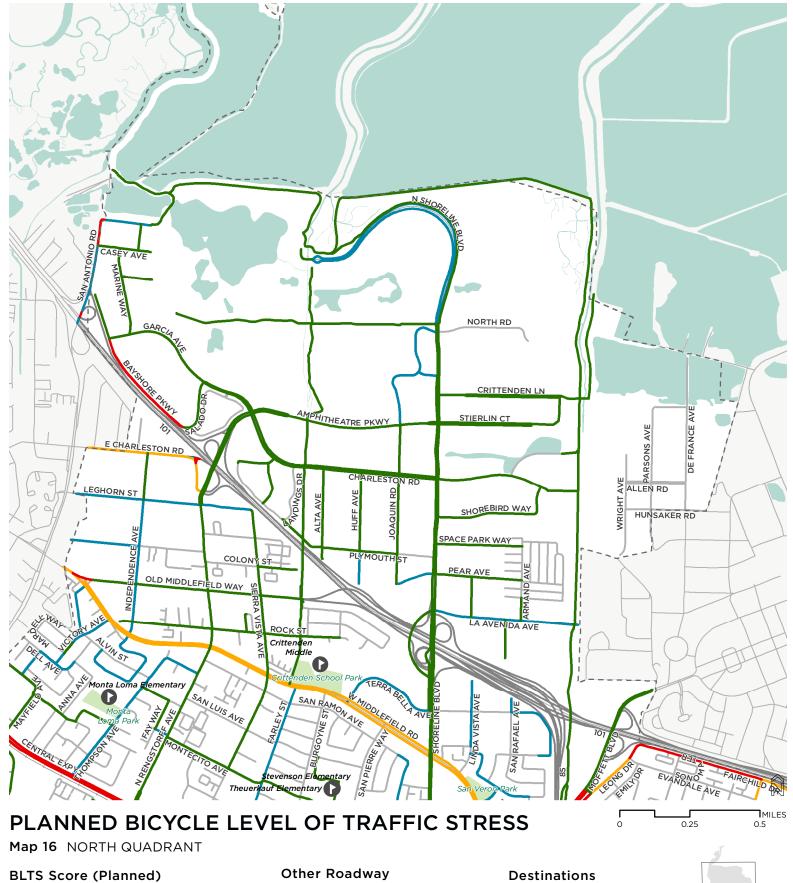


Light Rail Station







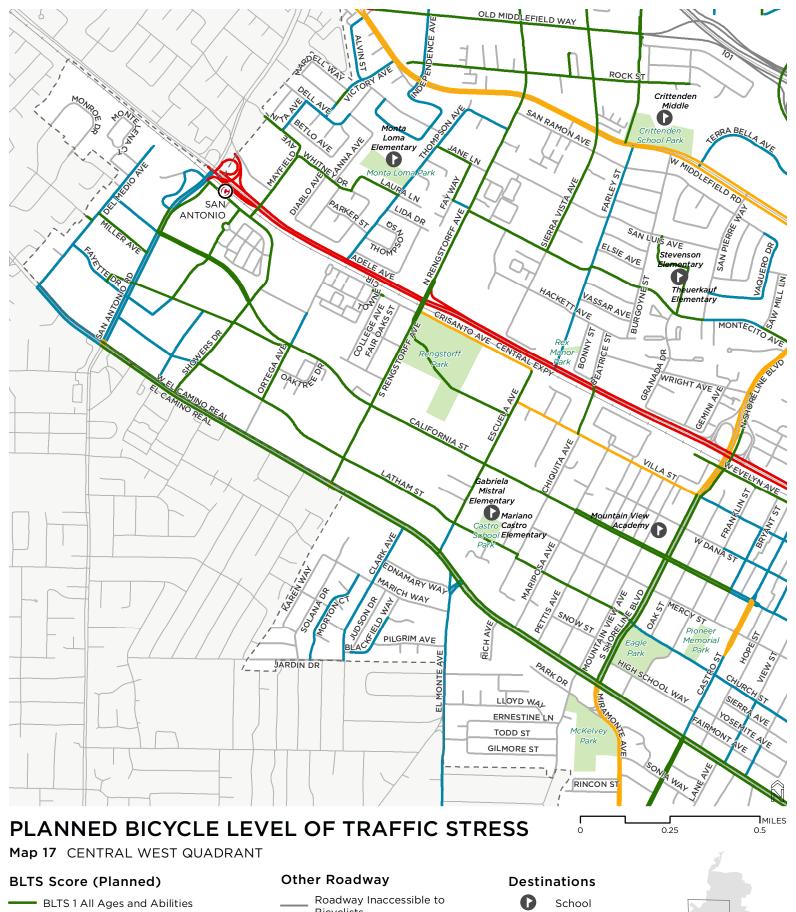


BLTS 1 All Ages and Abilities BLTS 1.5 All Ages and Abilities (Residential) BLTS 2 Average Adult **BLTS 3 Confident Adult** BLTS 4 Fearless Adult

Roadway Inaccessible to **Bicyclists**

School Caltrain Station Light Rail Station Park _____ City Boundary Data provided by the City

of Mountain View, Caltrans Esri, OSM.

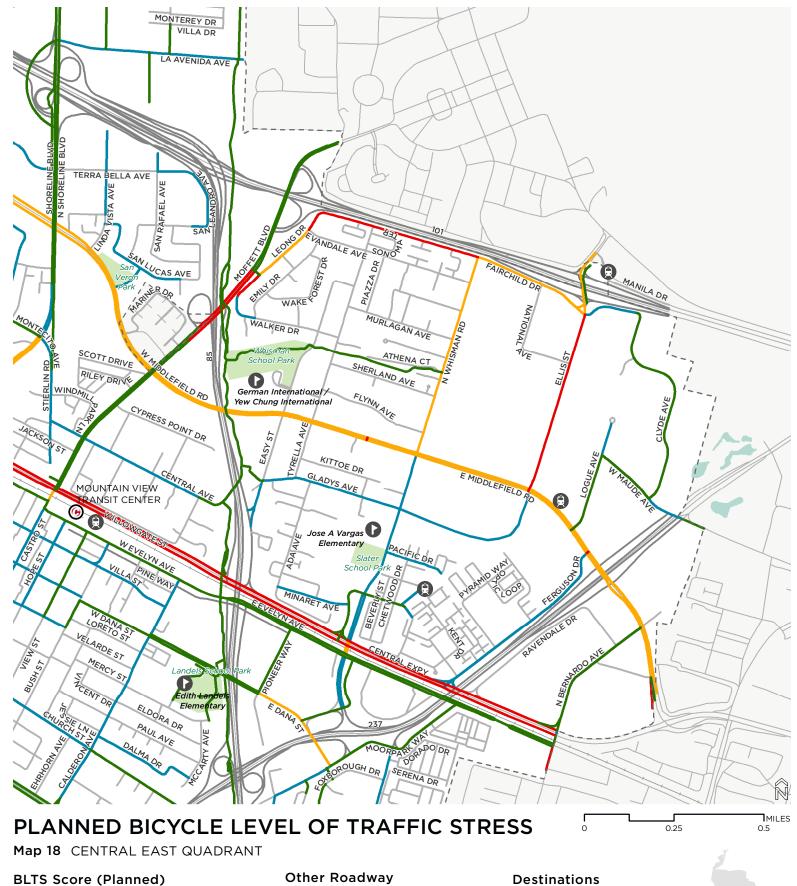


BLTS 1.5 All Ages and Abilities (Residential) BLTS 2 Average Adult **BLTS 3 Confident Adult** BLTS 4 Fearless Adult

Bicyclists

Caltrain Station Light Rail Station





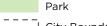
Roadway Inaccessible to BLTS 1 All Ages and Abilities **Bicyclists** BLTS 1.5 All Ages and Abilities (Residential) BLTS 2 Average Adult **BLTS 3 Confident Adult** BLTS 4 Fearless Adult

Destinations

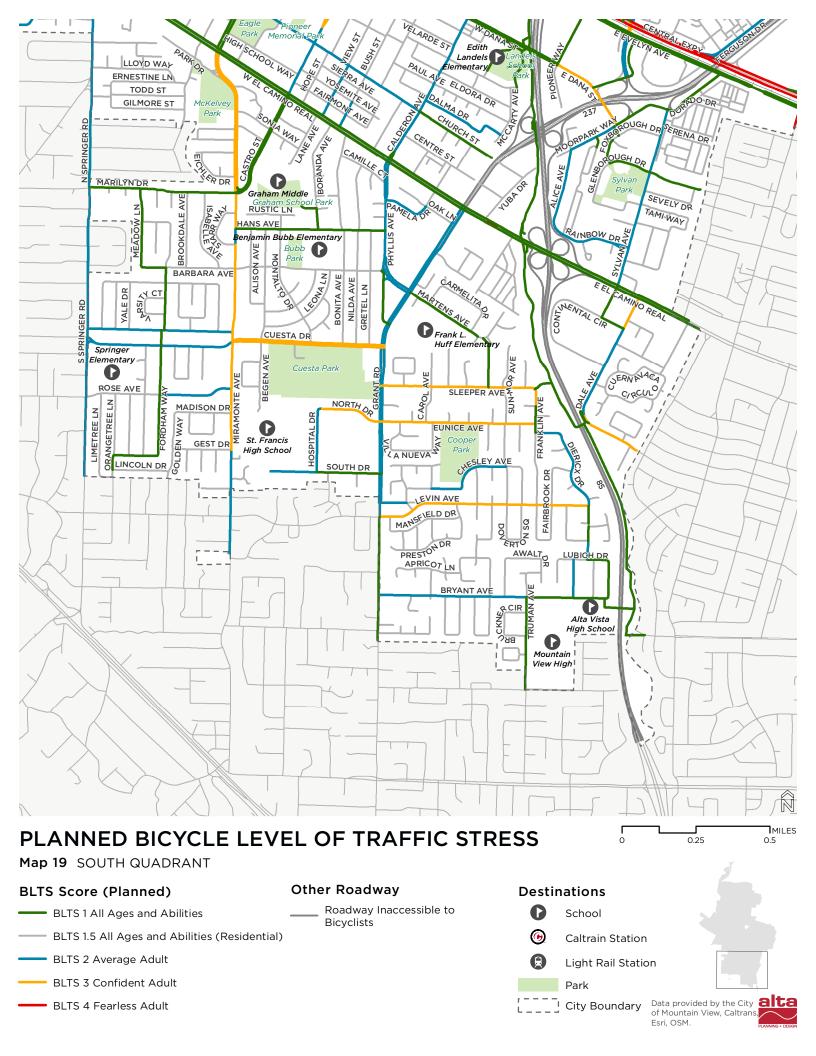
O School

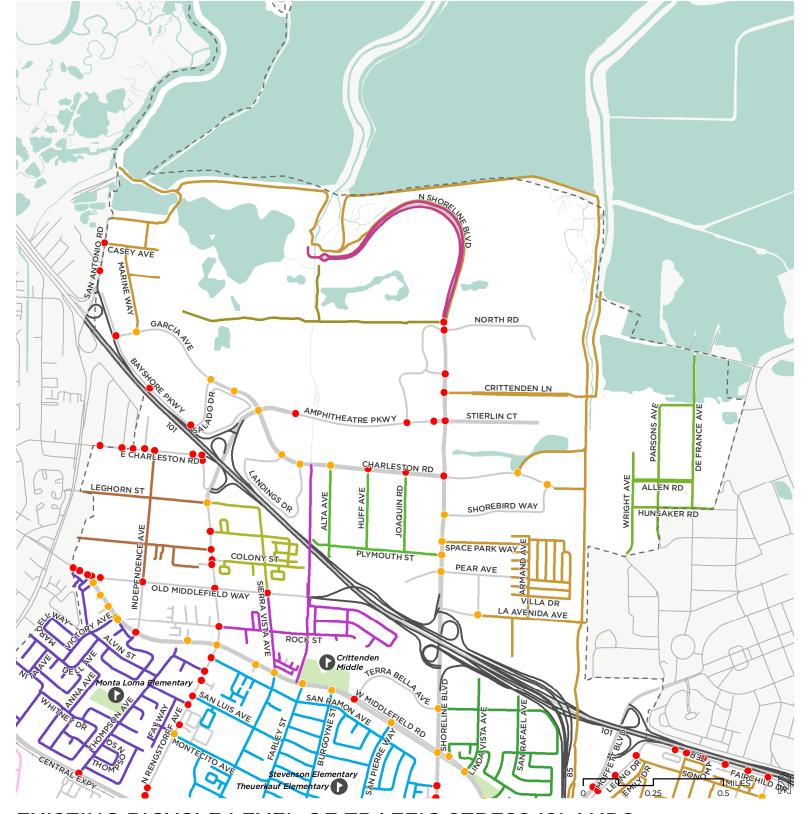
Caltrain Station

Light Rail Station









Map 20 NORTH QUADRANT

Existing Low Stress Islands

Each color represents a connected low stress network

High Stress Intersections

LTS 3

LTS 4

Roadways Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

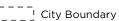
Destinations

School

Caltrain Station

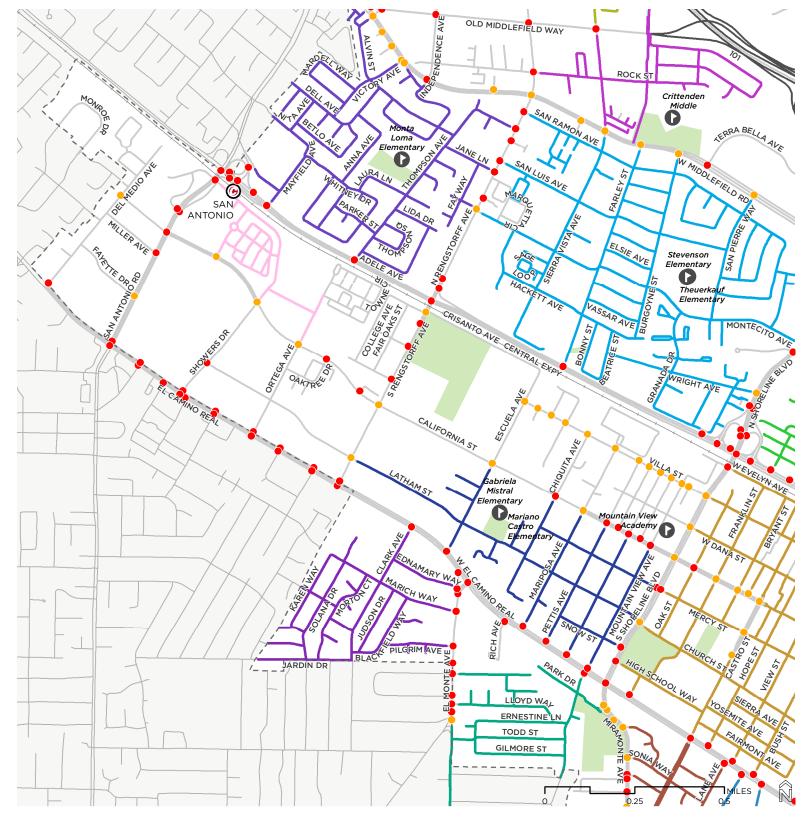
Light Rail Station







of Mountain View, Caltrans



Map 21 CENTRAL WEST QUADRANT

Existing Low Stress Islands

Each color represents a connected low stress network

High Stress Intersections

LTS 3

LTS 4

Roadways

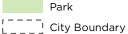
Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

Destinations

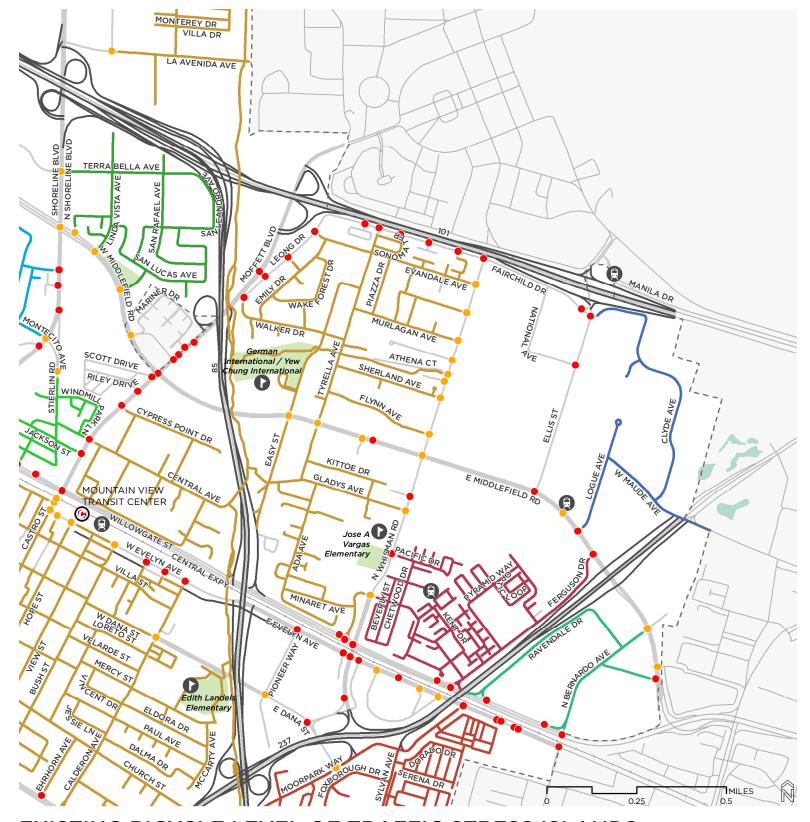
School

Caltrain Station

Light Rail Station







Map 22 CENTRAL EAST QUADRANT

Existing Low Stress Islands

Each color represents a connected low stress network

High Stress Intersections

LTS 3

Roadways

Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

Destinations

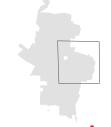
School

Caltrain Station

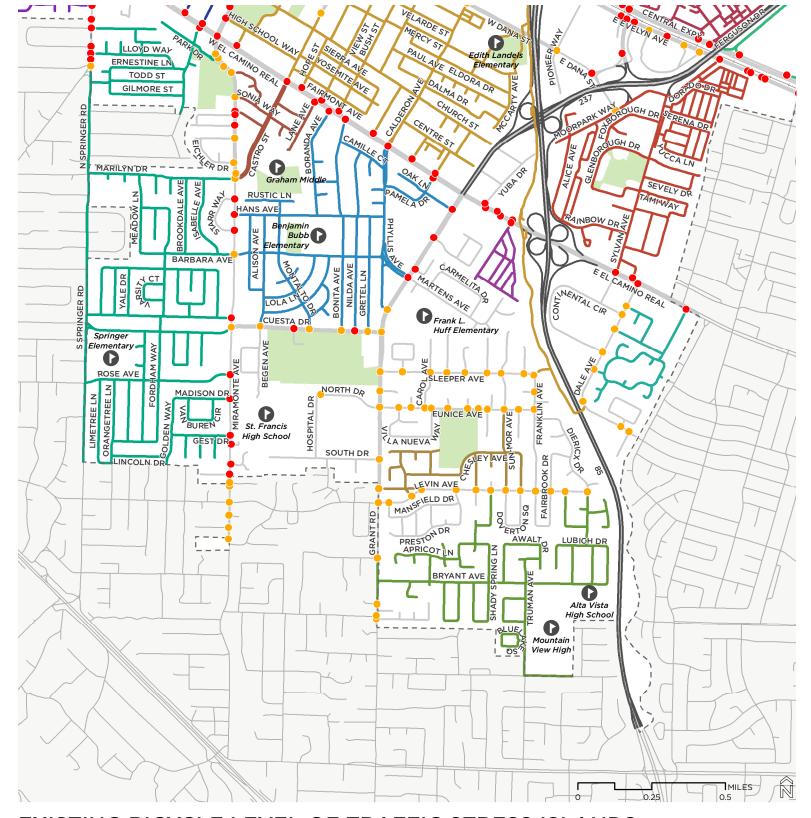
Light Rail Station

Park

[____ City Boundary



Data provided by the City of Mountain View, Caltrans, Esri, OSM.



Map 23 SOUTH QUADRANT

Existing Low Stress Islands

Each color represents a connected low stress network

High Stress Intersections

LTS 3

LTS 4Roadways

Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

Destinations

School

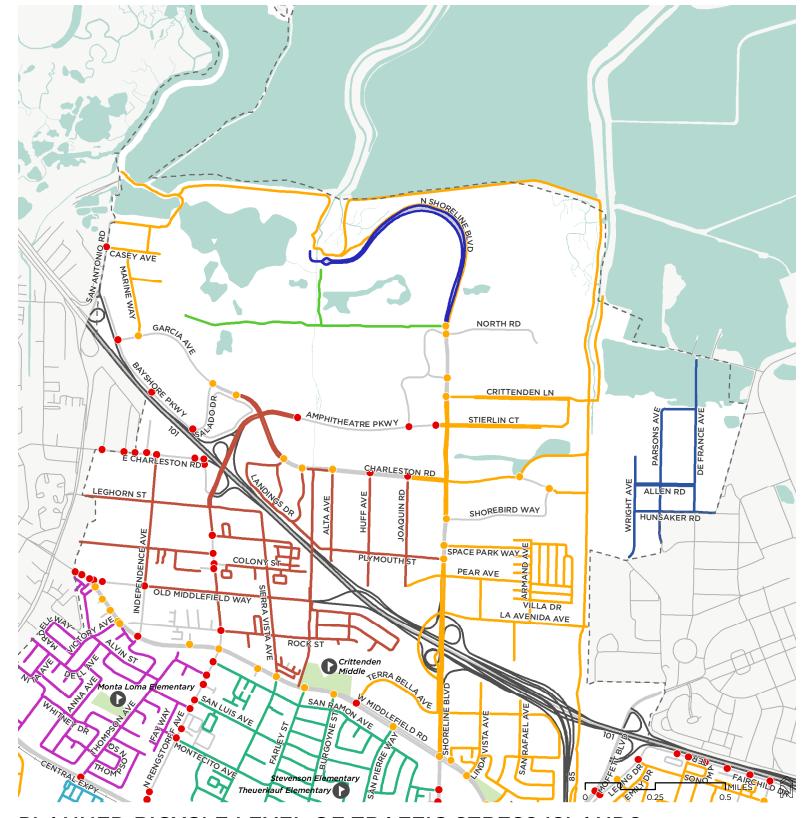
Caltrain Station

Light Rail Station

Park

City Boundary





Map 24 NORTH QUADRANT

Planned Low Stress Islands

Each color represents a connected low stress network

High Stress Intersections

- BLTS 3
- BLTS 4

Roadways

Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

Destinations

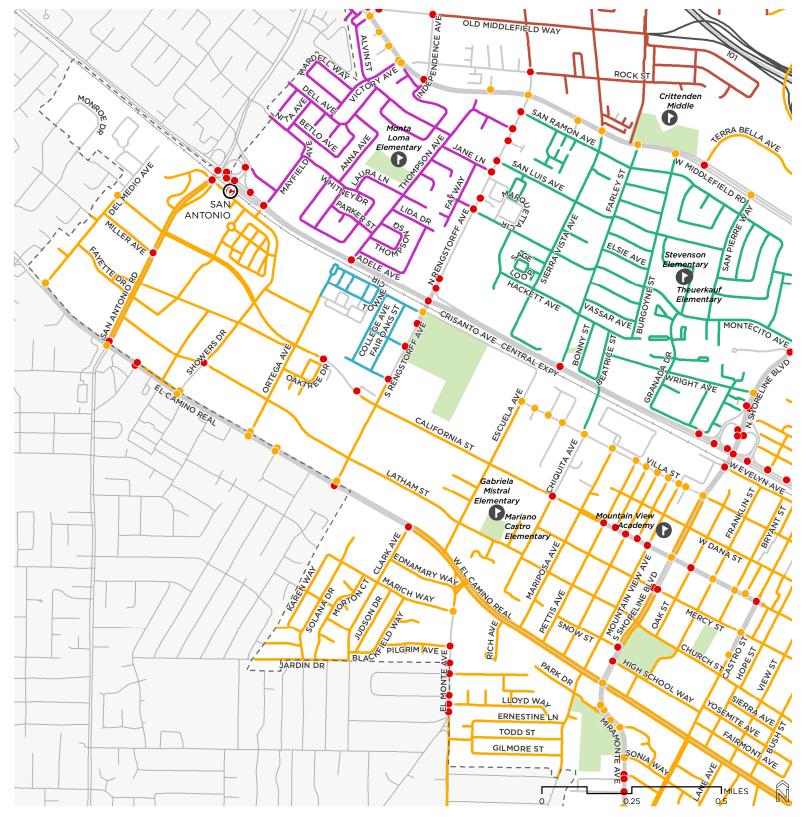
- O
- School
- Caltrain Station
- Light Rail Station







Data provided by the City of Mountain View, Caltrans.
Esri, OSM.



Map 25 CENTRAL WEST QUADRANT

Planned Low Stress Islands

Each color represents a connected low stress network

High Stress Intersections

- BLTS 3
- BLTS 4

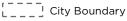
Roadways

Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

Destinations

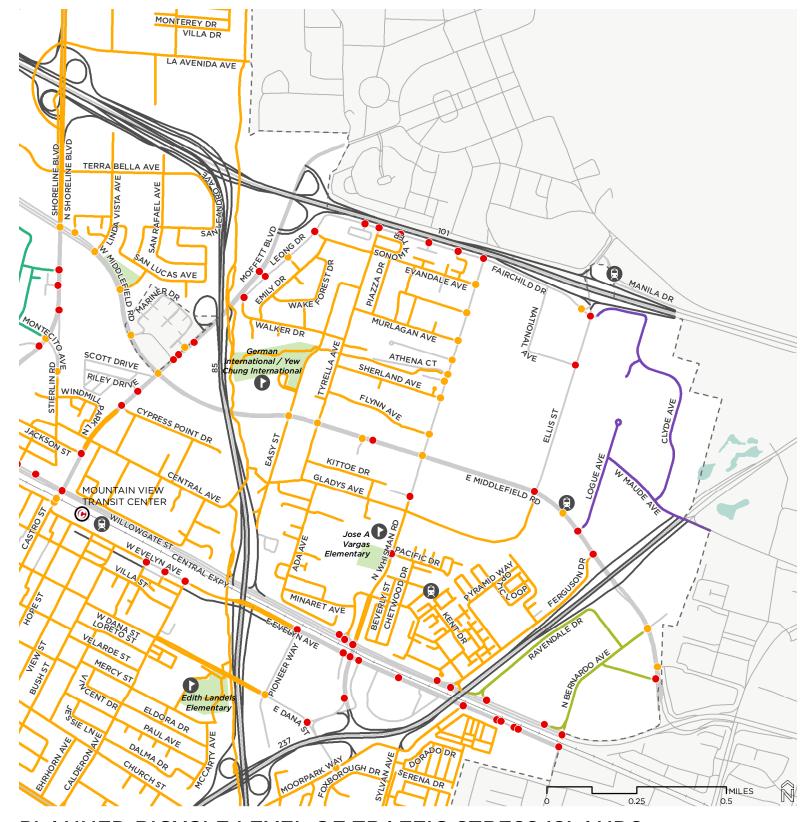
- School
- Caltrain Station
- Light Rail Station







Data provided by the City of Mountain View, Caltrans. Esri, OSM.



Map 26 CENTRAL EAST QUADRANT

Planned Low Stress Islands

Each color represents a connected low stress network

High Stress Intersections

- BLTS 3
- BLTS 4

Roadways

Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

Destinations

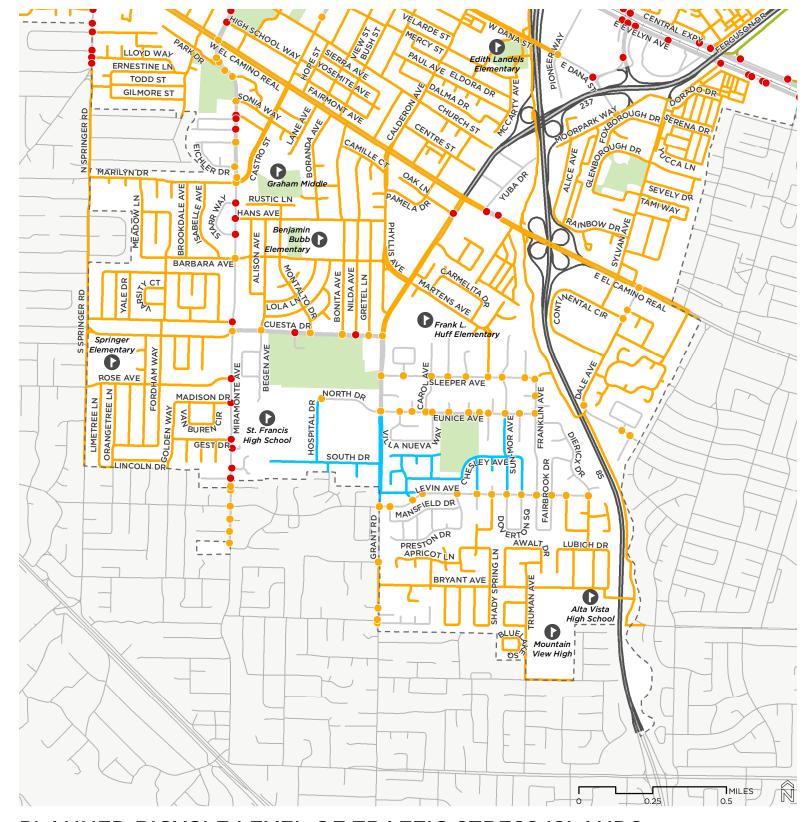
- ♠ School
- Caltrain Station
- Light Rail Station



[____] City Boundary



Data provided by the City of Mountain View, Caltrans, Esri, OSM.



Map 27 SOUTH QUADRANT

Planned Low Stress Islands

Each color represents a connected low stress network

High Stress Intersections

- BLTS 3
- BLTS 4

Roadways

Roadway Inaccessible to Bicyclists

Destinations

- School
- Caltrain Station
- Light Rail Station
- Par
- [____] City Boundary

